

273. Memorandum From Acting Secretary of State Stoessel to President Reagan¹

Washington, May 18, 1982

1. *British Ambassador's Assessment on Falklands.* I had a long talk with UK Ambassador Henderson today. He expects the Argentinians will not accept the latest UK proposals, but will come back tomorrow with suggested changes. Henderson anticipates that these in turn will be unacceptable to the British and that the UN Secretary General will thereupon declare his mediation mission at an end. Henderson intimated that a major UK assault on the main island would ensue on the heels of the SYG's declaration; he predicted with confidence that the operation would be successful and that the battle—while possibly involving high casualties on both sides—would be over “sooner rather than later.” Henderson thought that when the assault takes place there will be pressure in the UN Security Council for a simple ceasefire without withdrawal (which would be unacceptable to the UK) and that—in his “personal view”—the time would then be appropriate for the US again to come forward as the only power capable of bringing about a settlement.

[Omitted here is material unrelated to the conflict in the South Atlantic.]

¹ Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, Very Sensitive Correspondence Files of Alexander M. Haig, Jr., 1981–1982, Lot 83D288, Evening Reading—May 1982. Secret; Sensitive.