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OD(SA)(82) 50th Meeting

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CABINET

DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND
THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

MINUTES of a Meeting held at
10 Downing Street on
THURSDAY 3 JUNE 1982 at 9.45 am

PRESENT

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
Prime Minister

The Rt Hon William Whitelaw MP
Secretary of State for the
Home Department

The Rt Hon Francis Pym MP
Secretary of State for Foreign
and Commonwealth Affairs

The Rt Hon John Nott MP
Secretary of State for Defence

The Rt Hon Cecil Parkinson MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
and Paymaster General

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT

The Rt Hon Sir Michael Havers QC MP
Attorney General

Admiral of the Fleet
Sir Terence Lewin
Chief of the Defence Staff

Sir Antony Acland
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Sir Michael Palliser
Cabinet Office

SECRETARIAT

Mr R L Wade-Gery
Mr A D S Goodall
Mr R L L Facer
Brigadier J A C G Eyre

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1. MILITARY ISSUES

THE CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF briefed the Sub-Committee on the latest military situation.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that it would be helpful to have legal advice on the feasibility under the Geneva Convention of affording the French Embassy access to Lt. Commander Astiz (who could have the services of a solicitor) before he was returned to Argentina from the United Kingdom.

The Sub-Committee -

Invited the Attorney General to consider the feasibility of affording the French Embassy access to Lt. Commander Astiz on the basis described in the Prime Minister's summing up.

2. POLITICAL ISSUES

The Sub-Committee had before them telegrams nos. 913-7 from the United Kingdom Representative at the United Nations, Sir Anthony Parsons, reporting the state of play on the ceasefire resolution tabled by Spain and Panama in the Security Council; and the draft of a possible message from the Prime Minister to General Galtieri calling for an unconditional Argentine withdrawal before the final assault on Port Stanley.

In discussion, there was agreement that Sir Anthony Parsons had been remarkably successful in presenting the United Kingdom's case at the United Nations. It was pointed out that a personal message from the Prime Minister to General Galtieri, calling on him to avoid unnecessary bloodshed by agreeing to an unconditional withdrawal of Argentine forces from the Falklands before the final British assault on Port Stanley began, could have a beneficial impact internationally both at the United Nations and, for example, at the Versailles Summit. It would serve to underline the British anxiety, already demonstrated in the Prime Minister's recent interviews with British television and in Sir Anthony Parsons' latest speech at the United Nations, to avoid further loss of life if at all possible. If, as seemed virtually certain, General Galtieri rejected it, it would help to put the onus of responsibility for further loss of life

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on Argentina. As against this, it was pointed out that the modalities of an Argentine withdrawal at the present stage of operations could be difficult and protracted; the effect on the morale of British Forces on the ground was uncertain; the message could be exploited by General Galtieri in order to gain more time, to insist once again on unacceptable conditions for an Argentine withdrawal or to try to involve himself in a direct dialogue with the Prime Minister.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, noted that lobbying of foreign governments represented on the Security Council along the lines recommended by Sir Anthony Parsons was already in hand and that a special effort would be made to secure Zaire's vote. The United Kingdom would be prepared, if necessary, to veto any unacceptable resolution. The pros and cons of a personal message to General Galtieri were finely balanced; but since acceptance of a British call to withdraw was probably incompatible with the survival of General Galtieri's government, there seemed no prospect that he would comply with it: instead he could be expected to seek to exploit it in ways disadvantageous to the United Kingdom both on the ground and internationally. After careful consideration, therefore, it was agreed that it would be preferable to send no message, but to rest on the position taken in her own television interviews and Sir Anthony Parsons' latest speech to the Security Council.

The Sub-Committee -

Took note.

Cabinet Office

3 June 1982

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