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(sólo la parte relacionada con Malvinas).

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PRIME MINISTER

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ENGAGEMENTS

Q2. Mr. Geraint Howells

asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 April.

The Prime Minister

This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall preside at a meeting of the Cabinet later today. This evening I am giving a reception for those engaged in business, representing both management and the shop floor.

Mr. Howells

In view of the seriousness of the position in and around the Falkland Islands, has the Prime Minister any plans to invite the leaders of all the political parties in the House to Downing Street for discussions?

The Prime Minister

I have no such plans at present. Had the hon. Gentleman been in the House at the time he would have heard what the Leader of the Opposition said. We take it as our duty to keep the House as a whole as fully informed as possible.

Mr. George Gardiner

Will my right hon. Friend today undertake to consider with great caution any proposals from the Argentine, bearing in mind that if an aggressor is even half compensated for his aggression, that will be an encouragement to others to behave likewise?

The Prime Minister

I take my hon. Friend's point. It has been made strongly. That is the feeling on both sides of the House. Of course we shall try to seek a diplomatic solution, but we have to be true to our objectives. I cannot disguise from the House that the Argentine proposals at present before us fall short in some important respects of those objectives and of the requirements expressed in the House.

Mr. Foot

Will the right hon. Lady tell us when she will report to the House—in accordance with what she has said about such reports—on those proposals, on what they are officially and what the Government's views are about all of them? Will she tell us whether they are supported by the United States Administration or whether General Haig was merely acting as an intermediary in the matter?

The Prime Minister

The proposals are Argentine proposals. We are grateful to Mr. Haig for the patience and stamina that he has shown over the proposals, both in Buenos Aires and in his visits to this country, but they are Argentine proposals. He has kept us fully informed, when he has been able to do so, about precisely what they are. We now have full details. The right hon. Gentleman heard what I indicated a moment ago. We regard this as a stage in the negotiating process that must now be continued. We are examining the proposals very closely and will seek to put forward our own proposals to Mr. Haig. With that in mind, my right hon. Friend Francis Pym the Foreign Secretary plans to visit Washington on Thursday.

Mr. Foot

When will the right hon. Lady be reporting to the House again? I hope that in these discussions she [column 120] will also be taking into full account the proposals made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) about the implication of the United Nations. Does the right hon. Lady agree that, apart from the inherent justice of our cause, a major source of strength is that this country is acting in conformity with the United Nations charter and in pursuance of resolution No. 502? If the right hon. Lady and the Government follow up the proposals made by my right hon. Friend they could provide some alternatives to the specific proposals from the Argentine and also make sure that we continue to act in full conformity with the United Nations charter and our obligations under the charter.

The Prime Minister

I do not believe that there is much point in reporting to the House before my right hon. Friend has seen Mr. Haig in Washington. Among the many problems presented by the Argentine proposals is that they fail to provide that the Falkland Islanders should be able to determine their own destiny. The House has always said that the wishes of the islanders are paramount.

As regards the proposals put forward by Denis Healey the right hon. Member for Leeds, East that referred to United Nations administrators, we are in the process of one negotiation through Mr. Haig, and it would be better not to get our wires crossed but to go steadily forward on that proposal. I accept what the right hon. Gentleman said. We are trying to secure implementation of United Nations resolution No. 502, which is clear, but not so easy to implement. We also have rights on self-defence under article 51 of the charter.

Mr. Foot

I wish the right hon. Gentleman well on his visit to the United States. However, I am not at all certain that it will not be necessary for further reports to be made to the House in the meantime. Does the right hon. Lady agree that as these matters are fully discussed in other places there should be constant and persistent reports to the House of Commons?

The Prime Minister

There is no intention to hold up information in any way. The right hon. Gentleman, his right hon. Friends and Members have been extremely understanding of the fact that while negotiations are in progress it is difficult to give full details of them. I have indicated one important respect in which the Argentine proposals fall short of the objective of almost every hon. Member. I am here every Tuesday and Thursday, but we will make much fuller statements as often as we can.

Mr. St. John-Stevas

Is my right hon. Friend aware that her handling of the Falklands crisis with a combination of firmness and diplomacy has commanded the support of the vast majority of hon. Members? Is she further aware that her declaration this afternoon that despite the difficulties or shortcomings of the present proposals she will pursue resolutely a diplomatic solution to the crisis will also have the full support of most hon. Members?

The Prime Minister

I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. We remain committed to seeking a diplomatic solution if an acceptable one can possibly be found.

Mr. David Steel

The Prime Minister knows that she has all-party support for her determination to secure the removal of the Argentine from the islands, to secure implementation of the Security Council resolution and re-establish conditions in which the future of the islanders can be determined in the long-term. However, will the right [column 121]hon. Lady refrain from ascribing to the House as a whole her phrase about the paramountcy of the wishes of the islanders? Does she agree that while their wishes and interests are uppermost in our minds, the long-term issue is a paramount one for the House to resolve?

The Prime Minister

But the House, in exercising its duty, has always said, not only in these negotiations, but on many previous negotiations, that the wishes of the islanders are paramount. Many previous negotiations have been on the basis that the Argentines wanted what is called decolonisation—that has a particular meaning in United Nations terms—but they have not been able or willing to grant self-determination to the islanders.

Q3. Mr. Newens

asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 April.

The Prime Minister

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Newens

Does the right hon. Lady agree that it would be a great advantage to involve the United Nations more deeply? That would relieve the United States of the necessity to act in what is called an evenhanded fashion. If the United States adopted the same economic sanctions and brings the same pressure to bear on the Argentine as Western European countries and the Commonwealth have done, is it not a fact that that would have a moral and economic impact and would make a peaceful and diplomatic solution much more likely?

The Prime Minister

There is a clear mandatory resolution on record by the Security Council, which should have the force and effect of international law. At present it is not being implemented. Mr. Haig is trying to see that it is implemented. I believe that he is a very good and appropriate negotiator, but a negotiator must have credibility with both parties to the negotiations. It is in our interests that he should continue to have that credibility. However, we all know that the United States and this country are democracies.

Sir John Eden

Are the Government still determined to use whatever means are at their disposal to secure the withdrawal of the Argentine forces from the islands and to re-establish British administration before any question of a longer-term solution is entered into?

The Prime Minister

I confirm that that is our aim. Our strategy is to try to use diplomatic means, backed up by a task force, which continues steadily on its way.

Mr. Roy Jenkins

In view of the strong all-party support that the Government have rightly received during the past two and a half weeks, will the Prime Minister bear in mind that she will be expected to take future, I hope and believe, un-rushed decisions in an equally non-party way? Does she agree that that demands more than merely asking [column 122]the right hon. Gentleman the Paymaster General, as chairman of the Conservative Party, to a meeting of senior Ministers last night? Will the right hon. Lady seriously consider the proposition made by the hon. Member for Cardigan (Mr. Howells)?

The Prime Minister

I must confess that I had expected a more fundamental point from the right hon. Gentleman. On the last occasion that this point was raised the Leader of the Opposition said, rightly, that he would not find that the appropriate way to proceed. If the right hon. Gentleman wishes to see me—I am sure the same applies to my right hon. Friend Francis Pym the Foreign Secretary—about this matter I am always available to see hon. Members on these important issues.

Q4. Mr. John Townend

asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 20 April.

The Prime Minister

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Townend

Is my right hon. Friend aware that, despite the recent proposals, she has widespread support in the country for the stance she is taking to ensure that dictators cannot get by aggression what they fail to get by negotiation? In particular, in view of the Argentine record on human rights, does she agree that the suggestion to bring Argentine police in to the islands is not acceptable, because it could lead to the intimidation of the islanders?

The Prime Minister

My hon. Friend has enunciated a very important principle, not only for the people of the Falkland Islands, but for the people of many other territories which may be invaded if unprovoked aggression in this case succeeded. As to the police, my hon. Friend knows that there were only two police officers on the islands—it was a very law abiding place—and we are very much aware of the record of the present junta in Argentina.