

297. Message From British Foreign Secretary Pym to Secretary of State Haig<sup>1</sup>

London, May 26, 1982

*Begins:*

Thank you very much for the message which I received yesterday morning.<sup>2</sup> You have raised some very important and difficult questions.

I do of course understand the danger of Argentina turning towards the Soviet Union. And we in London are naturally concerned about the risk of Argentine military strikes against the Falkland Islands after we have repossessed them. I was particularly grateful for your generous and important offer of an American battalion to help in deterring any Argentine move to invade the Islands again in the future. We are thinking hard about all these problems.

In the meantime I should like to give you something of the flavour of the political situation here.<sup>3</sup> With the continued refusal of Argentina to negotiate seriously and with the establishment of the British bridge-head in the Falklands, there has been a major change in parliamentary and public opinion in Britain. It would no longer be realistic to ask people here to accept the ideas of an interim administration or mutual withdrawal from the Falklands. They are just not political starters now. After the events of recent days, and the British losses as well as our military progress, what people want to see is the repossession of the Islands and the restoration of British administration. The achievement of those will of course enable us to consult the Islanders in due time about their wishes for the future.

One question I am therefore considering is whether some of the ideas mentioned in your message, and particularly your offer of a

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, Files of Alexander M. Haig, Jr., 1981–1982, Lot 82D370, (3) Falklands Crisis 1982. UK Secret. A stamped notation at the top of the message indicates that Haig saw it.

<sup>2</sup> See Document 294.

<sup>3</sup> In telegram 11615 from London, May 25, the Embassy provided its own assessment of the Thatcher government's outlook: "Thatcher wants to take the Islands fast. She also may want us to help Britain keep them. Military stalemate or a frontal assault with high casualties might heighten Thatcher's interest in a ceasefire and negotiations. But she forcefully rejected a ceasefire Tuesday in the Commons and it is far from clear she envisages early negotiations." "In reconquest," the assessment continued, "we should not expect magnanimity. On the contrary, Thatcher will want to celebrate a victory that will be a political triumph." The "Foreign Office and probably Pym would be glad to see Britain eventually rid of the Islands and back to its real business in this world." "Indeed, we are told, the Foreign Office favors the Secretary's proposal, but doubts Thatcher will buy it." (Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Falkland File 05/25/1982)

battalion, could be used at a somewhat later stage. I may want to come back to you on this.

Meanwhile, let me stress that I am very conscious of the need for Britain and the US to maintain the best possible relations with the Latin America countries—especially the moderates. I have spoken today on the BBC Latin American Service in terms which I hope will go down well in those countries. The Prime Minister and I have been in contact with our opposite numbers in Brasil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Peru and elsewhere. British Ambassadors throughout the area have today been instructed to make approaches about the OAS meeting later this week.

I greatly value our exchanges of messages and your frequent talks with Nicko Henderson.<sup>4</sup> Without your support, things would be far harder for us in these difficult days.

*Ends.*

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<sup>4</sup> Henderson sent a handwritten note to Haig regarding Pym's message on May 25: "I expect Walter [Stoessel] and Larry [Eagleburger] passed on the personal message: that Francis found plenty of food for thought in your message, however different the present mood in London. Francis asks me to tell you personally how much he values your frank talks with me which enables him to keep in touch with your thoughts. So, they certainly are considering your ideas in London; and the way you have expressed them has forestalled any nervousness." (Department of State, Executive Secretariat, Files of Alexander M. Haig Jr., 1981–1982, Lot 82D370, (3) Falklands Crisis 1982)