

128. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Clark) to Secretary of State Haig¹

Washington, April 15, 1982

SUBJECT

MEMCON FOR SECRETARY HAIG ON PRESIDENT'S PHONE CALL TO
PRESIDENT GALTIERI

For your information in your meetings with President Galtieri, attached is a verbatim transcript of the President's phone conversation with President Galtieri tonight.² As you can see, it ran about 30 minutes.

¹ Source: Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Subject File, Memorandums of Conversation—President Reagan (April 1982). Secret. Printed from an uninitialed copy. The texts of the memorandum and the three referenced tabs were transmitted by the White House to Haig in Buenos Aires in telegram WH2019, April 16. (Reagan Library, Dennis Blair Files, Country File, Falklands Crisis 1982)

² According to the President's Daily Diary, Reagan spoke with Galtieri on a conference line from the White House Residence between 5:06 and 5:38 p.m., April 15. (Reagan Library, President's Daily Diary)

Galtieri did not raise much that was new nor did he bring up specific negotiating points. He did underline his obvious concern about the approaching British fleet. Galtieri also suggested unnamed nations might be exacerbating the conflict, and that U.S. media disclosures were unhelpful. The Argentine President ended with a rousing Argentine version of Western Hemisphere history and implied that the Argentines and North Americans share a common heritage of struggle against (British) colonialism.

President Reagan reiterated our search for a peaceful solution resolution of the dispute and called on the parties to be flexible and restrained in the coming days and weeks. The President also expressed his personal support for your mission.

I might add we read Galtieri as a worried man, but one not yet ready to retreat from previously established positions.

Word of the call leaked and as a consequence we prepared a short press release³ which deals only with generalities. Then, so as to relieve any concerns on Maggie's part we notified Prime Minister Thatcher of the call through a cabinet line message.⁴

³ Attached at Tab B but not printed. For the text of the press release, see *Public Papers: Reagan, 1982*, Book I, p. 476.

⁴ Attached at Tab C. See Document 129.

**Transcript of a Telephone Conversation Between
President Reagan and Argentine President Galtieri⁵**

Undated

President: This is Ronald Reagan.

Galtieri: Good afternoon, Mr. President. This is President Galtieri of Argentina speaking to you. It's a pleasure to greet you, Mr. President. I wonder if you hear me well. I can hear you very well.

President: Yes, I can hear just fine, and I know that you wish to continue our conversations. I'm pleased to have this opportunity to talk with you. I'm at your disposal.

Galtieri: Mr. President, I'm very glad to be able to speak to you once again as a follow-up to our first conversation that we had which, perhaps, was not very fruitful on the night of April 1⁶ at a time from our standpoint the essence of the issue was resolved and we were not in a position to accede immediately to your request. Can you hear me, Mr. President?

President: Yes, just fine.

Galtieri: Mr. President, I think it is highly important for Argentina, for us to have assistance, the assistance of your government, in this very difficult situation, that we are experiencing in our relationship with Great Britain which, among other things, is affecting the solidity of the Western World. Can you hear me, Mr. President?

President: I can hear you, yes, very well.

Galtieri: Mr. President, it is the profound wish, my personal wish, and that of the government, and the people of Argentina, to see to it that this situation does not continue to deteriorate. And it is furthermore our wish that with the assistance of the United States, that both countries seek an acceptable solution within the framework of UN Resolution 502 taking into account the whole background of this problem that goes back 150 years both from the standpoint of the bilateral relationship as well as all that has been debated, all that has been, the way the problem has been dealt with, the whole record of the UN in its debates of the problem of the past 16 years with reference to the issue of decolonization around the world. Did you read me, Mr. President?

President: Yes, I have all of that.

⁵ No classification marking.

⁶ See Document 41.

President: Was that all the President wanted to say BEFORE, or do you want a response from me now or does he have more?

Galtieri: Mr. President, going on for one more paragraph, if you would allow me, I also wish to have you realize that with the advance of the British fleet toward the South Atlantic region we feel that there is an increasingly dangerous situation, not only between our two countries, between the two countries involved in the South Atlantic, but it also our concern that this issue not deteriorate to a point where other nations might become involved and that this might not become tangled up and exacerbated by outside interests. We wish to continue the good relationships that have been established between our two governments, your administration and my administration, over recent times, relationships which have become so close, Mr. President, and for this reason we wish to continue this relationship with reference to all aspects of the international scene and within this context it is my fear that if the British continue their hostilities in the direction of the South Atlantic region the situation may slip out of our grasp; may slip out of our control and become an extremely delicate issue for the world at large. Did you understand me, Mr. President?

President: Yes, let me just say I'm committed to a peaceful resolution of this dispute. This is important to us because as I've said both countries involved, yours and Great Britain, are friends of ours so our good offices will continue to be extended to you both. Now, Secretary Haig will be arriving in Buenos Aires in a few hours to continue our efforts, and he is my personal representative and I have full faith and confidence in him. Now, Mr. President, I am committed wholeheartedly to a peaceful resolution of this dispute. I agree that a war in this hemisphere between two Western nations, both friendly to the United States, is unthinkable. It would be a tragedy and disaster for the Western world, and a bitter legacy for future generations of Argentines, Britons, and Americans. The only one who could profit from such a war would be the Soviet Union and its slave state allies, and it would be a common misfortune for all the rest of us. So I hope that we can work out a solution to this. Over.

Galtieri: Thank you, Mr. President, I share your views. But with the passing of every hour and with the continuation of the blockade by Great Britain along our coasts and as the British fleet continues to advance toward the South Atlantic, I fear that whether we wish to see this or not, this may bring about some serious misfortune that we will not be in a position to pinpoint or to keep under control immediately and will have the consequence of aggravating the present situation. And this is why I think that we must be very careful in regard to this because it is obvious that there are attempts also on the part of the

American press⁷ and the world press as we noticed in some of the coverage yesterday, in particular to bring about some split in the very good relationships that have been established between our two countries in recent times; between our governments, our two governments, our two nations, and between our two administrations. For this reason I fear that as time passes we may be faced with certain events that would be very difficult to bring under control. It goes without saying, Mr. President, that I am thankful to you for dispatching Secretary Haig once again to Buenos Aires and, of course, I will again be in touch with him tomorrow and we will have lengthy conversations tomorrow to focus on this problem which is of grave concern to us. Over.

President: Mr. President, as I said, I sincerely hope that we all can reach an agreement soon. And I share your fears about some inadvertent act creating the trouble that you will be unable to retreat from. I know that you and the British Prime Minister are leaders of courage, principle and determination and we're going to need all of that in these days ahead. We're also going to need, though, flexibility and restraint from both you and the British. And, if we have that we can get through this together. I know we have a ways to go but there must be a just and peaceful solution to this very serious matter and one that, as I said the other night when I spoke to you, that takes into consideration the interests of those people living on the islands. And, Secretary Haig will be with you soon and I will be relaying what we have just said to my own staff here, and again you have my assurance about him and that he is my personal representative. It's a most sensitive situation and I want to assure you that I know others have used propaganda to try and indicate that there is some division between us. We are doing nothing to undermine our role as an honest broker in these talks. Peace, Mr. President, is our common cause. To preserve peace between our two good friends, you and Britain. That is my personal goal. And that is our single objective. We've been careful to maintain good relations with both you and the British, because if we didn't we couldn't continue to offer our help in this. At the same time, failure to live up to existing obligations, going beyond them, would jeopardize our ability to play an honest role. The role both Argentina and the United Kingdom want. So, I want you to know that we are maintaining this neutral attitude. I hope we can continue to, if fighting breaks out this will be much more difficult. I have undergone some criticism myself simply because we're trying to remain neutral. But I intend to do that as we continue to negotiate this and I just hope and pray that there will be no hostile act from either side while we continue to work this out.

⁷ See Document 115.

Galtieri: I thank you very much, Mr. President, I'm sure that you are aware that the purpose of this call was to continue the dialogue that we had initiated on the first of April for a direct communication between two presidents and to continue the cordial and friendly relationships in the understanding that has been developed between both countries in our search on behalf of the Western world for solutions to our problems in order to avoid any divisions or splits between us. I only wish to add, Mr. President, the following consideration. The people of the United States in 1776 (sic)⁸ and the Northern Hemisphere began their struggle against colonialism and achieved their independence. We, in the Southern Hemisphere, began this struggle in the last century, perhaps somewhat later than you did, and we achieved independence for our people and now on the 2nd of April 1982, we have tried to make this independence complete. Perhaps achieving complete independence, as I said, later than you did, Mr. President. I hope that you can appreciate our sentiments in this regard, Mr. President. Over.

President: I understand your concern and assure you again that we are going to stay in this with the sincere hope that we can help bring about a peaceful solution and maintain the friendship that we have with the nations of the Western world and I appreciate your calling me and look forward to hearing from Secretary Haig after you have had a chance to discuss matters with him and so I will say thank you again and good night.

Galtieri: Talk to you again, Mr. President, thank you very much.

Galtieri: Good night to you, Mr. President. We'll talk again, some time.

President: Good night.

⁸ As in the original. An erroneous reference to the beginning of the American Revolution in 1776.