

Do you surrender Mr Hunt? You're a reasonable man

Simon Winchester, our correspondent, was in Port Stanley when the Argentine invasion force landed in the Falkland Islands. This is his chronology of events immediately before, during and after their arrival.

Thursday, Falkland Islands time

1630. Interview with Mr Dick Baker, the Falklands Chief Secretary, cancelled. "Sorry, I have to go to an urgent at Government House", he told me.

1805. Meeting at Government House ends. No comments. Faces very grave.

2005. Mr Rex Hunt, the Governor, telephones *The Times* in an attempt to get on the radio with an important announcement. Will you please come and see me at the Government House?"

2015. Mr Hunt on the radio warns of the possibility of invasion, alerts the Royal Marines, calls up all members of the Falklands Islands Defence Force, closes schools, orders radio station to stay on the air. "I expect to declare a state of emergency before dawn. I urge you all to remain indoors. Let us see what the authorities are resolute and law-abiding people."

2035. In interview with Governor, he says there are indications that an Argentine naval task force could be off Cape Horn at 0300 hours on Friday. Obstacles have been placed on the airfield. The doctor is preparing the hospital. The Governor's personal aircraft has been flown to the racecourse.

2130. We interview Hector Gilbert and Roberto Gamem, senior Argentine airforce officers on the island. They deny any knowledge of an impending invasion, offer us whisky.

2135. Some 20 part-time Falkland Islands troops learning weapons drill at Stanley drill hall. They wear SLRs and light machine-guns.

2200. *Pomp and Circumstance* March played on Radio Falkland.

Friday, Falkland Islands time

0030. Radio Argentina broadcasts: "The Malvinas will be ours by dawn. All military leave cancelled. Hercules

transport planes being sent to the southern bases. President Galtieri will address the nation."

0035. Governor Hunt on radio. Reports United Nations Security Council meeting but "as I speak there is no indication other than that the Argentine task force will be at Cape Pembroke by dawn. Please do not go and see for yourselves."

0400. Mr Baker and Royal Marines arrive at our house to arrest all Argentine guests. 0415. The Governor declares a state of emergency. On the radio he says "Anyone seen on the streets will be arrested. The morale of the Royal Marines and the Falkland Islands Defence Force is terrific. I am proud to be their Commander-in-Chief."

0440. We arrive at Government House after several changes from the marines. We establish ourselves in a private house 100 ft from the main building, belonging to the Argentine Consul and the Governor's private secretary.

0550. Governor says on radio that an aircraft carrier, a destroyer and three other ships have been spotted by the marines and Mr Basil Biggs, the lighthouse keeper at Cape Pembroke.

0608. Invasion begins. Confused shooting heard from the east of Government House. A rocket hits the ridge to the south of us.

0620. Very heavy firing. Spanish voice shouts: "Mr Hunt is a traitor. The island has been taken over by Argentine marines". More shooting and mortar fire. A rocket smokes through the wall of our refuge, narrowly missing one of our number. "We want you to come out or we'll burn you. You are surrounded. Do you surrender? You are a reasonable man."

0630. Royal Marine shouts from the darkness: "No, the Governor will not surrender."

0640. More heavy firing, and constant explosions of grenades, bursts of heavy and light machine-gun fire, and bullets lighting the dawn sky.

0710. Governor on radio: "Government House is virtually surrounded. There are five armoured personnel carriers with 30mm cannons on their way to us. We are under attack by the Argentine vehicles. It is very hectic, with lots of shooting. There is heavy mortar fire. They are trying to attack the power station."

0720. Civilians call into the



Occupation force: Argentine marines guarding Falkland Islands Company offices in Port Stanley.

radio station. Rhoda says: "Lots of armoured cars up here, quite colourful really." 0735. Dr Daniel from the hospital reports: "All the patients and staff OK. We are preparing breakfast. No one is hurt that we know of."

0736. Governor Hunt: "We are well and truly pinned down now. They have 30mm cannon on us. We don't have a chance. I'll talk to them, but I'm not surrendering to the bloody Argies!"

0816. Air Vice-Commodore Gilbert on radio: "I want to speak to the commander of the invasion force because I am the peacemaker. Tell him to come to the Town Hall with a white flag."

0820. Tom and Gwen Davis, from Newcastle upon Tyne, report two mortar shells hit their house on the airport road. "A terrific bang. Everything started falling apart. Water tank broken, the central heating is all shot through. But we are OK."

0827. Commanding Officer of Argentine forces agrees to meet Señor Gilbert outside the Roman Catholic church by the Town Hall.

0835. Transport aircraft reported to be flying into airport.

0900. Cassefire called. Shooting stops. BBC World Service says invasion "imminent."

whisky earlier that night — was walking towards Government House with a white flag. "Don't fire at the man with the white flag" the radio orders.

0759. Gilbert goes into Government House.

0800. BBC World News says: "Invasion of the Falkland Islands expected very soon."

0805. Very heavy firing. Deputation with white flag leaves Government House.

0814. Argentine flags seen flying over the Royal Marines headquarters at Moody Brook. It has evidently been captured.

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0915. Three half-track armoured personnel carriers with Argentine troops waving pass Government House. British martial music played on radio. Radio Argentina announces General Menendez to be the new Military Governor of the Malvinas.

0925. We see Royal Marines coming out of the bushes with their hands up, dropping their rifles, dropping their ammunition belts. We leave our house.

0940. Admiral Busser, deputy commander of the invasion force, said: "These Royal Marines of yours are brave men. They fought very competently. They are gentlemen. They fought very cunning superiority in order to prevent wounding people and to prevent damage to the population and to property. I appreciate the Governor is a very courageous man, too."

0950. Captured Royal Marines being brought in by sentries. Forced to lie on stomach while Argentine soldiers search them for concealed weapons. Major Mike Norman, the newly arrived commander, says: "Well, the Governor came second. But at least we came first in the body counts." No Royal Marines injured, but at least one Argentine officer killed, three injured, and three captured.

1000. I go into Governor House to find the Governor, Mr Wells and Mr Baker sitting amid the ruins of the

communications equipment and coding machines they have destroyed. Two Argentine soldiers stand guard over them. "I was treated with the utmost courtesy", Mr Hunt says. "I have refused to shake the hands of these officers. I have invited them to leave immediately. They are here illegally. I told them to go. I said it was reprehensible that Argentina should seize the island by force. The Admiral said he was an officer obeying instructions."

1005. The Governor says and the rest of the British diplomatic mission have been ordered to leave the Falklands this afternoon.

Between then and 1700 hours Argentine forces pour into the town, consolidating their hold on it.

1700. The Governor, in full colonial dress, appears at the door of Government House; in his official capacity as the red London Taxi, by his chauffeur, Mr Don Bonner, to the radio station for a farewell address.

1715. The Governor and his party are driven through the streets of Port Stanley on the way to the airport. Crowds, many in tears, wave farewell.

1900. The Governor, his wife Mavis, son Tony and the rest of his staff, board an Argentine Airforce Fokker jet bound for Montevideo. The captured Royal Marines board a Hercules transport for the same journey.

Frank Johnson in the Commons

A mood to test the Iron Lady's metal

Outside, the sunshine, breeze and pale blue sky of a London spring; inside, for three hours on Saturday, the House was swept by storms not seen in this place since (ominous and, Gray God, inapt comparison).

A huge queue had formed for the public gallery. The motive above all was no doubt curiosity. But there was also an air among the queuers of quiet, well-ordered concern. Argentina's equipment at times of the national crisis in the vast Buenos Aires rabble on behalf of whose depraved passions 1,800 Falkland Islanders have been set upon.

The civilized world will agree that we come best out of the comparison. Inside appeared to mouth something in agreement. Mr Foot made the only speech since he became leader that recaptured his old glory. Of course Mrs Thatcher was right when she said that, had the Government moved ships immediately. Mr Foot and his party would have raged at her for sabbat ranting. Like a Tory backbencher did not want to see that they were in no mood this day for the party game.

Throughout the debate, there was a cloud of gloom against what so many see as Britain's traditional energy, the foreign Office. "Someone or a blunderer," said Mr Cormack, a Tory.

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With his crinkly black hair and shiny moustache, Sir Bernard Braine looks, if he will forgive the expression, not like an Argentine. But he displays a healthy hatred of them. "The thought that our people are in the hands of these criminals makes an Englishman's blood boil," he boiled.

Of Mr Nott we will say little, except that he is a stout party member and the same sort of thing as a tricky lay and order one. Must stop any which hunt against the Government must make sure enough backbench speeches helping poor John Nott.

It was not to be as easy as that. Indignation swept and roared around the Government. Mrs Thatcher sat transfixed. She

understood the feelings involved all right. For we start, she undoubtedly shared them. Yet she was, at this opening phase of the crisis, still in the mercy of the experts who draft the briefs.

When she said: "Yesterday morning, at 8.23 am, we sent a telegram", she adopted a heroic tone as if what was sent at 8.23 am was a gunboat.

When Mr Enoch Powell reminded us that Mrs Thatcher had once gloried in the mood of the Iron Lady, and when he added: "In the next week or two the House, the nation and the Prime Minister herself will learn a what metal she is made", she looked across at him, nodded slowly, and appeared to mouth something in agreement.

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