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SOUTH ATLANTIC PRESENTATION UNIT (SAPU)

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Cabinet Office

18 May 1982

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PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVIEW ON I.R.N. ON MONDAY 17 MAY 1982

Q: Prime Minister, our representatives are once again negotiating at the United Nations. Now is this really the last chance for negotiations to achieve some positive results?

PM: I think it may be. After all, we've been negotiating now for about 6 weeks. I've looked at six sets of proposals and tried to put our view on each. They've got nowhere. And the fact is that I feel that if the Argentines had really wanted to withdraw, if they had really wanted to obey the Security Council Resolution, we should have seen some sign by now. But you know the Task Force is there, it's being very active, you saw the result of that commando raid, and one just hopes that that will have some influence on the junta in Argentina. And perhaps get a settlement where what had happened before wouldn't.

Q: Now does that actually mean that if there's to be any movement it has to come from their side, that we've gone as far as we can and that really it's up to them to move now?

PM: Oh, we've gone as far as we can, yes. They're the invader. They're the aggressor, we are the aggrieved. There's a United Nations Resolution which says the Argentines must withdraw. It's up to them. If we want peace, and I do, if they want peace they can have it by withdrawing.

Q: How wide is the gap now between the two of us? Are we anywhere near a compromise?

PM: It's very difficult to say. I think there's a fundamental difference between a democracy on our side and a dictatorship on their side. We believe in self determination, a dictatorship of course doesn't. And then sometimes you get speeches made in Argentina of the kind that President Galtieri made this weekend when he said that he was prepared to sacrifice some 40,000 lives for the Falkland Islands, to keep them. I just thought how dreadful. It made one sick at heart, so many. Whereas he could avoid all the loss of life by withdrawing from the Islands and carrying on the kind of talks we had before.

/ Q:

Q: Now are you prepared to sacrifice lives for the sake of regaining the Islands? Some lives, hundreds of lives already. Do you put a number on it.

PM: If an aggressor succeeds in what he sets out to do, if he goes in by force to hold land and continues to hold that land, subjugate those people, then there will be many many other people in the future who will be treated the same way in other territories across the world. Therefore he has to go and he won't go by negotiations, he has to leave and we have to take military action to ensure that he does.

Q: Does that mean we make him go whatever the cost?

PM: We make him go. As I said in the very first speech, the cost of making a dictator, an invader go now, is very much less than of having other invasions, other dictatorships taking territory and peoples by force and then finally having to deal with them. So, he has to go.

Q: I get the feeling, coming from Downing Street as well as from other places in this country, that Ministers feel President Galtieri is just wasting time, playing for time, and that the longer this goes on the stronger he becomes. He's just playing you along.

PM: We don't know, he's not been able to play us along so far because no military decision has been held up because we are negotiating. Not one single one. Well, you've seen what's happened. Nothing's been held up. It's very difficult you know to know who you are negotiating with. You negotiate at the United Nations with a Mr. Ros. But you see we were already negotiating with him back in February. We always had the Islanders with us and what they wanted we tried to obtain for them and if they didn't want to make any concessions whatsoever or have more Argentinians in the Falklands, all right. Falklanders live there and therefore we agreed with the Falklanders. So then we were negotiating peacefully with Mr. Ros. Mr. Costa Mendez is their Foreign Minister, when the South Georgia incident came up, you know they landed on South Georgia to try to

remove a whaling station under commercial contract but they hadn't got the proper permits. When we tried to settle that by diplomacy just one day before the invasion, Mr. Costa Mendez called our Ambassador and said the negotiations are closed. President Reagan telephone President Galtieri to say we hear you are making plans to invade - don't. President Reagan was on to President Galtieri for 50 minutes on the telephone. He was rebuffed. Now, they didn't want a peaceful settlement then. They just wanted to use military means and to invade. They not only fired the first shot they were responsible for the invasion and the first act when they had landed was they went straight to the barracks where our marines were expected to be, they thought they were all inside those barracks, and they mortar bombed those barracks heavily, hoping to get the lot. They didn't because fortunately our marines were not there. Now that's what you're dealing with. You don't know who you are dealing with. Is it Mr. Ros, is it Mr. Costa Mendez, he has to refer to Galtieri, Mr. Galtieri has to refer to the others in the junta, they have to refer to the generals. We've been at this for six weeks and we're having one last go to see if we can get a peaceful settlement.

Q: How long can that one last go, go on for? Days, hours, weeks?

PM: Well, it occurs through the Secretary General of the United Nations who is being very very active indeed. A person of total integrity. And it just depends how long he thinks he can go on. My guess is that we shall know this week whether we're going to get a peaceful settlement or not.

Q: This week. That really is the deadline is it because we seem to have been saying this for a long time?

PM: I think we shall know this week. These are the sixth set of proposals. You would think that if the Argentines wanted a peaceful settlement they'd have taken more steps than they have towards one. The question is do they want one or not. And that's what we are trying to find out.

Q: Your suspicion is clearly that they do not.

PM: I have seen no signs that they do in the last six weeks.

Q: Can I come back to the cost of this whole episode briefly. Is it really a clash between, some say, what is right in principle and what is possible in practice? All right, the principle that they should leave the Islands is absolutely right but if it is too costly in lives and you don't want to get involved probably in numbers again, but if it's too costly then it will have been proved to be the wrong decision to go out there. To be practically wrong.

PM: No. I don't think you've got the point right at all. There are two points. First, the Falkland Islanders are British citizens. British citizens have been invaded. If they can't look to their own country to protect them, to go and try to get the invader off, what future is there for anyone in this world. So they have a right to look to us for their defence. We have a right to defend our own territory. That's one principle. Secondly, an invader must not be allowed to succeed. If he does there are many other peoples who will be invaded. Many of them who will be in jeopardy. Now these two are very important principles and ideals. And if they are flouted there will be no law in the world, there'll be international anarchy and many many peoples' lives will be at stake. And don't forget you're not exactly either dealing with a democratic country. Even if a democratic country did that we'd have to go and defend our own. But you're dealing with a country that hasn't exactly got a good record on human rights. Are you going to leave our people to be under the heel of that kind of junta.

Q: Well eventually we probably will. Eventually we are working to handing over the sovereignty of the place anyway?

PM: I beg your pardon. Did you really say that eventually Britain would leave these people to be under the heel of a junta if they did not wish it? Those are words that I never thought to hear. We went to defend them. That's what we've gone for. We've gone to get the Argentines off the Island. And I hope no-one will ever say that British subjects can't look to us to protect them.

Q: Can I inject a slightly personal note. I remember you talking in the House of Commons about your real fears being not that one of their boats went down but that one of our boats went down and very quickly that came to pass. It's an enormous stress for you personally

to have to make the kind of decisions which do involve men's lives.

PM: You cannot fight these battles without losing casualties. That problem is one which I live with every hour of the day and every hour of the night. But I also remember there are British people with something like 9 or 10,000 soldiers on those Islands. They are British people there. They look to us. It's more than 1800 people, it is the whole principle of shall an invader succeed, shall there be an international law. You see the fact is that United Nations Resolution on its own won't get those Argentine soldiers off those Islands. It ought to, it ought to. But it won't. There aren't many mandatory resolutions in the Security Council. There have been a number. The trouble is that the United Nations hasn't the power or authority to act to ensure that they are adhered to. So, if we can't get them off by diplomatic means, by economic means, we'll have to get them off by military means.

Q: You share the responsibility I have just mentioned, of course, with other members of the inner Cabinet. There's been a certain amount of public speculation and indeed speculation in your own Party that there's a division of opinion between yourself and Mr. Pym.

PM: There's no division of opinion. We argue about things, of course we do. There's so much at stake. You discuss every aspect, of course you do. You owe that to the lives of the people who are going to be risked and you owe it to their families, you owe it to all our people. All of that is done. No-one in this country would ever have said what Galtieri said: "I am prepared to sacrifice 40,000 lives". We think about each one. Each and every one. But you cannot do these things without risks. We try to minimise the risks and we try to see that our own people have as much safety as is possible and that the risks are minimised.

Q: Well, I've got a slightly philosophical question, not too much there. But almost as soon as we start to negotiate with somebody like Galtieri, when he has actually just taken something by right of force, we almost make concessions to the fact that he has done it. We almost immediately start offering/^{him}some advantage for the fact that he's invaded. Is that a fear with you, that he will get something from this?

/ PM:

PM: Well, what he's asking of course is to say look I will withdraw if you can assure me that I'll get sovereignty. And we're saying no, certainly not. You have to withdraw and we will continue to negotiate in the future. But you know, when we negotiated before, we always had the Islanders with us. And the Islanders don't want to be under the Argentine. Self determination means a great deal to us. That's what democracy is all about. And he invaded them really to punish them because they didn't want to be Argentinian. Because they didn't want to be under the rule of Argentine. We go down there to protect the right of self determination and to protect their right to live their lives in their way and with the kind of government of their choice. That is what democracy is all about.

Q: Do you have any fears about the way international opinion is going on all this? In the Common Market itself there seems less than absolute support for our stand.

PM: If we succeed, and I believe we shall, we shall have the quiet acclaim and approval of all who believe in democracy and they will think, thank goodness someone's stood up for international law, someone's stood up for their own people, someone's stood up and been loyal to those who are loyal to them. Someone's done it at last.

Q: So even if all the international opinion goes against you, even if the UN and the Common Market all start to run away, you still say we fight on, we are standing for this cause.

PM: I don't believe everyone will run away from us. There's too much at stake. And unfortunately there are far too few democracies in the world. Everyone will not run away from us. The United States has been very very staunch. Europe has been very very staunch. I believe that all democracies hope that democracy will succeed in this as in many other problems the world has to face.

Q: Just a couple of final points. One is, of great concern in particular to the religious the strong religious community in our Islands. And that is the visit of the Pope and the thought that it might be cancelled. Have you any advice to offer at this stage.

/ PM:

PM: It is a pastoral visit of the Pope. I very much hope that he will come. So many people are looking forward to it. So many people have made endless effort to see him, to organise things for him. It is a pastoral visit. I hope very very much that he will come and that he will get a warm welcome in our country.

Q: Can I ask what is really the summarising question. From the tone of everything that you've said and everything in which you've made so plain, it just strikes me that there really is, bearing in mind the gap between ourselves and Argentina, very little hope for anything but an invasion, that does seem the most likely course of action now, doesn't it?

PM: There's always time to pull back. Always. And that's ^{WHY} our Ambassador has gone back to the United Nations this week to have one more go. To see if we can persuade them to pull back. For people like us it's difficult to see why they don't pull back. They've got a lot of young people on that Island and then he says he'll sacrifice 40,000. I cannot understand that. I just cannot understand it. When he could stop it as an act of statesmanship if you like, he could stop it and say all right, stop, we'll withdraw and then we'll go on talking afterwards. All it would need and many many people in the world would feel very much better, it would be an act of statesmanship and to be a wise act, an act that would be of great benefit to the Argentine people. For they are wrongly in those Islands. They were aggressors. That leads to international anarchy and if they don't decide to withdraw then I'm afraid we have to use force to get them out.

Q: And so that's the final message from our envoys to the Argentinians at the United Nations. Pull back or face the consequences.

PM: That is the right message if there is to be any hope for peace-loving, freedom-loving people the world over.

2. Mr Pym's Statement to the Press in Luxembourg on Monday Night

Mr Pym: I want to say on the Falklands issue and the economic measures there was a very broad degree of agreement that these measures should continue and in fact they are going to continue. They are going to continue for a further seven days. Eight countries are going to continue the measures on that basis. Two other countries have particular difficulties and they are going to take measures to ensure that effectively the ban continues - the ban on imports. I think that it is a satisfactory result which brings no comfort to Argentina at all. And I would remind you that the Secretary-General of the United Nations has himself said that he believes that probably in the course of this week - and of course nobody can be certain - the negotiations themselves will come to a conclusion and therefore the Community felt that to extend for a further week was a sensible period of time. And bear in mind that Ministers are meeting again next Monday which is the seventh day. That is the background of that decision and so far as we are concerned I have to say I believe that to be satisfactory.....
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Q: Can you tell us how a compromise was reached from the position earlier in the evening?

A: What compromise?

Q: Well, we were talking earlier in the evening about the Italian situation. A possibility of them invoking the Luxembourg

A: The position is that eight members of the Community are going on exactly as we have been before and two are continuing on a different basis and will ensure that these imports do not come in. So that is the state of the compromise. It is not 100% but it is entirely satisfactory and there is no joy in it for Argentina.

Q: Italy and Ireland

A: I have explained the position exactly and there was a very broad desire within the Community to continue because the negotiations are obviously at a very critical stage and there is a very broad measure

Q: Would you have preferred a month?

A: I think a week is quite reasonable because we are meeting in a week's time. The Secretary-General said himself that in his view probably a conclusion of negotiations will be reached this week. No we don't know that is so but he said that himself so I think it is perfectly reasonable. If we want to change it or try to continue it or whatever it may be next Monday we are all going to meet any way so we can carry it forward.

3. Falkland Islands Company: Argentine Propaganda Claims

Argentine propaganda has been misrepresenting the Falkland Islands Company as a monopoly dominating political, economic and social life and preventing the proper development of the islands. To this has been added the completely false allegation that Mr Denis Thatcher is a shareholder.

The Company does not dominate the islands. It employs less than 14% of the population. Though it has substantial holdings, it is only one of 40 independent land holders and for some years has been working actively to sell off land to small farmers and encourage independent tenants. The Company has made a significant contribution to the development of the islands and has been co-operating in plans for diversifying their economy.

The islanders have their own free and democratic institutions free of any company influence. The government of the islands is based on universal suffrage and there are no company representatives on the elected councils although two company employees were elected to the present councils. There are full union rights on the Falklands - a union with over 500 members working for numerous employers - and legislation covering wages, working conditions, compensation etc.