

312. Information Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State-Designate for European Affairs (Burt) to Secretary of State Haig¹

Washington, May 28, 1982

SUBJECT

Thatcher's Approach to the Falklands

You will have seen Ed Streator's telegrams from London relating his conversations in the last 48 hours with FCO Permanent Under Secretary Antony Acland and Conservative Party Deputy Leader Willie Whitelaw (attached).² Messages make it abundantly clear that Mrs. Thatcher is determined to achieve a military victory in the Falklands before taking any decisions on next steps.

These conversations tell me that any comprehensive U.S. proposal for ending the dispute is simply not in the cards in London for now. Indeed, if we put forward such a proposal, we are likely to elicit an immediate rejection from Thatcher and sour the atmosphere for the President's meeting with her in Versailles next week and his visit to Britain.

Instead, I believe that we should concentrate our efforts on persuading the British to stop short of a total humiliation of Argentina. (If I remember correctly, Lincoln let the Confederates retain their horses and the officers kept their swords.) If we try for much more than that now, as was envisaged in the paper you saw this morning, I fear that we will come up entirely empty.³ Thus, I suggest that you focus Nicko's attention on the question of how the U.K. might act in the context of an imminent military victory to leave the Argentines with a shred of dignity and a barely plausible denial that they had been conquered by British force of arms.

¹ Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, S/S Special Handling Restrictions Memos 1979-1983, Lot 96D262, ES Sensitive May 25-31 1982. Secret; Sensitive. Drafted by Blackwill.

² Not found attached. In telegram 11986 from London, May 28, Streator conveyed a summary of his May 28 meeting with Acland. In addition to expressing Thatcher's desire for a "quick, clean military victory" and stating that "there are no plans to resume negotiations of any kind," Acland also informed Streator of the Prime Minister's "interest in meeting with the President during the Versailles Summit for an extended discussion of the Falklands issue." (Department of State, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Miscellaneous Files, March 1981-February 1983, Lot 83D210, Falklands [Folder 1]) Streator's May 27 conversation with Whitelaw was described in telegram 11904 from London, May 28. (Ibid.)

³ See the attachment, Document 308.