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CONVERSATION BETWEEN HEADS OF DELEGATION ON THE EVENING OF FRIDAY, 4 JUNE 1982

Nothing of much importance was said over dinner. After the meal Heads of Delegation with the interpreters (Japan, France, Germany, and myself) sat round a table for coffee in the ante room and President Mitterrand invited the Prime Minister to give an account of the Falklands situation. This she did starting from President Peron's campaign to take over the Falklands and finishing by saying that when peace returned we should try to re-establish friendly relations with Argentina and the other Latin American countries and would try to bring the Falklands to self-government; there were deposits of petroleum and oil, and great possibilities for development if this could be carried out without interference.

There were then a number of questions, and various Heads of Delegation, notably President Reagan, commented on the course of events since the invasion. President Reagan said that we could not possibly condone armed aggression as a means of solving problems. If so, there were as many as 50 outstanding boundary disputes on the American Continent. So the issue was not so much that of the Falklands as that armed aggression must not be seen to succeed. The Prime Minister agreed, thanking all her colleagues for their support adding that in the cases of Afghanistan and Cambodia there was nothing we could do, but this time we could and had to act. In reply to questions, she added that she had very little hope that even at this stage the Argentine Government would agree to withdraw their troops until they were forced to.

Discussion then turned to what the Government's present would do supposing that Port Stanley was re-taken and the Junta refused an armistice. The United Kingdom obviously would maintain its position but what action if any could be expected from the Soviet Union and other Latin American states; would this lead to increased Soviet or Cuban influence in South America? Mr. Trudeau asked whether, if there were no armistice the United Kingdom would expect sanctions to continue for 5, 10, 15 years. The Prime Minister said no. She thought we could get armistice but she hoped that sanctions would be maintained in order to help us to do so. She did not believe that there was any great threat of increased Soviet influence nor of serious alienation of third world countries, even in Latin America.

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There was then a rather rambling discussion on these lines during which President Reagan said that most Latin American Governments were afraid of the introduction of communism through the Soviet Union and Cuba. He thought with Mrs. Thatcher that the situation could be restored but wondered whether a promise of western help in economic matters might help to persuade the Argentinians to agree to an armistice. Chancellor Schmidt asked specifically whether when Port Stanley was re-taken would the United Kingdom attack the mainland if armistice were refused? The Prime Minister said not: the air bases on the mainland had been a threat but her objective was to re-possess the Falklands which could then be defended from a firm land base and the threat from the sea would become less serious and could be contained by the use of a nuclear submarine. Meanwhile, intelligence was being supplied to the Argentinians from Soviet satellites, ships and air reconnaissance. But the main reconnaissance danger was that mounted by the Argentinians themselves from the mainland in Boeing 707s.

Chancellor Schmidt returned to the idea of an approach, after the re-possession of the Islands on the lines put forward by President Reagan but added that such an approach must be by consensus; if it were made and the solidarity of the powers concerned then collapsed, the situation would be worse than if the attempt had not been made. He was particularly concerned about the attitude of Spain which was now a member of NATO. He enquired whether the British idea of an armistice would include anything about sovereignty and the Prime Minister replied that it would not; if after the fall of Port Stanley the Argentinians were prepared to negotiate with the United Kingdom well and good; if not then the idea of an approach by the United States, Canada, the European Community and NATO on the lines suggested might very well be valuable. Mr. Suzuki then said he wished to make a statement. He said he thought it would be wise for the United Kingdom if possible to reach an armistice with the Argentinians after the re-capture of Port Stanley. Japan would support United States efforts and United Nations efforts to reach a settlement on the lines of Security Council Resolution 502. The Japanese Government had already urged Argentina to comply with this Resolution and would continue to work towards an armistice.

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President Mitterrand then brought the discussion to a conclusion. It was decided that a message to the Argentine Government on the lines suggested must be sent collectively but that it was too soon to do anything now and that it would be damaging to allow the idea to become known before the re-possession of the Islands. On the other hand it was important that the approach should be made immediately after the fall of Port Stanley, within 24 or 36 hours, before attitudes had time to harden and that the Foreign Minister should be invited to discuss the content of the message and the way in which it should be delivered.

(The above is a much abbreviated and rather impressionistic note; it is of course impossible to do a simultaneous whispered interpretation and take detailed notes at the same time).

P. L. CARTER

5 June 1982