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OD(SA)(82)55th Meeting

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CABINET
DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE
SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND
THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

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MINUTES of a Meeting held at
10 Downing Street on
MONDAY 14 JUNE 1982 at 10.30 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 (Item 1)

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

Sir Robert Armstrong
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 Sub-Committee -

Took note.

2. POLITICAL ISSUES

The Sub-Committee had before them a memorandum by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary (OD(SA)(82) 62) on the future administration of the Falkland Islands, covering two notes by Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials; a memorandum by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary (OD(SA)(82) 66) on how to achieve a complete cessation of hostilities in the Falklands conflict; and a telegram from Her Majesty's Ambassador at Paris, Sir John Fretwell, reporting a conversation with the Secretary General of the Quai d'Orsay, Monsieur Gutmann.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that public opinion at home and on the Falklands would expect Mr Hunt to return as soon as possible after Port Stanley had been reoccupied. But it would be inappropriate for him in the new circumstances to exercise the responsibilities of Commander-in-Chief or to use the full panoply of a colonial governor; he might be given the title of Civil Commissioner, and the commander of United Kingdom forces that of Military Commissioner. Further consideration should be given urgently to the question of titles and responsibilities, including the wording of the Order in Council needed to give effect to them. Looking to the longer term, the future shape of the Islands' administration could not be decided until the circumstances prevailing after British repossession were known. Further work would be needed on the constitutional implications of the possibilities discussed in OD(SA)(82) 62: but it would be right to think in terms of moving towards a greater degree of self-government for the islanders. Meanwhile the first priority would be the rehabilitation of the Islands. Friendly governments, notably the

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United States and France, should be firmly discouraged from thinking in terms of a negotiation between the United Kingdom and Argentina about the Islands' future status, as provided for in the various draft settlements considered before the British landing on the Falkland Islands. The Argentines had been unwilling to accept any settlement on terms that would have been possible for the United Kingdom, and now they had lost their chance: if Argentine troops now withdrew from the Islands, it would be as a consequence of repossession effected by British military action to expel Argentine forces in exercise of the right of self-defence, and not as a result of voluntary Argentine withdrawal in compliance with Security Council Resolution 502. But the sanctions introduced by the European Community and others were no doubt seen in the countries concerned as justified by Resolution 502, and care should be taken not to give the impression that the United Kingdom regarded Resolution 502 as a dead letter. It would be right to open a dialogue with the United States Government about arrangements to repatriate Argentine prisoners of war; but it was too early for a more general discussion with the Americans: the problems involved in achieving a comprehensive ceasefire and devising satisfactory arrangements for the Islands' longer term future needed further careful consideration.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, in consultation with the Defence Secretary, to make contingency arrangements for Mr Rex Hunt, accompanied by the two Falkland Islands Councillors at present in the United Kingdom, to return to the Islands at the earliest appropriate moment after the British reoccupation of Port Stanley.
2. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to consider how Mr Hunt's responsibilities should be defined and with what title he should return, and to prepare a draft statement to be made by the Prime Minister to Parliament announcing his return and the basis on which the Islands would be administered in the period immediately following British repossession.
3. Invited the Attorney General, on consultation with the the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, to advise on the terms of the Order in Council needed to put the foregoing arrangements into effect.

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4. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, in consultation with the Defence Secretary, to initiate discussions with the United States authorities about arrangements for the repatriation of the majority of Argentine prisoners of war.

5. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to send instructions to Her Majesty's Ambassador at Paris to rebut French suggestions that it might soon be appropriate for the United Kingdom to make concessions to the Argentine Government on the sovereignty issue.

Cabinet Office

14 June 1982

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