

Margaret Thatcher and Her Role in the Falklands War

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce popisuje roli Margaret Thatcher během sporu o Falklandy, který vyústil ve válečný konflikt v roce 1982. Cílem bylo popsat nároky obou zemí na ostrovy a popsat jakou roli hrála Margaret Thatcher během vyjednávání, především s americkým ministrem zahraničí, Alexandrem Haigem, americkým prezidentem Ronaldem Reaganem a Radou bezpečnosti během snahy o vyřešení tohoto sporu. Tím, jak musela konat důležitá rozhodnutí a hájila zájmy své země, se její role ukázala jako velmi významná.

Klíčová slova: Argentina, Diplomacie, Falklandy, Leopoldo Galtieri, Margaret Thatcher, Spojené království, Válka o Falklandy

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the role of Margaret Thatcher during the dispute over the Falkland Islands, which resulted in the war in 1982. The aim was to explain the claims of both countries for the islands and describe the role Margaret Thatcher played during the negotiations. Especially during the talks between her, Alexander Haig, the United States Secretary of State, the American President Ronald Reagan, and the Security Council as they tried to resolve the dispute between the United Kingdom and Argentina. Her role proved to be significant as she made crucial decisions and defended the interests of her country.

Keywords: Argentina, Diplomacy, Falkland Islands, Falklands War, Leopoldo Galtieri, Margaret Thatcher, United Kingdom

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's/Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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INTRODUCTION

The events of 1982 were significant not only for the United Kingdom but to the whole world. Two countries were fighting over small islands in the middle of nowhere. The Falkland Islands had been under British rule for more than a hundred years. However, the peaceful atmosphere changed when Leopoldo Galtieri, and his military junta, came to power in Argentina. Galtieri and his men decided to take the islands back. They expected the takeover to go without any significant setbacks. They believed the islands should be Argentinean, and they did not see why Great Britain, located hundreds of kilometres away, would fight for the small islands in the middle of the South Atlantic Ocean. Their expectations might have been correct if it was not for Margaret Thatcher. The well-known prime minister was inspired by Winston Churchill and even got the nickname “The Iron Lady” for her intransigence and decisiveness. She decided to fight for the islanders who felt British and did not want to be a part of Argentina, even though she knew that the fight for the islands would be challenging due to many factors. What followed were weeks of intense diplomatic negotiations and even fighting, but thanks to Thatcher and her government, the islands remained British. Thatcher’s political career was in many ways controversial. Nevertheless, one thing is certain. The islanders and many British people will see her decision to defend the islands as a highlight of her political career.

1 THE LIFE OF MARGARET THATCHER

1.1 Early life

1.1.1 Childhood and education

Margaret Hilda Roberts was born on the 13 of October 1925 to Alfred Roberts and Beatrice Stephenson in Grantham.¹ Her father was a successful businessman and owned a corner shop in Grantham. Thanks to his success, he eventually moved into local politics, where he represented the Chamber of Trade and was eventually elected as an alderman in 1943. It is also believed that most of the values Thatcher lived by during her life were installed by her father, hard work, moral sense, and need for public service.² Religion played a significant role in Thatcher's upbringing. Not only did she regularly attend the Sunday service but also Sunday school.³ Thatcher received excellent education. She attended Hangtower Road Country Elementary School, which regarded as one of the best in her local town. After few years, she moved to Kesteven and Grantham Girls' School as she won a scholarship to study there. In 1943, she got the opportunity to study at Somerville, Oxford. Thatcher studied chemistry for four years and got her bachelor's degree. During her last years there, she started to focus on politics. She joined the Oxford Union Conservative Association. This decision did not make her the most popular person at Somerville, as it was predominantly left-wing, and there were not many conservatives. Nevertheless, the negative voices around her only made her stronger, as she believed that others were wrong and she was right. In 1945 she made her first recorded political speech, and once she returned to Grantham, she started working for the Conservatives and acted as a warm-up speaker. In 1946 she became the president of the Oxford Union Conservative Association. When she left Oxford, she worked for eighteen months at BX Plastics as a laboratory researcher. Although, she was focusing on her political career in the background.

1.1.2 The beginnings of her political career

Her efforts resulted in her first run for Parliament in 1950. Unfortunately, she was not successful. In 1951 she married Dennis Thatcher, a wealthy businessman who supported

¹ John Campbell, *The Iron Lady* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), chap. 1.

² Campbell, *The Iron Lady*, chap. 1.

³ Archie Brown, *The Human Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), chap. 6.

Margaret's political ambitions.⁴ After their marriage, Thatcher started studying law and in 1953 passed the bar exam.⁵ She finally managed to enter the House of Commons in 1959 as she won the Conservative seat of Finchley in North London⁶ and held the seat until 1992.⁷

1.1.3 Entering the office

From the early stages of her political career, Thatcher showed her how prescient she could be in some cases and oblivious in others.⁸ In 1961 she became a parliamentary secretary in the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance for three years.⁹ In 1970 she became Secretary of State for Education and Science. The economic situation at that time was not good, and the Government had to save money. Edward Heath, who was the prime minister at the time, asked Thatcher to make cuts. Thatcher decided to raise the price of school meals and stop the supply of milk to children over the age of seven.¹⁰ This decision proved to be unpopular in the public eye and led to the cries of "Thatcher, the milk snatcher" among people.¹¹ After her stint as the Secretary of State for Education and Science, which took four years, she decided to challenge Heath for the party leadership. Her challenge was successful, and in February 1975, she was elected as the party's leader.¹²

1.2 The first spell as a prime minister

The Conservatives won the elections in 1979, and Thatcher became the first female prime minister in the country's history. Thatcher's entry was not easy as she had to deal with strikes after the winter of discontent. Although it left Thatcher in a difficult situation, she probably would not have won the elections without the winter of discontent.¹³ This period resulted from the bad income policy by the previous prime minister James Callaghan and unemployment.¹⁴ The country was in decline. What Thatcher opted for was a complete

⁴ Cambell, *The Iron Lady*, chap. 2.

⁵ Earl A. Reitan, *The Thatcher Revolution: Margaret Thatcher, John major, Tony Blair, and the Transformation of Modern Britain, 1979-2001* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), chap. 1.

⁶ Cambell, *The Iron Lady*, chap. 2.

⁷ Reitan, *The Thatcher Revolution*, chap. 1.

⁸ Claire Berlinski, *There Is No Alternative: Why Margaret Thatcher Matters* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 348.

⁹ Cambell, *The Iron Lady*, chap. 3.

¹⁰ Cambell, *The Iron Lady*, chap. 5.

¹¹ David Cannadine, *Margaret Thatcher: A Life and Legacy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 18.

¹² Cambell, *The Iron Lady*, chap. 1.

¹³ David Brown, Rober Crowcroft and Gordon Pentland, *The Oxford Handbook of British Political History, 1800-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 162.

¹⁴ Reitan, *The Thatcher Revolution*, chap. 1.

revolution of the system. She wanted to change from a planned economy to a market economy. She wanted free enterprise, limited union power, and to expand the welfare state. One of the first tasks she had to deal with was the need to reduce inflation.¹⁵ Her government reduced direct taxation to increase personal incentives and cut public spending. Thatcher also made cuts in the National Health Service and later even in higher education. Even though her actions had a slow start, eventually, they worked out. Thatcher's reforms were control of local government spending, sale of council houses and reform of the rates, and the property tax on homes and business.¹⁶ Especially her decision of selling the council houses was one of the most important social revolutions. Not only people had the opportunity to own their own houses, but it also helped to convert some people into Conservatives. In 1983 the inflation reached 4.5% and stayed around 5% in the next five years.¹⁷ On the other hand, the actions Thatcher took to reduce the inflation led to the rise of unemployment, which negatively affected her popularity. Unemployment was one of the most significant drawbacks of her political career as the unemployment rose to 11.8% in 1986¹⁸. In the polls, the satisfaction with her work was around 25%, and the satisfaction with the Government was around 18%. Another step Thatcher took was privatisation. In the first stage, she decided to sell companies without strong political constituencies, for example, British Oil, Associated British Ports or National Freight Corporation. The privatisation aimed to create competition on a free market and bring funds to the Government. By 1989 the privatisation brought more than six billion pounds to the Government.¹⁹ The success of privatisation was one of the factors that helped her to be re-elected in 1986.²⁰

1.2.1 Dealing with strikes

Another theme around Thatcher's first term as a prime minister were strikes. She did not want the Government to intervene in the strikes. She believed the workers themselves had the responsibility for their jobs, and if they price out their employer, the works would be those who would lose their jobs and therefore suffer. The strikes got so bad, especially in the nationalised industries, that the Government had to intervene, for example, in the case of British Steel²¹ or British Leyland. The strikes were on only among the industrial companies

¹⁵ Cambell, *The Iron Lady*, chap. 3.

¹⁶ Reitan, *The Thatcher Revolution*, chap. 2.

¹⁷ Cambell, *The Iron Lady*, chap. 3.

¹⁸ Reitan, *The Thatcher Revolution*, chap. 4.

¹⁹ Reitan, *The Thatcher Revolution*, chap. 2.

²⁰ Cambell, *The Iron Lady*, chap. 15.

²¹ Reitan, *The Thatcher Revolution*, chap. 2.

and the Nation Health System. Thatcher's way of dealing with the strikes was The Employment Act of 1982, making it illegal to engage in illegal labour practices.²²

One of Thatcher's biggest strengths was her ability to express herself. Especially the use of ethos and pathos was something she used often and well. She frequently used her background as an example which helped her to connect with people.²³

1.2.2 Political soulmate

Throughout Thatcher's political life, she had a close ally in the American President Ronald Reagan. Their relationship was good from the first moment they met in 1975. Peter Hannaford, who was Reagan's campaign adviser, remembers that there was perfect chemistry between them and that their first conversation was as if they knew each other for years, even though it was the first time they met. Even Reagan later admitted that he liked Thatcher straight away. The relationship was on such a level that Thatcher even called him her friend.²⁴ Their good relationship could also be seen in their correspondence as Thatcher referred to Reagan as "Ron" and Reagan to Thatcher as "Margaret".²⁵ They had in common not only similar opinions on the economy, military, or philosophical thoughts. They were both determined to bring their beliefs to reality. At Reagan's funeral, Thatcher said the following.

It all worked because he was more afraid of me than I was of him." Although the situations they found themselves in were not always easy, the respect for each other always remained.²⁶

²² Andrew Gamble, *The Free Economy and the Strong State* (New York: Palgrave, 1994), 109.

²³ Andrew S. Crines, Timothy Heppell, and Peter Dorey, *The Political Rhetoric and Oratory of Margaret Thatcher* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 159-160.

²⁴ Richard Aldous, *Reagan and Thatcher: The Difficult Relationship* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), chap. 1.

²⁵ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), US: Reagan letter to MT (Reagan accepts invitation to visit the UK) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/124328>.

²⁶ Aldous, *Reagan and Thatcher: The Difficult Relationship*, chap. 3.

2 THE HISTORY OF THE FALKLANDS ISLANDS

2.1 The discovery

The islands are situated about four hundred miles from the east coast of Argentina. They consist of two large islands, West Falkland and East Falkland and about 200 smaller islands.²⁷

The Spanish claim that they were the first ones to step a foot on the islands. They believe that the Spanish ship referred to as *Incogníta* discovered the islands. The ship got lost during its journey and spent some time in the area described as similar to today's Fox Bay on the islands.

As the Spanish claim was questionable, it is generally believed that the islands were discovered in 1592 by John Davis. Nevertheless, even a British author, Mary Cowell, believes that there is a possibility that a Spanish ship wintered there in 1540.²⁸

There was no permanent settlement on the islands until Louis Antoine de Bougainville arrived on the islands in 1764 with the permission of the French government to colonise the islands.²⁹

In 1765 the British government sent Captain John Byron to proclaim the islands as a property of King George III. Byron landed at Port Egmont on the Saunders Island, approximately eighty miles from Port Louis. He raised the Union flag, proclaimed that the whole island group is called The Falklands Islands and left. A year later, in 1766, Captain Macbride established the first British settlement of hundred people in Port Egmont, a place now known as Saunders Settlement. It is believed that the Brits were not aware of the French settlement at that point.

When the Spanish became aware of the French settlement, they objected to the French government that the islands are part of a Spanish colony, The Royalty of la Plata. The French agreed with the Spanish claim and handed the islands over. The Spanish only had to pay compensation for Bougainville's expenses. The Spanish appointed a governor who settled in Port Louis, which was renamed, Puerto Soledad. Only when British and Spanish ships met in the Falkland Sound in 1769, the Spanish learned about the British settlement at the

²⁷ Francis Mackay and Jon Cooksey, *Pebble Island: The Falklands War, 1982* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2007), 15.

²⁸ Lowell S. Gustafson, *The Sovereignty Dispute over The Falkland (Malvinas) Islands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 3.

²⁹ Gustafson, *The Sovereignty Dispute over The Falkland (Malvinas) Islands*, 8.

Falkland Islands. Both countries started war preparations, but when France refused to support the Spanish claim, a compromise was made to return to the conditions before 1770, thus allowing a British settlement in Port Egmont.³⁰

As the Spanish started to lose their power during the beginning of the 19th century, they left the islands in 1811, leaving a leaden plaque stating their claim of the islands.³¹

In 1820 Argentines sent Colonel Daniel Jewitt to the islands, who claimed the islands in the name of Argentina.³² In 1831 the Americans destroyed a fort in Puerto Soledad because the Argentines were against the Americans hunting seals in the area around the islands. The Argentinean governor was evicted in the process, and when the Americans left the islands, they proclaimed the islands to be free of all government. Nevertheless, the Argentines appointed a new governor a year later. In 1833 a British warship, HMS Clio, came to the islands and proclaimed British sovereignty and requested the Argentinian settlers to leave. The British stayed on the islands with the main settlement at Stanley Harbour.³³

2.2 First disputes

Since the Second World War, there have been attempts to solve the issue. In 1947, Britain provided an offer to take the issue to the International Court of Justice, but the Argentinians rejected it. This led to Britain submitting the issue unilaterally in 1955. The case was accepted. Nevertheless, Argentina immediately announced that they would not accept any decision made by the Court. In 1956 the case was removed.

Another step after the International Court of Justice was the United Nations. Argentina asked the United Nations to intervene based on a Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which was declared in 1960. However, straight away, there was a dilemma as the declaration was meant for people in colonies to emerge as independent nations. The issue for Argentina was that that the Falkland Islands people declared that they want to be part of the United Kingdom and not Argentina.³⁴

2.3 The last talks

The last talks came in 1966. Britain had the idea of moving the Falklands population to a new settlement in New Zealand. Nevertheless this was not an option as they were bound to

³⁰ Gustafson, *The Sovereignty Dispute over The Falkland (Malvinas) Islands*, 14.

³¹ Gustafson, *The Sovereignty Dispute over The Falkland (Malvinas) Islands*, 21.

³² Gustafson, *The Sovereignty Dispute over The Falkland (Malvinas) Islands*, 21-22.

³³ Martin Middlebrook, *The Falklands War* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2001), chap. 1.

³⁴ Middlebrook, *The Falklands War*, chap. 1.

the wishes of Falkland people who wanted to stay. The other issue was that if Britain gave up on the islands, it would send a message that could later affect other places. For this reason, Britain gave up on the idea, and the talks were unsuccessful without any results. The rest of the world did not care, but they would lean towards the British claim if they had to choose a side. This was because if every nation wanted to claim some area based on old claims, in this case, 150 years old, it would create chaos as it would show the worst case of colonialism.³⁵

2.4 Argentinean claim

The tension started to rise again in the 1970s, the foreign secretary at that time, David Owen, advised to make contingency plans. When the dispute escalated in 1982, Owen was one of the most prominent critics of Margaret Thatcher as he predicted the situation many years ago.³⁶ The situation calmed down until 1982 when the Argentinians decided to invade the islands. Argentinians believed that they should have the right to keep the islands because other countries, for example, Ecuador or Brazil, retained the Galapagos Islands and Trinidad island. Commander Pinedo's eviction was considered an occupation by force, and Argentina believed that without this interference of the British, the sovereignty would pass to Argentina without any hiccups. The British did not want to let the Argentinians have the islands as they believed that they had all the right to keep the islands based on the fact that they inhabited the islands from 1833 to 1982 and the old settlement in the 18th century. British argued that there were no Spanish or Argentinean people living on the island for over 150 years, and the population in 1982 was dominated by the British. The advantage the British had was that in the 20th century, sovereignty was determined mainly by the principle of self-determination.³⁷

2.4.1 The principle of self-determination

There are two types of self-determination, constitutive self-determination and ongoing self-determination. The constitutive self-determination concerns decisions based on political status, for example, to be or not to be a part of another state. Furthermore, the group of people cannot be self-governed. In the case of ongoing self-determination, there already must be a

³⁵ Middlebrook, *The Falklands War*, chap. 1.

³⁶ Aaron Donaghy, *The British Government and the Falklands War 1974-79* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1-2.

³⁷ Middlebrook, *The Falklands War*, chap. 1.

certain level of independence, and the whole process is self-governed. In today's world, there are only two cases where a group can secede.³⁸

(1) "classic" decolonisation (when an overseas colony seeks to liberate itself from metropolitan control), and (2) (perhaps) the reclaiming of state territory that is subject to unjust military occupation.³ (Some scholars would add a third circumstance: where a racial group has been denied meaningful access to participation in government.)³⁹

Unfortunately, the definitions are not clear as they offer multiple points open for interpretation.

(1) the nature of the domain of independent control (what sorts of activities and institutions the group exerts control over in its own right), (2) the extent of its control over items in the domain (which may vary from item to item), and (3) the particular political institutions by which the group exercises political control over its domain of control.⁴⁰

³⁸ Allen Buchanan, *Justice, Legitimacy, and Self-Determination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 32-33.

³⁹ Buchanan, *Justice, Legitimacy, and Self-Determination*, 33.

⁴⁰ Buchanan, *Justice, Legitimacy, and Self-Determination*, 333.

3 THE PRE-WAR DEVELOPMENT

3.1 British plans with the islands

The first time Thatcher was involved with the dispute over the Falkland Islands was in 1979. Britain had to decide on the future of the Falkland Islands. There were two possible courses of action at that time. The options were either a fortress policy of economic development or a lease-back. Thatcher was advised against the economic development, as Lord Carrington believed that it would require many British forces present on the islands as the Argentinians would be more likely to invade them. Carrington advised Thatcher to pursue the idea of a lease-back, even though she was not fond of the idea at first.⁴¹

The idea of the lease-back was described in the following steps. The United Kingdom would surrender formal sovereignty to Argentina over the Falkland Islands and the Falkland Island Dependencies. The Argentine government would simultaneously grant the United Kingdom a perpetual lease over the Falkland Islands and South Georgia. The United Kingdom and Argentina would agree to equal co-administration of the economic resources of the maritime areas of the Dependencies and the Falkland Islands outside territorial waters. The Argentine government would bind itself to provide all the necessary facilities and services for the Falkland Islanders. This included transit, education, and health care. The United Kingdom, Argentina, and, if possible, Chile would agree to a condominium over the area of their overlapping claims in Antarctica.⁴²

At that time, the United Kingdom was keen on keeping overseas possessions for any cost. This can be shown by Nicholas Ridley's speech in which he said that they already gave up huge areas and believed that in most cases, it was beneficial. The only claim Britain had, which he felt strongly about, was our long-standing claim to Bordeaux, his motive being wine. He found it hard to see the motive towards the islands where there was no wine.⁴³

Ridley and Cavondoli even later agreed on the idea of a leaseback.

⁴¹ Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), chap. 23.

⁴² Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: Hall minute for Nick Ridley ("Falkland Islands) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/121825>.

⁴³ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography*, chap.23.

When the lease-back was presented to the Parliament, it was attacked by MPs as feared by Thatcher. The MPs saw the lease-back as a betrayal of the Falklanders.⁴⁴ The Parliament was not the only one against the idea of a lease-back. The Falklanders were angered by the idea and were disappointed by Britain's approach.⁴⁵

In January 1981, new Falkland representatives were elected and expressed their disagreement with the idea of a lease-back again. The representatives wanted to pause the negotiations over their sovereignty, and that was what happened. The Foreign Office knew that any negotiations with the islanders would be complicated, and hence, they would be trying to change their view on the lease-back. For those reasons, the negotiations were stopped.

3.2 Junta comes to power

In December 1981 came one of the most critical days in the whole dispute. In Argentina, a military junta came to power, replacing the previous government. The junta was led by General Leopoldo Galtieri and his government made the solving of the Falkland's issue its main priority. At that very moment, it was the worst thing that could have happened to Britain as they were probably the weakest in the whole period of holding power over the Falkland Islands.⁴⁶

3.2.1 New York negotiations

In the first few months, the junta was still in talks with Britain over the dispute. Those talks resulted in a meeting in New York in 1982 where all the representatives met.⁴⁷

The main talking points of the meeting were the sovereignty and the involvement of the islanders. Argentina tried to present itself as the only party interested in finding progress as they tried to shift the blame back to the United Kingdom as Britain blamed Argentina for the rejection of their last offer and stalling the negotiations. It was advised that a negotiating commission should be set up to help with the sovereignty dispute. The Committee's main focus was supposed to be on sovereignty, the interests of the islanders, natural resources and

⁴⁴ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography*, chap. 23.

⁴⁵ Margaret Thatcher, *Margaret Thatcher: The Downing Street Years* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 193-194.

⁴⁶ Duncan Anderson, *The Falklands War, 1982* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 13-15.

⁴⁷ Thatcher, *Margaret Thatcher: The Downing Street Years*, 194-196.

security.⁴⁸ After multiple sessions of discussions, there was still a significant difference in British and Argentine opinions. However, both sides agreed that the negotiations must continue.⁴⁹ British side saw the talks as successful and leading in the right direction.⁵⁰ Thatcher and the whole of Britain expected that Argentina would not become aggressive and non-rational. A policy of progressively escalating dispute, with diplomatic and economic pressures, was expected, which was not the case in the end. The first warning light could have been the Argentinian refusal of publishing the joint communiqué from the meeting in New York in 1982. The Ministry of Foreign Defence was forced to publish a unilateral statement. This statement revealed the contents of the New York talks and said that if the issue is not resolved quickly, Argentina will defend its interests. At this time, the Argentinean press started calling for military action if no progress was made on the issue. Thatcher wanted to make contingency plans, but her wish did not reach the intelligence. At this moment, it still was not believed that the Argentinians would attack the Falklands. Also, the articles in the Argentinian newspapers were seen just as something to please the Argentinian people. With the aim of raising the popularity of the newly elected junta by saying what the public wanted to hear. Britain and Thatcher herself had another reason to stay calm. Thatcher had a good relationship with American President Reagan, and the relationship between Argentina and the USA was also improving. So as her intelligence nor the American had any concerns about the whole situation, there was no reason to panic.⁵¹

3.2.2 The first landings

A day after, ambassador Williams informed Luce that he expects the Argentineans to be intelligent and does not expect them to do anything unexpected. Scrap metal dealers landed on the British dependency of South Georgia. They were supposed to fulfil a legitimate contract, but they had no permission from the authorities to land on the island.⁵² This was not

⁴⁸ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: FCO record of Anglo-Argentine Ministerial talk on the Falkland Islands in New York (First Session) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/118365>.

⁴⁹ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: FCO record of Anglo-Argentine Ministerial talks on the Falkland Islands in New York (Fourth Session) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 25, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/118368>.

⁵⁰ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKMIS New York telegram to FCO ("Falklands: Anglo-Argentine Talks") [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 27, 2021 <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122481>.

⁵¹ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography*, chap. 23.

⁵² Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography*, chap. 23.

the first time this happened. Another unauthorised landing of Argentinean scrap metal dealers happened in December of the previous year. After Britain's strong response, the scrap dealers left the islands. When Britain wanted to discuss the matter with the Argentine government, they answered that they had no idea anything like that happened and refused any involvement.⁵³ When the scrap metal dealers arrived on the 18 of March 1982, this time, with the assistance of the Argentine navy, they robbed and damaged property of the British Antarctic Survey and ran up the Argentine flag. A few days later, on the 21 of March 1982, HMS Endurance was ordered to come to South Georgia. This decision was made with Thatcher's firm belief that it was the right thing to do. The Tories later strongly questioned this decision by Thatcher in the Parliament. They were not sure about the decision as it could have provoked a strong reaction from Argentina. The opposition was also uncertain if Britain was able to enforce its will in such a situation. They believed that Thatcher was not thinking rationally or imperially, as Alan Clark said. Some believed, for example, Nick Budgen, that she is a Reaganite that would do anything the United States want.

The second landing created a chain reaction in Argentina. Marines were sent to South Georgia on the 23 of March and landed on the islands the next day. Junta brought forward plans for the invasion of the Falkland Islands, and only two days later, the junta ordered to go ahead with the plans. The British did not know about any plans of invasion. Ambassador Williams in Buenos Aires was left without any information and believed the Argentinians. As the British did not see any danger, they opted for negotiations with the Argentinian side. They concluded that these landings were just unfortunate events, and HMS Endurance was ordered to land at Grytviken, the British base, instead of landing in Leigh, where the incident happened.⁵⁴

Although the politicians believed that all these events were just coincidences, most of them started being concerned about the situation. They realised that if Argentina decided on military action, Britain would face the complicated task of defending the islands at such a long range.⁵⁵ On the 28 of March, Thatcher called Carrington to raise her concerns about the whole situation. Carrington informed her that he was already in contact with Al Haig, the American Secretary of State, who believed they should stay calm. The next day, when

⁵³ Thatcher, *Margaret Thatcher: The Downing Street Years*, 196.

⁵⁴ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography*, chap 23.

⁵⁵ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography*, chap. 23.

Thatcher and Carrington travelled to Brussels for an EEC summit, they agreed on reinforcing HMS Endurance with a nuclear-powered submarine instead of the whole flotilla as was discussed before.⁵⁶ The idea of sending a whole flotilla to the Islands was strongly opposed to, as it could be seen as a provocation, thus have the opposite effect of which Britain wanted, avoiding the invasion.⁵⁷ Thatcher even mentions that the leak of their plans did not anger her. She wanted to show the Argentinians that they are not taking this situation lightly.⁵⁸

3.2.3 Preparing for the invasion

On the 31 of March, a day after Thatcher's return,⁵⁹ Foreign Office released a statement about the situation. They believed that they had the first indications of Argentinian ships on their way to the Falklands.⁶⁰ However, there was no intelligence of the potential invasion. The Foreign Office believed it was only a test of Britain's reactions.⁶¹ Nevertheless, Thatcher knew how unpredictable the Argentinians could be, and this new development left her worried. That evening, John Nott requested an urgent meeting regarding the Falklands.⁶² Thatcher decided to contact President Reagan and inform him about the current situation and her fears. She asked Reagan to contact Galtieri and get a reassurance from him that there will be no military action towards the islands.⁶³

At the start of the meeting, Nott informed those present about the situation on the islands. He said they received intelligence about the situation. They believed that the Argentinians would invade the Falklands on Friday, the 2 of March. When Nott finished, Thatcher took over. Thatcher was straight away decided on what they must do. She knew she has to take the islands back. However, there was a considerable backlash from the others in the room. They all believed that they could not defend the islands. They considered the islands to be lost. All the factors like distance or the economic situation played against Thatcher, but she stood her own. So, when Sir Henry Leach, The Chief of the Naval Staff, arrived and agreed

⁵⁶ Thatcher, *Margaret Thatcher: The Downing Street Years*, 197.

⁵⁷ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography*, chap. 23.

⁵⁸ Thatcher, *Margaret Thatcher: The Downing Street Years*, 197.

⁵⁹ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography*, chap. 23.

⁶⁰ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: FCO telegram 180 to UKMIS New York (2244Z) ("Falkland Islands") [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/118431>.

⁶¹ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography*, chap. 23.

⁶² Thatcher, *Margaret Thatcher: The Downing Street years*, 197.

⁶³ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: MT message to President Reagan (2025Z) (Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands) [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 27, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/223774>.

with Thatcher's idea, they quickly got to work. In her biography, Thatcher recalls the conversation with Leach as a crucial one. She knew it was the right decision to defend the islands, but she could not have pursued the idea independently. One of the first things to do was to contact Reagan's administration about the current situation. Reagan agreed to press Galietri to withdraw. Leach decided to put together a task force lead by aircraft carriers HMS Hermes and HMS Invincible. He believed the task force should be able to begin their journey in the next 48 hours from the decision, but it would take about three weeks to get to the islands.⁶⁴

3.2.4 Next steps

The month of April started with a day full of political meetings. It all started with a discussion of the Cabinet. A meeting of the Overseas and Defence Committee of the Cabinet followed. Thatcher was aware that those first few days would be critical for the future of the islands. She needed to get support from the Parliament and get the back-benchers on her side to keep the Falklands.⁶⁵

The Cabinet agreed to do everything they can to keep the islands. The prime minister informed the Cabinet about a promise she made to the Americans that the British government would not take any early actions, which could lead to an unnecessary escalation of the situation. It was also agreed that the HMS Endurance would not be withdrawn as planned. The ship was considered to be an essential asset, and it would not be reasonable to get rid of it at the very moment. The meeting ended by discussing the contingency plans with the Lord Privy Seal.⁶⁶

The government, especially Lord Carrington were considering the option of calling the Security Council. Lord Carrington was warned about this option by British diplomat Anthony Derrick Parsons, who thought that if Great Britain called the Security Council, they would gain little sympathy. It would also make United Kingdom look weak. At that very moment, the issue was nothing more than an illegal landing of scrap metal dealers. Something like that would be strange to take to the Security Council. He also warned Lord

⁶⁴ Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography*, chapter 23.

⁶⁵ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 198-200.

⁶⁶ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKMIS New York to FCO ("Falkland Islands: Security Council") [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 30, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/118432>.

Carrington that if he, in the end, decides to call the council, he needs convincing proof of a genuine and immediate threat of invasion.⁶⁷

Carrington informed Governor Rex Hunt about the evince of a possible Argentinian landing.⁶⁸ Hunt responded to this message by outlining the plans of defence.⁶⁹ Carrington responded by repeating that the invasion is only likely and nothing is certain.⁷⁰

Because of the possible landing of the Argentinean forces on the islands, the United Kingdom prepared a response to the possible invasion. They came up with five options. The first and probably the essential step was to refer to the Security Council. The other options included actions with different allies. Either with the Americans, European partners, South American countries, or acts with the non-aligned countries. The last two options were the least appealing. The South American nations made clear they seek a peaceful solution. The choice of action with the non-aligned would also be difficult as there would not be any support from the countries except those in the Commonwealth like Australia, New Zealand, or Canada. Nevertheless, it would be an extremely high-risk option as any economic actions would hurt the United Kingdom more than they would hurt Argentina. Also, those actions could cause legal difficulties. Nevertheless, it had to be considered as a possible course of action for the United Kingdom.⁷¹

On the same day, Thatcher finally received a letter from American President Ronald Reagan. He told her about the conversation he had with General Galtieri. Reagan told Galtieri his concerns about the situation and offered to send a personal representative to resolve the dispute. Unfortunately, from the Galtieri's way of communication, Reagan concluded that Galtieri decided on the idea of an armed conflict. Galtieri also appeared to be drunk, which did not help with the dialogue between the two leaders. Reagan ended the letter by declaring

⁶⁷ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKMIS New York to FCO ("Falkland Islands: Security Council [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 30, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/118432>.

⁶⁸ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: FCO to Port Stanley ("Argentine Action Against the Falkland Islands [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 30, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122434>.

⁶⁹ Thatcher MSS (digital collection) Falklands: Port Stanley to FCO ("Argentine Action Against Falkland Islands") [Falklands Governor Hunt outlines his plans to defend Falklands, requests advice] [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 31, 2021, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122435>.

⁷⁰ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKE Brasilia telegram 59 to FCO (0900Z) ("Falkland Islands/South Georgia") [declassified Spt 2016], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 31, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/153039>.

⁷¹ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: Fearn minute to Ure ("Falkland Islands: UK Response to any Argentine Action") [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 31, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/118522>.

neutrality on the issue of sovereignty. Nevertheless, the United States would not remain neutral if the Argentineans use military force to repossess the islands.⁷²

The situation around the islands was not only a worry for the British, Argentinians, or the United States but also Brazil. Brazilian ambassador Beana expressed his fears straight away, especially about the coming of a nuclear submarine as The Treaty of Tlatelolco banned the presence or even transport of nuclear weapons. Lord Carrington straight away clarified the situation. However, other than that, Brazil stayed silent on the issue.⁷³

The 2 of April 1982 was described as a nightmare by Luce. The British knew what was coming, but there was nothing they could do.⁷⁴

The political meetings continued. Lord Carrington suggested seeking support in the Commonwealth and, together with Margaret Thatcher, informed Australia and other Commonwealth members about the situation. Thatcher and Carrington reassured them that the British claims were applicable and asked them for the strongest possible condemnation of the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands.⁷⁵

Thatcher received an estimate of what it would take to take the islands back from the Private Secretary J.E. Holmes. The most likely political costs, in his opinion, would be the following. At first, a possible backlash against 17.000 British subjects. Secondly, the Argentine government might be tempted to declare war and act formally against the British subjects. Thirdly, after telling the Security Council that the British want to avoid use of a military force, it would not be the wisest move to change their state. These actions would hardly give Britain any support from other countries. His next point was that they should not rely upon any support from their European allies or even the United States as they have their interests and investments in Argentina. Any actions could harm Britain's position in NATO or the European community. As a penultimate point, Homes warns Britain to be careful because the Soviet Union might want to get involved as Argentina is an important trading

⁷² Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: President Reagan letter to MT (response to her appeal for assistance), [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122495>.

⁷³ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKE Brasilia telegram 59 to FCO (0900Z) ("Falkland Islands/South Georgia") [declassified Spt 2016], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/153039>.

⁷⁴ Moore, Margaret Thatcher: *The Authorized Biography*, chap. 23.

⁷⁵ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: FCO letter to No.10 ("Falkland Islands"), [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/221383>.; Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: MT message for Prime Minister of Australia and other Commonwealth Heads of Government ("Falkland Islands") [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/221480>.

partner of theirs. Lastly, he mentions that even if they were successful with the military repossession, there would be many difficulties with proving the military actions as Argentina could also represent some points that would prove their right to possess the islands.⁷⁶

Ambassador Henderson met with Alexander Haig in Washington and presented which actions would the United Kingdom want the United States to take. The three wishes were recalling the United States Ambassador to Argentina, raising the issue of Argentine military action in the Organization of American States, and embargoing the US defence sales to Argentina. Al Haig told Henderson the United States will consider this option and reassured Henderson that the United States want to be as helpful as possible.⁷⁷

Later that day, Alexander Haig sent a telegram to the UN calling for a resolution of the dispute. He mentioned that the United States want to make a short statement on the matter without commenting on the issue of sovereignty. Nevertheless, Haig reassured Lord Carrington of strong American support for Britain's claim.⁷⁸

On the same day, Lord Privy Seal made a statement on the situation in the British Parliament. In his speech, he repeated the wishes of the Security Council president to avoid the use of military force and seek a diplomatic solution. He said there was no response from the Argentinian side, but there was still hope of Argentina reconsidering their position. The council was still hoping that Argentina would be willing to discuss the matter and come to a diplomatic solution. With the situation escalating, the United Kingdom decided to call the Security Council. Parsons repeated the British claim and their hope of a diplomatic solution. Nevertheless, due to the Argentina's actions, he asked the president of the United Nations to get involved in the situation. Parsons was optimistic about the steps they took and believed there was nothing more they could have done. He felt support from most council members, as the majority agreed that the Argentineans are those to blame. The statement of the Argentinean ambassador Eduardo A. Roca was not giving any impression of the Argentinian willingness to discuss the matter diplomatically. He tried to justify the use of force. Also, any appeal for a diplomatic solution was ignored. On the other hand, if the islands get

⁷⁶ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: FCO minute for Foreign Secretary ("Retaking the Falkland Islands: The Political Costs") [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 31, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/221385>.

⁷⁷ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: State Department telegram to USE London ("Secretary Discusses Falkland Island Invasion With Ambassador") [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/223829>.

⁷⁸ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: State Department telegram to USMIS New York ("Falkland Islands Dispute in the Security Council") [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 31, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/223822>.

invaded, Parsons feels that thanks to the general opinion of the council, they would be able to get enough support votes or force Russians to veto.⁷⁹

Back in the United Kingdom, the situation was made even worse by bad atmospheric conditions, which made any communication with the Falkland Islands almost impossible. This meant that the rest of the world had no idea about what was happening on the islands.

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⁷⁹ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKMIS New York to FCO ("Falkland Islands") [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 2, 2021 <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/118435>.

⁸⁰ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 199.

4 FALKLANDS WAR

4.1.1 The invasion

The atmosphere of the unknown changed at 12.45 pm as the captain of the British Antarctic survey vessel, RRS Bransfield, reported an Argentinean radio broadcast suggesting that 200 Argentinian troops had landed on the Falkland Islands.⁸¹ The operation the Argentines called Operation Blue was in progress.⁸² Rex Hunt tried to send a message back to Britain about the Argentines sailing towards the islands. However, the message was not received by the government, probably because of the bad weather conditions.⁸³ Shortly after the Falkland Islands Defence Force surrendered, the Argentines removed the British symbols around the islands.⁸⁴

When the Cabinet met at 2.30 pm, the landing was still not confirmed as any communication attempts with Port Stanley or HMS Endurance failed. During the meeting, the following points were made. British merchant shipping was warned not to enter the Argentinean waters, and the British ships in Argentinean ports were advised to leave. Potential economic sanctions to Argentina were examined under Treasury chairmanship. Also, the position on any shipment of military equipment and spares to Argentina needed to be established. During the discussions, it was also advised to contact the International Committee of the Red Cross.⁸⁵

The main criticism Thatcher received in the Parliament was from the opposition members, as they believed that her administration should have reacted quicker. Thatcher argued that even if they sent their ships to the islands on the day of the scrap metal dealer's landing. The vessels would not have reached the islands to be there in time to prevent the Argentine invasion. The time between the two instances was only twelve days. Also, any British

⁸¹ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: FCO note ("Falklands") [released 2013], "Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 1, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122845>.

⁸² Martin Middlebrook, *The Argentine fight for the Falklands* (Barnsely: Pen & Sword Books, 2009), 45. Chapter The First Steps to War.

⁸³ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 200.

⁸⁴ Ezequiel Mercau, *The Falklands War An Imperial History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 71-72.

⁸⁵ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Cabinet: Minutes of Full Cabinet - CC(82) 15th (Falkland Islands) [declassified 2012], "Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 1, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122269>.

counteraction after their landing would be seen as strange considering the long period of peace.⁸⁶

The United States had a great interest in the development of the Falklands issue, so with the reports of potential invasion, Central Intelligence Agency prepared the first report of the situation, which stated the following. The Argentine press reports indicated about 4,000 troops on the islands with 10 to 14 naval ships.⁸⁷ The CIA later altered the number of soldiers on the islands to only 200-350 soldiers.⁸⁸ They also expected other military equipment like missile destroyers, corvettes and others to be in the area. Thanks to the military authorities in Buenos Aires, the CIA knew about the first three casualties on the Argentinean side. The Royal Marine defenders were without any losses.

4.1.1.1 The reactions to the landings

Galtieri defended the attack in his public speech in front of thousands of supporters. In the following interview, Galtieri revealed that only now would Argentina consider opening a dialogue.

The activity of the Argentine military was observed. CIA was confident that the Argentines expect a response to the invasion from the United Kingdom's side. They expected the army to reinforce before the British arrival. Americans also expected Argentinian ground forces to be alerted and prepared to reinforce the islands if necessary. If it came to a battle, the CIA did not expect the Argentinean side to do well against the British military force.

CIA expected Margaret Thatcher to make a Parliamentary statement the following day. They expected her to call for a peaceful settlement but only based on the Argentine withdrawal from the islands. Thatcher was expected to face a backlash from the back-benchers, but nobody expected any backlash to change her decision.

Argentina had support from the Uruguayan Foreign Minister and President Alvarez, who agreed with the Argentinean claim of the islands. Argentina also had previous support from Brazil, but the military actions could have changed its position. President Figueiredo nor any representative of the country made any statements on the issue. Another country which did

⁸⁶ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Cabinet: Minutes of Full Cabinet - CC(82) 14th (Falkland Islands) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122268>.

⁸⁷ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: CIA Directorate of Intelligence memorandum ("Falkland Islands Situation Report #1") [declassified 2008], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 10, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/114290>.

⁸⁸ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: CIA paper ("Quick Intelligence Assessment on Falkland Affairs") [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 10, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/223838>.

not publicly state their position was Chile. Chile was afraid that Britain might not get the support it needs to justify a counterattack. Chileans were also scared by the steps Galtieri took and were afraid of facing a similar issue with the Beagle Channel controversy. Argentina also could have expected support from the Soviet Union.⁸⁹

4.2 The pressure

The 3 of April was in the Parliament often referred to as national humiliation or a day of shame.⁹⁰

The pressure on Thatcher and her ministers was once again building.⁹¹ Headlines like “Shame” started to appear in the British press, which greatly influenced the British people. Thatcher knew that she needed to present the information in the most transparent way possible. For those reasons, she instructed B. Ingham to focus on the ways of communicating the issue with the media. His advice was to keep the Governor, Rex Hunt, and the leader of the marines out of the public eye at least until the official press conference a few days later. He also believed that Lord Carrington and Nott should not avoid public appearances as they did until then. It was agreed that Lord Carrington should send a message to the Islanders through the BBC overseas service.⁹² In his speech, he tried to encourage the Falklanders and assure them that the government is united against the actions of the Argentinean junta.⁹³

On this day, Thatcher was finally able to speak with Governor Rex Hunt, who was moved to Uruguay. He confirmed the invasion and described the events. He reminded Thatcher that the Falklanders were extremely disappointed, and some of them were even in tears as they did not want to be part of Argentina. Hunt confirmed the casualties on the Argentinean side and no casualties on the side of the Falklanders.⁹⁴ Another source of information for Thatcher

⁸⁹ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: CIA Directorate of Intelligence memorandum ("Falkland Islands Situation Report #1") [declassified 2008], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/114290>.

⁹⁰ Jonathan Aitken, *Margaret Thatcher: Power and Personality*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), chap 17.

⁹¹ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: USE London telegram to State Department ("British Military Steps in the Falkland Dispute") [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/223843>.

⁹² Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: Ingham minute for MT ("Falkland Islands in the Media") [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/221390>.

⁹³ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: Carrington telegram to UKE Buenos Aires ("BBC Overseas Service: Message to the Falkland Islanders") [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/221389>.

⁹⁴ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKE Montevideo to FCO ("Falkland Islands Invasion") [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 15, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122449>.

was a message from the HMS Endurance. The message confirmed Argentine presence on the islands. The Argentinean troops seemed friendly to the islanders but tried to limit their access to the news.⁹⁵

Meanwhile, a significant number of countries started to declare their position on the issue. The newest European country that expressed its solidarity and support was Italy. The Italians were an essential ally for the British as they were well known for their good relationship with Argentina.⁹⁶

The situation was still closely followed by the CIA as they revealed further assessments of the situation on the islands. The CIA expected that the Argentineans steps should make the United States press the United Kingdom to negotiate. At this time, more South American countries declared their position. The Argentinean claim was supported by Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador, but all named countries expressed their hope for a diplomatic solution. The only South American country which refused to support the Argentinean claim was Chile because of the issue with the Beagle Channel. A very likely reason why the named South American countries decided to support Argentina was because of their own territorial disputes, and they might have hoped that having shown support to Argentina, their favour would be returned if any dispute in their country arose.⁹⁷ The political situation in Argentina was good. This fact could be supported by The National Workers Confederation in Argentine calling off their planned strike to celebrate the recovery of the islands.⁹⁸

As Argentina was celebrating, Thatcher had a challenging task ahead of her. Together with John Nott, they had to step in front of the Parliament for the first time since the Argentinean invasion was confirmed. Thatcher did a fantastic job. She managed to deal with the pressure from the opposition, especially from Mr J.W. Rooker or Mr Edward Rowlands. Most of the complaints from the opposition were again about her slow reaction to the issue.⁹⁹ Overall,

⁹⁵ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: HMS Endurance to CINCFLEET (extracts of overheard conversations between Falkland Islanders) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 15, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122448>.

⁹⁶ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKE Rome telegram to FCO ("Falkland Islands") [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/200216>.

⁹⁷ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: CIA Directorate of Intelligence memorandum ("Falkland Islands Situation Report #2") [declassified 2008]], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 15, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/114291>.

⁹⁸ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: CIA Directorate of Intelligence memorandum ("Falkland Islands Situation Report #3"), Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 15, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/114292>.

⁹⁹ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), HC S: [Falkland Islands] [audio]], "Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 16, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110946>.

she was satisfied with her performance.¹⁰⁰ Unfortunately, the same could not be said about John Nott, whose speech did not go as well. Nott also tried to defend the steps taken but was straight away under pressure as the back-benchers were making their thoughts clear in a loud and rude manner. There were even calls for his resignation from the opposition during his speech.¹⁰¹ His poor performance even led to him being suspended by Mrs Thatcher from further speeches in the Parliament.¹⁰²

During the first April days, both countries focused on negotiations with their potential allies and gaining every possible advantage over the opposition. The parliaments of Venezuela¹⁰³, Peru¹⁰⁴, and Panama¹⁰⁵ made their support for the Argentinean claim clear. Especially Venezuela described Britain as a colonialist power and did not want history to repeat itself. Although they expressed their support to Argentina, they also expressed their hope of a diplomatic solution.¹⁰⁶

One of the first European countries that managed to speak with Argentinean politicians was Germany. German foreign minister was invited to talk with President Galtieri. Galtieri told the minister that Argentina still hopes for a diplomatic solution but had doubts of Britain's willingness to discuss the matter. Galtieri also told the German minister that they would defend the islands should they be attacked. Nevertheless, there was an interesting point raised from Galtieri. He was not in favour of the United States mediating the dispute. Galtieri would rather see the dispute mitigated by one of the European countries.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 203-204.

¹⁰¹ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), HC S: [Falkland Islands] [audio], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 16, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110947>.

¹⁰² Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: Coles minute for Pattison ("Falkland Islands") [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 16, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/221400>.

¹⁰³ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKE Caracas telegram to FCO ("Falkland Islands: Communiqué") [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 16, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/221411>.

¹⁰⁴ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKE Lima telegram to FCO ("Falkland Islands: Communiqué") [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 16, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/221412>.

¹⁰⁵ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKE Panama City telegram to FCO (Falkland Islands: Panamanian Government's Declaration) [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 16, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/221413>.

¹⁰⁶ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKE Caracas telegram to FCO ("Falkland Islands: Communiqué") [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 16, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/221411>.

¹⁰⁷ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKE Bonn telegram to FCO ("Falkland Islands") [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 17, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/221410>.

Argentina was not the only one making friends. Thatcher received a phone call from French President Mitterrand¹⁰⁸, who expressed Frances's support.¹⁰⁹ Thatcher later thanked him¹¹⁰ and described his phone call and Frances's influence in the United Nations as a huge help and something that she would never forget.¹¹¹ Thatcher also received support from the Australians.¹¹² Meanwhile, Lord Carrington was trying to find allies outside of Europe. He enquired in Peru, Mexico, Canada, and the Equator about the use of their airports for British military aircraft.¹¹³

Meanwhile, Thatcher needed to prepare for her following speech in the Parliament. She was aware that the main criticism would be again from the back-benchers criticising her slow reaction to the dispute. Thatcher wanted to analyse the actions of the Argentinean parliament and media to prove that similar things have happened before without any consequences.¹¹⁴ She also requested to investigate how much access the Falklanders have to the news and the reception to the news.¹¹⁵

President Galtieri made the Argentinean position public. He repeated what he said to the German diplomat. He said that if the islands get attacked, they will defend them with force. Meanwhile, all the payments to the United Kingdom were suspended. What might have been surprising was Galtieri saying that the UK now lost the claim for Antarctica. They believed that the United Kingdom's claim of Antarctica was based on the ownership of the islands.

¹⁰⁸ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: No.10 record of telephone conversation (MT, President Mitterrand) [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 17, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/221493>.

¹⁰⁹ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: No.10 record of telephone conversation (MT-President Mitterrand) [transcript; Mitterrand expresses support for MT] [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 17, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/121960>.

¹¹⁰ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: No.10 letter to FCO ("Falkland Islands") [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 17, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/221408>.

¹¹¹ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 201-202.

¹¹² Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKE Canberra to FCO ("Falkland Islands"), Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 17, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/123043>.

¹¹³ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: Carrington telegram to UKE Bogota (and Lima, Mexico City, Ottawa, Quito) ("Falkland Islands: Contingency Planning") [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 17, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/221403>.

¹¹⁴ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: No.10 minute to FCO ("Falkland Islands") [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 17, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/221407>.

¹¹⁵ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: No.10 letter to FCO ("Falkland Islands") [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 17, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/221406>.

So now, with the islands being Argentinean again, there is no way of Britain holding any Antarctica claims.¹¹⁶

4.2.1 Resignations and War Cabinet

On the 5 of April, Thatcher's situation got even more challenging. Her close colleagues, Lord Peter Carrington, Humphrey Atkins, Richard Luce, and John Nott handled their resignations.¹¹⁷ The resignations of the first three, Carrington, Atkins, and Luce, were accepted, but Thatcher decided to keep John Nott. She believed that the Secretary of State for Defence was an important position considering the future policy towards the islands, and she still believed that even after few mistakes, Nott was the best option.¹¹⁸

There was news about a potential issue with the Security Council. Parsons saw a potential Argentine ally in Jeanne Kirkpatrick. She believed that the United States should side with the South American countries.¹¹⁹ Moreover, Parsons believed she had a close relationship with Eduardo Roca. This information was helpful for Thatcher as the talks in the Security Council might not go as smoothly as she might have hoped.¹²⁰ Thatcher also received some positive news that day. The Portuguese president showed his support and mentioned the possibility of the Azores island being used for refuelling the British aircraft.¹²¹ Thatcher did interviews for ITN¹²² and IRN,¹²³ where she confirmed that Francis Pym will become the new Foreign Secretary. Thatcher believed that Pym is the best possible option, thanks to his experience and reputation. She described him as a true gentleman and tactician. John Biffen took the vacant position of leader of the House of Commons previously occupied by Pym. Thatcher denied any claims that Carrington's resignation was dishonourable. Thatcher

¹¹⁶ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: CIA Directorate of Intelligence memorandum ("Falkland Islands Situation Report #4") [declassified 2008], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 18, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/114293>.

¹¹⁷ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Letters to & from persons leaving the Government (Atkins, Carrington, Luce), Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 18, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104911>.

¹¹⁸ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), TV Interview for ITN (Falklands), Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104913>.

¹¹⁹ Cannadine, *Margaret Thatcher A Life and Legacy*, 48.

¹²⁰ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKMIS New York telegram to FCO ("Security Council: Falkland Islands") [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 18, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/221469>.

¹²¹ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKE Lisbon telegram to FCO ("Falkland Islands: Portuguese Attitude") [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 18, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/221453>.

¹²² Thatcher MSS (digital collection), TV Interview for ITN (Falklands), Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104913>.

¹²³ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Radio Interview for IRN, Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104914>.

thanked him for what he had done for the country. The interviewers were also asking questions about a potential conflict. To which Thatcher replied that everything that matters is to recover the islands. She believed that people should not be thinking about the war as they still want to solve the dispute in a peaceful manner even though her hopes of a diplomatic solution were slim.

With Rex Hunt returning to the country, Thatcher finally had a chance to meet him face to face. The meeting significant as she had the chance to assess the situation as well as it was possible at that time.¹²⁴

The prime minister decided to set up a Sub-Committee of Overseas and Defence Committee of the Cabinet. The OD (SA) was also often referred to as a War Cabinet. The Cabinet consisted of Thatcher, Francis Pym, John Nott, Willie Whitelaw, Cecil Parkinson, Sir Terence Lewin, Michael Havers, who would be supported by different official and military personnel.¹²⁵

The first meetings of the War Cabinet focused on the economic relations, potential solutions, and future steps against Argentina.¹²⁶ In Portsmouth, the first ships started to leave for the Falklands. The fleet which left on Monday and the following days included four carriers, eleven destroyers and frigates, HMS Fearless, three submarines, and other naval auxiliaries.¹²⁷

The first big issue the War cabinet had to deal with was the announcement of the exclusion zone around the Falkland Islands as the nuclear submarines were expected to reach the islands soon. The question was when to announce the exclusion zone. Alex Haig was expected to meet with Thatcher, and the announcement of the exclusion zone might change the relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States. The Committee's suggestion was to announce the zone before the end of the parliamentary debate as questions

¹²⁴ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 205-207.

¹²⁵ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 208-209.

¹²⁶ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Cabinet: Minutes of the Official OD Sub-Committee on the South Atlantic and Falkland Islands - ODO(SA)(82) 1st (Falkland Islands: Economic Measures Against Argentina) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 18, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/124397>.; Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Cabinet: Middleton and Alexander note circulated to the Official OD Sub-Committee on the South Atlantic and Falkland Islands - ODO(SA)(82) 2 (Economic and Financial Relations with Argentina) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 18, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/124401>.; Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Cabinet: Middleton and Alexander note circulated to the Official OD Sub-Committee on the South Atlantic and Falkland Islands - ODO(SA)(82) 3 (Falkland Islands: Economic Measures Against Argentina) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 18, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/124402>.

¹²⁷ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 209.

about this topic were expected. The committee also advised informing Mr Haig ahead of the official announcement.¹²⁸

The decision was announced in the Parliament by John Nott, which proved to be an intelligent decision. The announcement was accepted well, which helped Nott re-establish his position and recover his previously lost self-confidence. The exclusion zone was supposed to come into effect on the 12 of April, the expected time of the submarine's arrival.¹²⁹

The next step of the Thatcher administration was to continue with the diplomatic pressure on Argentina. This time Britain wanted to ban arms sales and other military material to Argentina, the embargo on all or some imports of goods from Argentina, and end the export credit guarantees for new commitments to Argentina. Britain also wanted to discourage further international lending to Argentina. The message was sent to the leaders of the European Community countries and Japan, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States. Thatcher said she understands that these actions might negatively affect their economy. Nevertheless, it was the least violent option. The appeal was successful, especially among the European countries. Most countries reacted positively and agreed to take the measures suggested by Thatcher, except Italy, Spain, and Ireland. From the middle of April, the embargo was imposed for one month and later renewed after some negotiations.¹³⁰ The response in the Commonwealth was also positive, with the exception of India, Japan. The Soviet Union was on the Argentinean side.¹³¹

4.3 Dealing with Al Haig

Another important day came for Mrs Thatcher on the 8 of April as Alexander Haig came for negotiations to London. The fact that Haig came to Britain before his negotiations with Argentina was a great advantage for Thatcher, as she could set the tone of the discussions. Thatcher started by expressed her gratitude for the help of the American administration so

¹²⁸ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Cabinet: Minutes of OD Sub-Committee on South Atlantic and the Falkland Islands - OD(SA)(82) 2nd (Situation in the South Atlantic) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 18, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122305>; Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Cabinet: Minutes of OD Sub-Committee on South Atlantic and the Falkland Islands - OD(SA)(82) 1st (Situation in the South Atlantic) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 18, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122304>.

¹²⁹ Anderson, *The Falklands War*, 8.

¹³⁰ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: MT message to world leaders ("Falkland Islands: economic measures against Argentina [declassified 2012]," Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 18, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/150576>.

¹³¹ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 210-211.

far. She continued by explaining the British claim and the historical background. Thatcher reminded Haig that Britain hopes for a diplomatic solution, but Argentina is not allowing them to do so. Haig's intentions were clear. His main aim was to prevent a war. He showed sympathy for the British position and reminded Mrs Thatcher that the United States want to be as helpful as possible. However, Haig told Thatcher that the United States have to be cautious about their profile. When the discussion came sovereignty, Thatcher was firm and did not show any willingness to alter her and the Governments opinion. She did not speak only about the Falklands dispute as a problem between Great Britain and Argentina, but as an example for possible future disputes. If this issue was not dealt with correctly, many similar issues might arise, for example, with West Berlin in Germany or French Guyana. She believed that they could prevent those other possible disputes by dealing with this issue in the right way. Haig understood the point Thatcher was making, but his intentions were different. His main point was to prevent a war, and once it was prevented, he saw the opportunity to discuss sovereignty. Overall, Haig divided the issue into the withdrawal and administration status. They both agreed that the withdrawal must come first, but the disagreement came over the second point, the administration. Haig suggested international presence on the islands, American or Canadian, during which the negotiations would continue. Thatcher disagreed with this option. In her eyes, the Argentinians would actually gain something by the use of force if the international presence was established on the islands. This was from the British, and in her opinion, even a diplomatic point of view, unacceptable. Haig tried to persuade Thatcher into accepting his proposal, but he was not successful. This meeting made Haig worried that the conflict would be unavoidable. Thatcher replied that it is too late for those worries as Argentineans already used the force. Haig also said that he believed that the discussions in New York about the future of the islands were just a cover-up for the preparation of military action. In his opinion, Argentina did not expect the British response to be as big as it was. The discussion concluded by Thatcher and Haig agreeing on the points of withdrawal and also the future status as Thatcher was open to a discussion about the islands once the Argentine military withdraws from the islands. After these talks, Haig was supposed to leave for Buenos Aires and negotiate with the other side.¹³²

¹³² Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: State Department record of conversation (1800Z pre-dinner) (MT, Haig) [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 19, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/223910>.; Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: No.10 record of conversation (MT-Haig) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 19, 2021,“ <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/134922>.

4.3.1 Argentinean games

On the 12 of April, the Americans returned to London to continue the negotiations after their talks in Argentina. His main finding from the negotiations in Argentina was the evident differences in the views of their armed services. The air force did not want to go to war, the navy wanted the war, and the army was in between. Nevertheless, Haig managed to come up with few proposals that the Argentineans might accept. Firstly, both Britain and Argentina would agree to withdraw from the islands and a specified surrounding area within two weeks. Secondly, no further military forces were to be introduced, and forces around the islands were to be withdrawn and return to regular duties. The Argentinians wanted a promise from the United States to keep the British task force out of the South Atlantic, but Al Haig told them that it was impossible. He believed that they might be satisfied if the British units agreed to return to regular duties. Thirdly, there would be a commission, in place of the governor, consisting of the United States, British and Argentinean representatives who would act together to ensure that all parties follow the agreement. For that purpose, they would each need to have observers. Each member of the commission could fly his flag at headquarters. Fourthly, economic and financial sanctions against Argentina would be lifted. Fifthly, the traditional local administration of the islands would be restored, including the re-establishment of the Executive and Legislative Councils, to which Argentine representatives from the Argentine population in the Falklands would be added. Sixthly, the commission would promote travel, trade, and communications between the islands and Argentina, but the British government would have an option of a veto on its operations. Finally, negotiations on a lasting settlement would be pursued. The Argentinians would only agree to this part of the proposal if there was a date for the conclusion of negotiations. The suggested date was the 31 of December 1982.¹³³

After these points were presented, Thatcher and her War Cabinet discussed them in private. What they found was many holes but also some things they liked. The first issue the War Council found was the security of islanders after the interim period. If Britain had to withdraw their ships, Argentina would gain an advantage as they would remain closer to the islands, influencing the British ability to defend the islands if Argentina decides to invade the islands again. Without the presence of the British ships, there was also a chance that

¹³³ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 214-215.

Argentina might want to increase the number of their people on the islands and become the national majority. Thatcher knew something like that had to be prevented because it would make the principle of self-determination, she was applying, pointless to use. Although Haig did not want the British ships to return, he wanted them to stop and keep their position, but Thatcher also rejected this idea. Her counteroffer was that they would slow down the ships once Argentineans withdraw, but the ships would continue moving to the edge of the demilitarised zone. The last issue she discussed during that meeting with Al Haig was the matter of the flag. She insisted that the flag cannot fly above the governors house, and if Argentineans keep their governor, who was appointed after the invasion on the islands as a commissioner, she will appoint Rex Hunt as their commissioner.¹³⁴

During the break in the negotiations, Al Haig got a memo that New York Times published terms agreed between him and Sr. Costa Mendez, which were different from what he was presenting as an option to Thatcher.¹³⁵

Nevertheless, the negotiations continued. The topics were again the task force and the administration. Haig kept trying to stop the British ships, but he was unsuccessful as Thatcher insisted on her belief that the ships, at least, have to keep moving towards the islands. Haig also thought that if Argentina withdrew from the islands, President Galtieri would not survive. Another point of the debate was the approach of the commission. Haig proposed that the commission would positively promote and decide about the ideas of equal citizenship of the Argentinian people and Falklanders, for example, to own property or to reside on the islands. Thatcher did not like the idea, but in the end, they agreed on a vague text which would include the points the Americans or Argentineans wanted. Those were clear withdrawal zones, the fact that the one Argentine representative per council must be local, and that Argentineans on the islands must have the same qualifying period for voting rights as the Falklanders.¹³⁶

Unfortunately, all those negotiations proved to be pointless as Al Haig received a phone call from St. Costa Mendez in the evening. Costa Mendez told him that he no longer saw a reason for him to come to Argentina unless the governor would be appointed by the Argentine government and the possibility of a flag flown over there. If not, they wanted assurances of Britain's recognition of the Argentine sovereignty over the islands.

¹³⁴ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 215-217.

¹³⁵ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 218.

¹³⁶ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 218.

When the negotiations continued the following day, they all started to realise that Galtieri wants to claim the islands by force, and all those points up for negotiations were just a way of buying more time. Thatcher was now aware that diplomacy would not stop the Argentineans. The only way of stopping them from military action were economic sanctions. The prime minister, who started to lose patience, was reassured by Haig that what he told Galtieri is still valid. If Galtieri and his man use force to get the islands, the United States will side with Britain.

The situation got even more confusing when Haig spoke with St. Costa Mendez again. Haig was told that they dropped their demands and considerably changed their previous position.¹³⁷ Haig saw this as a step in the right direction, thanks to which they can continue the negotiations. He urged Thatcher and her War Cabinet to somewhat agree with the points of decolonisation and few minor changes to the proposals. After Thatcher confirmed that they would consider this option, Haig, who wanted to keep the negotiations going, no matter what, returned to the United States. This sudden change of the Argentinean approach left Thatcher confused about what they were trying to achieve by those sudden changes.¹³⁸

After few days, Thatcher received a message from President Reagan, whom Galtieri contacted. Galtieri started to be nervous and wanted to avoid armed conflict.¹³⁹ Thatcher replied that they could avoid the conflict quickly. They have to withdraw from the islands, and then negotiations can start.¹⁴⁰

4.3.2 Patience runs out

At that time, Al Haig was again negotiating in Argentina with the junta¹⁴¹, who wanted him to stay and solve the problem. On the other hand, they were unwilling to give up on some of their wishes or to accept some proposals from the British side. Haig was hoping to receive a text from the junta, which would show some progress. If he would not receive such a thing,

¹³⁷ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: State Department record of telephone conversation (Haig, Costa Mendez) [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 19 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/223911>.

¹³⁸ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: State Department record of telephone conversation (Haig, Pym) [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 19, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/223912>.

¹³⁹ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: President Reagan message for MT (conversation with Galtieri regarding the Falklands crisis) [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 19, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/223947>.

¹⁴⁰ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: MT message for President Reagan (Falkland Island crisis: negotiations with Argentina) [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 19, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/223949>.

¹⁴¹ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 224.

he did not see a reason to return to Britain.¹⁴² This ended up being the case as Thatcher received the news that there was no real progress made in the negotiations.¹⁴³

Thatcher also agreed that Francis Pym would leave for Washington to make the negotiations easier as Al Haig invited Pym to the United States.¹⁴⁴ Pym was supposed to meet Haig and discuss counter proposals to try and find a solution or at least to make some progress.¹⁴⁵ During his time there, Thatcher wanted Pym to seek any form of guarantee from the Americans.

After those steps taken, the War Cabinet met once again. The news from Haig were disappointing as he knew himself. Thatcher felt as if the Argentineans were persuading Britain and the United States. In her view, Argentina knew that Britain would not accept such offers, but it allowed them to be seen as the side wanting to find a solution, and Britain as the side declining those offers. The way of taking control of the situation back was to act with the Americans together through joined statements. The United States also had to stop being neutral.¹⁴⁶ Thatcher and War Cabinet discussed the possibility of returning to the United Nations, as there was pressure from the Labour side of the Parliament. However, it was advised against by the British representative at the United Nations as it was believed that any action there would not benefit them in any way.¹⁴⁷

4.4 Operation Paraquet

The operation was supposed to recover South Georgia. The planning of this operation started as soon as British ships left the ports and started moving south at the beginning of April.¹⁴⁸ The aim was to reinforce a small garrison in South Georgia. The Argentinean junta decided

¹⁴² Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: Haig telegram for Pym ("Falkland Islands Crisis") [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 19, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/223962>.

¹⁴³ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 224-225.

¹⁴⁴ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: FCO minute to No.10 ("Falkland Islands: Message from Haig") [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 19, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/221973>.

¹⁴⁵ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Cabinet: Minutes of Full Cabinet - CC(82) 18th (Falkland Islands) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 19, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122272>.

¹⁴⁶ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Cabinet: Minutes of OD Sub-Committee on South Atlantic and the Falkland Islands - OD(SA)(82) 10th (Situation in the South Atlantic) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 19, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122313>.

¹⁴⁷ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Cabinet: Minutes of OD Sub-Committee on South Atlantic and the Falkland Islands - OD(SA)(82) 9th (Situation in the South Atlantic) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122312>.

¹⁴⁸ Kenneth L. Privratsky, *Logistics in the Falklands War* (Barnsley: Pen & Sord Books, 2014), chap. 2.

not to defend the islands heavily, as they focused solely on the Falkland Islands.¹⁴⁹ Thatcher decided only to announce the decision to recover the islands to the Americans, not giving them a chance to get involved.¹⁵⁰ The reposition did not go as smoothly as Thatcher might have hoped. The conditions on the islands were challenging. Strong wind and snow were behind the failure of the first attempt at the island's reposition. Once the conditions improved, some troops managed to land on the islands, but as the conditions worsened, the troops asked their ships to be picked up by the helicopters. The conditions were horrible, and two of the helicopters crashed due to poor visibility. The last remaining helicopter managed to contact the troops on the glacier and received information about no casualties at the crash site. Later that day, the helicopter managed to land again and recover the remaining troops.¹⁵¹ Thatcher recalls how nervous she was about the whole operation, especially when she received the news about the accident on the glacier.¹⁵² This operation as a whole was a success but had some drawbacks. John Nott recalled the accident as one of the worst days of the war. He realised that it was not a good image for them, as the hiccups during the first operation did not inspire confidence for future operations. It also might have had a negative influence on public opinion.¹⁵³

During the operation, Pym was already in Washington negotiating with Al Haig. Furthermore, his performance during those negotiations was, in Thatcher's opinion, unsatisfactory. He was not successful in getting any guarantees from the Americans, nor did he do better at getting any British points across.¹⁵⁴ Before his arrival back to the country, Haig messaged Thatcher to let her know that Pym will bring a text which should be the basis for a future peace settlement.¹⁵⁵ Once Thatcher saw the results of Pym's negotiations, she was deeply disappointed. What Pym brought back was something that Thatcher described as a conditional surrender. She was not willing to accept something like that. In a letter to Al Haig, she showed her gratitude for his efforts and wanted to know the Argentine reaction

¹⁴⁹ Lawrance Freedman, *The Official History of the Falkands Campaign* (Oxon: Rotlage, 2005), 99.

¹⁵⁰ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 225.

¹⁵¹ Freedman, *The Official History of the Falkands Campaign*, 203.

¹⁵² Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 226.

¹⁵³ Freedman, *The Official History of the Falkands Campaign*, 203.

¹⁵⁴ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 225.

¹⁵⁵ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: Haig message for MT ("Falkland Islands Crisis") [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/223981>.

to those suggestions. Once again, she repeated that Argentina is the aggressor, and their withdrawal is vital for any future actions.¹⁵⁶

In Argentina, Galtieri visited the islands but did not meet the islanders. During his press conference in Buenos Aires following his return from the islands, he announced that they are unwilling to compromise on the issue of sovereignty but are willing to consider arrangements to protect the interests of the islanders. The situation for the British community living in Argentina started to get worse. They were advised to consider the possibility of coming back to England, one of them was even questioned by the Argentinean police, and three British journalists were held in custody. The United Nations took a hands-off approach for the time as Haig was leading the negotiations. Nevertheless, they were preparing contingency plans if they were asked to intervene by any of the sides. The UN advised the United States to end their neutral approach and put maximum pressure on Argentina.¹⁵⁷

With all this development, Thatcher called for a War Cabinet meeting once again. The main topics were the speed of the withdrawal of their forces, sanctions against Argentina, the issue of the representatives on the islands, and the negotiations after the Argentinean withdrawal. The plans Pym brought back required the British ships leaving said zones within seven days, without any guarantee of Argentineans doing the same, which Thatcher did not like. The sanctions they planned against Argentina would not be applicable the second they sign the agreement. The whole situation around the Argentinean representatives on the islands did not get any more transparent. The current proposal would still give a chance to the Argentineans to populate the islands and make the British population on the islands the minority. That statement was in complete disagreement with what Thatcher and her government were fighting for, which was to return the islands under British rule, as it was before the invasion. Even though Thatcher disagreed with specific points, Pym put the paper to the War Cabinet and wanted to go ahead with the plan. In the end, John Nott advised waiting for the Argentineans. He did not expect them to accept these conditions, and if they rejected them first, it would make the situation easier for Great Britain. The rest of the committee agreed, as they did not see the point in accepted something very similar to what they rejected a few days ago, as did Thatcher. If the Argentineans reject the proposal first, it

¹⁵⁶ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: MT message for Haig ("Falkland Islands Dispute") [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/223985>.

¹⁵⁷ Falklands: FCO Sitrep ("Falkland Islands: FCO Sitrep: 0730, 24 April: Overnight Developments") [released 2013], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/123083>.

will also make it easier to push the United States to start being more aggressive towards Argentina, as they would be seen as the reason for failing negotiations. In her biography, Thatcher even says that if the Pym's proposal passed the vote, she would have resigned as the prime minister, as the bill would be against everything she fought for.¹⁵⁸

Haig agreed to present the ideas to Costa Mendez and push them for a quick reply which did not come.¹⁵⁹ On the 26 of April, Haig told Costa Mendez that time ran out but decided to give them one last chance. To stop a conflict, Argentina had to get in touch with the British embassy immediately. If Argentina responded, he wanted to present them the offer on the last take it or leave it basis. He was unsure how the Argentine representatives would react, but it was a way of making their position completely clear. There was one last option of getting the Argentineans to communicate, which was a direct call from President Reagan to Galtieri. Haig was hoping that Galtieri would at least listen to Reagan, if not anyone else.¹⁶⁰ With the conflict becoming unavoidable, Thatcher instructed her Defence and Overseas Policy Committee to start planning the possible evacuation of the islanders, especially of the children and elderly.¹⁶¹ Since the Argentine invasion, about 100 islanders left the islands, and this number was expected to rise as the blockade of the task force might lead to a shortage of food and other essentials. The Falklands were expected to have enough supplies for about a month. Moreover, there was still a risk of the Argentinean troops becoming aggressive towards the islanders if any conflict occurred. The civilians on the islands were leaving Port Stanley looking for safety as some of them were afraid of getting caught in a crossfire.¹⁶²

As the current events suggested that the military conflict might be unavoidable, some MP's seemed as if they wanted to keep on negotiating for as long as possible. Thatcher realised that not only those MP's but also some of the general public need a reality check.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 227-229.

¹⁵⁹ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: MT message for Haig ("Falkland Islands Dispute") [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/223985>.

¹⁶⁰ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKE Washington to FCO ("Falkland Islands") [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122027>.

¹⁶¹ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Cabinet: Minutes of OD Sub-Committee on South Atlantic and the Falkland Islands - OD(SA)(82) 16th (Military and Diplomatic Issues) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122319>.

¹⁶² Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Cabinet: FCO note circulated to OD(SA) Committee - OD(SA)(82) 27 (Falkland Islands: Position of the Islanders in a Blockade) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122394>.

¹⁶³ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 231.

In the interview, she said the following.

I'm standing up for the right of self-determination, I'm standing up for our territory, I'm standing up for our people, I'm standing up for international law, I'm standing up for all those territories - those small territories and peoples the world over - who if someone doesn't stand up and say to an invader "enough, stop", they - the small countries, the peoples, the territories - all of them would be at risk and that's one reason why we've had so much support the world over and once again other countries are looking to Britain for a lead, and we mustn't fail in giving that lead.¹⁶⁴

4.5 The end of negotiations

As it was clear that Haig's negotiations were failing, the United Nations started to get involved again. Their involvement resulted in a clash between Margaret Thatcher and Michael Foot. He believed that Argentina and the United Kingdom did not comply with the Security Council Resolution from the 3 of April.¹⁶⁵

Another party that wanted to get involved in a search for resolution was Mexico. They understood the Argentine commitment to the islands but had more sympathy for Great Britain in terms of legal context. The President of Mexico, Lopez Portillo, did not want to intervene in the actions of Pym or Haig but wanted to offer Mexico as a possible venue for discussions if needed.¹⁶⁶ Discussions about other aspects also took place, but as Al Haig did not wish the United Kingdom to pursue this, they ended quickly. Thatcher shared Al Haig's opinion of not perusing the negotiations as she did not think that Mexico can offer anything significant that would help with resolve the situation.

Meanwhile, the United States, the United Kingdom and the rest of the world waited for the Argentine response to Haig's latest proposal, which was slightly modified after discussions with Francis Pym. Galtieri received American diplomat Shlademan on the 27 of April. He discussed the points with Galtieri, but he made no comments about the proposal but promised to respond by midnight. Shlademan also noted that there was a feeling of resignation among the Argentine leaders.¹⁶⁷ As the end of April was coming, and there was still no response, Pym and Henderson were stepping up the pressure on Haig to come out publicly against

¹⁶⁴ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), TV Interview for BBC1 Panorama (Falklands), Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104783>.

¹⁶⁵ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 231.

¹⁶⁶ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: No.10 record of conversation (MT, Senor Rossell de la Lama) [declassified Dec 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/222160>.

¹⁶⁷ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: State Department record of telephone conversation (Haig, Pym) [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/223922>.

Argentina and blame them for the stalling of negotiations, but without any success. Haig wanted to go back to Argentina for further negotiations¹⁶⁸, but Galtieri refused him as he was angered by the position the United States took in terms of the accident at South Georgia when the United Kingdom regained control over the islands.

When the deadline for the Argentine response passed, Thatcher decided to send a message to President Reagan.¹⁶⁹ In this letter, Thatcher asked Reagan to get involved as there was no response to the previous offer made by Al Haig, and because the deadline for their response already passed, their plans will be made as if Galtieri his government rejected the proposal.¹⁷⁰ In the end, Reagan did not have to get involved because on the same day Thatcher sent the letter, Argentines rejected Haig's proposal. They did so in a letter to Al Haig where they said that the document does not meet their demands. Therefore they have to reject the document. Nevertheless, Costa Mendez said that they are open to further negotiations, but they have to reflect the Argentine requests.¹⁷¹ Straightaway, Haig informed Pym about the latest development. He believed that not rejecting the proposal was a showing of good faith by the United Kingdom. Haig also said that President Ronald Reagan would make a public speech, although it will take a while before they openly state their position on the issue. He expected it to be ready on Friday. Al Haig also said that he would present the issue to reflect the British willingness to negotiate and seek a solution and the Argentine rejection of what he believed was a fair proposal. Haig made it clear that the United States will support the United Kingdom and the OAS in the United Nations. The United States will also take certain steps in their support of the United Kingdom. Those were the suspension of all military exports to Argentina, withholding of certification of Argentine eligibility for military sales, suspension of new export-import bank credits and guarantees and suspension of Commodity Credit Corporation Loans.¹⁷² What this meant was an end to the negotiations between the United States, United Kingdom and Argentina. However, it was not the end of negotiations.

¹⁶⁸ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: Haig message for Pym ("Falkland Islands") [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/223991>.

¹⁶⁹ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 232-233.

¹⁷⁰ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: MT letter for President Reagan (Haig's latest proposals on the Falkland Islands) [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/223999>.

¹⁷¹ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: Argentine Foreign Minister Costa Mendez letter for Haig (sovereignty over the Falkland Islands) [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/224000>.

¹⁷² Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: Haig letter for Pym (latest US proposals on the Falkland Islands) [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/224002>.

With the United States giving up, it was expected that the United Nations would take over. Tony Parsons told Thatcher that there would be significant pressure on stopping the military preparations once they come back to the Security Council. If Thatcher refuses, United Kingdom would have to use their veto, something Thatcher wanted to avoid.

The American public had a chance to express their opinion on the situation by a nationwide opinion poll. The results showed strong support for the British policy, with 60% sympathising with the United Kingdom and only 19% with the Argentinians, but a general feeling of the public was that the United States should not get involved in any fights, with 83% wanting to stay neutral and only 12% thinking that the US should help the United Kingdom.¹⁷³

Argentina started to be afraid of a potential British attack on the islands, so they issued a curfew and blackout on the islands. Costa Mendez decided to go to New York and meet with the representatives of OAS.¹⁷⁴ He tried to show the Argentine willingness to negotiate.¹⁷⁵ What he got from the meeting was another warning for both the United Kingdom and Argentina to follow the Security Council's resolution. British ambassador disagreed with the UN as he again blamed Argentina to be the aggressor, not giving the United Kingdom any other chance.¹⁷⁶

As the preparations for the potential attack were happening, Thatcher decided on a protentional use of nuclear weapons. Even though some people might have been worried, Thatcher straight away decided against the use of such a force on Argentina.¹⁷⁷

The mood in the Security Council during those days was by Parsons described as tense. There was a feeling that the United Kingdom might use force at any second, but there was no genuine attempt of solving the issue. However, Parsons expected the mood to change the next day when Haig was expected to announce the breakdown of the negotiations.

¹⁷³ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: British Information Service New York telegram to FCO ("Falkland Islands: US public opinion [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/219719>.

¹⁷⁴ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKMIS New York to FCO ("Falkland Islands [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/219487>.

¹⁷⁵ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKMIS New York to FCO ("Falkland Islands") [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/219492>.

¹⁷⁶ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: CIA Directorate of Intelligence memorandum ("Falkland Islands Situation Report #41") [declassified 2008], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/114294>.

¹⁷⁷ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: MT letter to Dennis Skinner MP (Chesterfield CND letter about the Falklands campaign and nuclear weapons) [released 2013], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/123808>.

The official announcement of the breakdown was made on the 30 of April. President Reagan told the journalists that the Argentineans armed aggression could not be allowed.¹⁷⁸

Also, on the 30 of April, a Total Exclusion Zone was announced. The Total Exclusion Zone meant that any aircraft or a ship within a 200-mile area around the islands could be attacked if they carry any reinforcements or supplies to Argentinean forces on the islands.

The British had another reason to be worried. In the proximity of the islands was an aircraft carrier, 25 de Mayo. With her War Cabinet, Thatcher decided to attack the carrier if it appeared in a suitable area. If the carrier's position met the criteria set by the War Cabinet, they believed that a right of self-defence could explain the attack.¹⁷⁹

4.6 The battle

The British decided to bomb the airport in Port Stanley and the Goose Green Airfield¹⁸⁰ even though Thatcher was worried about the bombing as it could have been seen as putting the civilians at risk. Although the targeted carrier, 25 de Mayo, managed to escape the British forces, it was not the only carrier in the area.¹⁸¹ The British focus shifted towards the Argentine cruiser General Belgrano. The cruiser was sunk on the 3 of May by two torpedoes from a British submarine, HMS Conqueror. Thatcher denied any political reasons behind the ship's sinking and said that the reasons were purely military.¹⁸² Even though General Belgrano was about 30 miles outside of the Total Exclusion Zone, the attack was still under the rules of engagement.¹⁸³ There were casualties on the Argentinean side as 368 out of 1042 crew members lost their lives. This had an impact on the British position in the Security Council and the overall world support.¹⁸⁴ For example, the Irish government spoke up against the United Kingdom, making them the aggressor. France and West Germany called for a cease-fire and a return to the negotiations in the United Nations.

The position of the British people did not make the situation any easier for Thatcher as 60% of them were unwilling to lose any British servicemen's lives, and 66% would not be prepared to lose any Falkland Islanders lives. The positive information Thatcher could have

¹⁷⁸ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 232-233.

¹⁷⁹ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 233-234.

¹⁸⁰ Middlebrook, *The Falklands War*, chap. 7.

¹⁸¹ Freedman, *The Official history of the Falklands Campaign*, 223.

¹⁸² Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 237-238.

¹⁸³ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: FCO to UKMIS New York ("Falkland Islands: Total Exclusion Zone") [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122294>.

¹⁸⁴ Middlebrook, *The Falklands War*, chap. 8.

taken from the poll by The Sunday Times was that 62% believed that it was right to use the force.¹⁸⁵

Meanwhile, Thatcher and her War Cabinet were preparing for a potential declaration of war by Argentina. They believed that Argentina was very likely to declare the status or at least give them an ultimatum.¹⁸⁶

As expected, Argentines did not let the attack on their ship be. On the 4 of April, the Argentines attacked the British ship HMS Sheffield.¹⁸⁷ This attack resulted in the first casualties of the dispute on the British side, with 40 lives lost. HMS Sheffield was one of the oldest carriers meaning the technology onboard did not give them the best possible chance of analysing the situation. The result was that the ship was not prepared for the impact, and the precautionary devices, like fire doors, were not closed.¹⁸⁸ The ship was heavily damaged, but it did not sink. The British military was left with two options. Either they would let the ship burn out and sink or tow the ship¹⁸⁹ to South Georgia.¹⁹⁰ The tow of the ship was initially the preferred option. However, the worsening condition of the ship made it impossible to tow, and the sinking of the ship was the only realistic option.¹⁹¹ During a meeting of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, it was agreed that the sinking of the ship by themselves would be better for the public eye than if the Argentines sunk the ship.¹⁹² The sinking of another ship had an impact on the diplomatic situation. Even the President of Brazil, Figueiredo, sent Mrs Thatcher a letter in which he expressed his condolences and his hope of the parties finding a way of ending the violence.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁵ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: No.10 Press Office minute for MT ("Falklands - Sunday Times Opinion Poll [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/219557>.

¹⁸⁶ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Cabinet: Alexander, Middleton and Spivey note circulated to the Official OD Sub-Committee on the South Atlantic and Falkland Islands - ODO(SA)(82) 36 (Response to an Argentine Declaration of War and Related Action) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/124435>.

¹⁸⁷ Freedman, *The Official history of the Falklands Campaign*, 256-257.

¹⁸⁸ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 239.

¹⁸⁹ Freedman, *The Official history of the Falklands Campaign*, 258.

¹⁹⁰ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: FCO notes of 44th Meeting/82 of Chiefs of Staff Committee (Intelligence Briefing, Own Troops, HMS Sheffield, Public Relations) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122222>.

¹⁹¹ Freedman, *The Official history of the Falklands Campaign*, 258.

¹⁹² Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: FCO notes of 44th Meeting/82 of Chiefs of Staff Committee (Intelligence Briefing, Own Troops, HMS Sheffield, Public Relations) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122222>.

¹⁹³ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: President Figueiredo letter to MT (message of sympathy following HMS Sheffield attack) [declassified Spt 2016], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/153027>.

During the escalating situation in the Atlantic, Francis Pym was in Washington, where another proposal was made. This time in cooperation with Peru. When Haig came with the proposal back to the United Kingdom, Thatcher did not like the proposal. Al Haig rejected any of their changes as he expected the Argentinians to reject the proposal anyway. However, this time, the situation was different. The attacks on the HMS Sheffield and General Belgrano changed the British position. During a War Cabinet meeting, Francis Pym advised accepting the proposal as he believed that the rejection of another attempt to solve the dispute would be damaging. Thatcher understood the point Pym was making, but the proposal was unacceptable. Nevertheless, she knew that she had to respond. Together with the War Cabinet, she decided to suggest some changes. They were mostly about respecting the wishes of the islanders. However, Thatcher started to get tired by the constant attempts of weakening the British position. She was so irritated by the attempts that she, once again, turned straight to President Reagan.¹⁹⁴ What she got in return was a letter in which he urged Thatcher to accept the Americo-Peruvian proposal as he believed it was their best option.¹⁹⁵

4.6.1 The last weeks

With the negotiations continuing, Mitterrand was once again in London, and Thatcher used the opportunity to push the sanctions against Argentina. Thatcher was disappointed by the decision of community ministers to keep the sanctions voluntary.¹⁹⁶

On Tuesday 18, Thatcher met with her War Cabinet once again. Nevertheless there was a critical decision to be made. The decision was about the landing on the islands. After the discussion was finished, it was agreed that they would go ahead with the landing if the weather conditions were suitable.¹⁹⁷

As Thatcher expected, Argentina rejected the last proposal, and as she decided earlier, they made the proposal public.¹⁹⁸ When Thatcher announced the proposal's publishing, she was

¹⁹⁴ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: MT letter for President Reagan (Falkland Islands crisis) [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/224059>.

¹⁹⁵ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: President Reagan letter for MT (Falkland Islands crisis: negotiations with Argentina) [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/224061>.

¹⁹⁶ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 246.

¹⁹⁷ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: Cabinet: Minutes of OD Sub-Committee on South Atlantic and the Falkland Islands - OD(SA)(82) 37th (Diplomatic and Military Issues) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122340>.

¹⁹⁸ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Cabinet: Minutes of OD Sub-Committee on South Atlantic and the Falkland Islands - OD(SA)(82) 38th (Diplomatic and Military Issues) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 22, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122341>.

met with a positive reaction from the Parliament supporting her decision. Even the opposition realised that it was essential to stay united in the difficult situation they were in.¹⁹⁹ Later that day, the landing was agreed upon by the entire Cabinet. On the 21 of May, Britain returned to the Falklands by landing in San Carlos. The landing was successful, and there were no casualties on the British side.²⁰⁰ On the other hand, five British ships were damaged, two of them seriously.²⁰¹ The events meant that Tony Parsons would have a difficulties defending Britains case in front of the Security Council. However, in the opinion of Margaret Thatcher, he was doing an excellent job.²⁰² Thanks to his skills, a new resolution was born as the UNSCR502, but it would require Argentina to withdraw from the islands.²⁰³ British actions did not go well with Argentina and led to an attack on HMS Coventry. The bombing of the ship resulted in the first casualties on the British side as nineteen members died due to the attack. In the next few days, the fighting between the sides continued with the attacks on the Atlantic Conveyor.

Argentinean foreign minister Costa Mendez became much more vocal and aggressive in the Security Council as he spoke against the support for the United Kingdom, especially from the United States.²⁰⁴ As a result, Al Haig was pushing Thatcher to come back to the council and negotiate, but she made it clear that she and her Parliament were no longer willing to negotiate having landed on the islands. Another positive for Thatcher, at that time, was the support of the opposition. For example, Eric Ogden, a Labour Member of Parliament, thanked her for her work and mentioned his agreement with the steps Thatcher's administration was taking.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁹ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), HC S: [Falkland Islands], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 22, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104943>.

²⁰⁰ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 248.

²⁰¹ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: Nott statement on San Carlos landings ("Statement by Secretary of State for Defence on Friday 21st May") [released 2013], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 22, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122962>.

²⁰² Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Cabinet: Minutes of OD Sub-Committee on South Atlantic and the Falkland Islands - OD(SA)(82) 42nd (Political and Military Issues) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 22, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122345>.

²⁰³ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Cabinet: Minutes of OD Sub-Committee on South Atlantic and the Falkland Islands - OD(SA)(82) 45th (Political and Military Issues) [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 22, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122348>.

²⁰⁴ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: Haig memorandum to President Reagan ("OAS and Falkland Islands Dispute") [published 2015], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 22, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/224175>.

²⁰⁵ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: MT letter to Eric Ogden MP ("Falkland Islands Governments' representation in London") [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 22, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/124226>.

Thatcher's situation got complicated once again as the Americans were unwilling to give up on the negotiations. The new proposal was not acceptable for the United Kingdom as it also involved Brazil. However, Thatcher knew that they have to keep the good relationship with the United States going, and a rejection of their plan could severely weaken their cooperation. In Thatcher's eyes, the military victory would have a more significant impact than a diplomatic one. On the other side, the Americans preferred the diplomatic defeat and wanted to avoid the Argentinean army being destroyed by the British. Thatcher described the situation to President Reagan in a long phone call on the 31 of May. Reagan understood Thatcher's position and agreed to continue the talks on a G7 summit.²⁰⁶

In the meantime, there were multiple requests to a cease-fire, for example, from Uruguay.²⁰⁷ When Thatcher was in Versailles due to the G7 Summit, the United Nations tried to pass a new peace plan, stepping up the pressure on Great Britain to a cease-fire. Thanks to a Japanese decision to vote against Britain, the plan passed. The passing forced Thatcher to use the veto, which bought the British military time to finish the reposition of the Falklands.²⁰⁸

After multiple days of fighting, the Argentineans were getting beaten, which led to Menéndez wanting to give up and accept Resolution 502. Galtieri wanted to continue, but the situation did not allow it.²⁰⁹

On the evening of the 14 of June, Thatcher finally received the news she was waiting for. After weeks of fighting, Argentina surrendered as British Troops secured Port Stanley. Later that night, Thatcher made a speech in the House of Commons and announced the British victory.²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: White House record of telephone conversation (Reagan-MT) [President calls MT urging ceasefire plan] [declassified 2016], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 22, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/205626>.

²⁰⁷ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), Falklands: UKE Montevideo to FCO ("Falkland Islands: Cease Fire") [declassified 2012], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 23, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/124043>.

²⁰⁸ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 256.

²⁰⁹ Martin Middlebrook, *Task Force, 1982* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 378.

²¹⁰ Thatcher MSS (digital collection), HC Stmt: [Falkland Islands] (Argentinian surrender) [audio], Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed April 23, 2021, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110952>.

4.7 The aftermath

The total number of casualties was 255 on the British side²¹¹ and 746 on the Argentinean side.²¹²

There were no big celebrations of the victory once the troops came back. Many people felt that there was no reason for the British troops to fight and lose their lives for what seemed to be a national failure. Nevertheless, with time the opinion of the general public changed. People realised that the actions had to be done and were happy with their success. The events of 1982 helped to renew not only national pride but also the self-confidence of the Britts.²¹³ The war had a positive result not only on Margaret Thatcher but also on the British people.²¹⁴ The success helped Thatcher significantly raised the Conservative party's popularity from 18.5% in December 1981 to 41% in July 1982. With this increase, the victory of the Conservatives in the 1983 federal election came as no surprise.²¹⁵ The feeling of decline and struggle among the general public disappeared as the success renewed the sense of pride, and people started to believe that the situation will get better.²¹⁶ Later in her political career, Thatcher played a major role during EU negotiations, for example, signing the 1986 Single European Act.²¹⁷ Thatcher stayed as the head of the Conservative party until 1990 when John Major replaced her.²¹⁸

The same cannot be said about Galtieri. The Argentinean people were disappointed with the actions of the government and their soldiers. The army lost all its authority, and there were even attempts to storm the presidential palace by the angry civilians. Galtieri was ousted as the president of Argentina on the 17 of June. The Radical party won the next elections on the 30 of October 1983 with Raoul Alfonsín as a leader.²¹⁹ The new government wanted to punish those who were responsible for the failure. Galtieri, together with nine other colleagues, was sentenced to imprisonment for the crimes committed during their reign.²²⁰

²¹¹ Middlebrook, *Task Force, 1982*, 383.

²¹² Middlebrook, *Task Force, 1982*, 384.

²¹³ Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands* (London: M. Joseph, 1983), chap. 17.

²¹⁴ Anderson, *The Falklands War, 1982*, 90-91.

²¹⁵ Mercat, *The Falklands War An Imperial History*, 150.

²¹⁶ Anderson, *The Falklands War, 1982*, 90.

²¹⁷ William Mulligan and Brendan Simms, *The Primacy of Foreign Policy in British History, 1660-2000: How Strategic Concerns Shaped Modern Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). 315.

²¹⁸ Tim Bale, *The Conservative Party: From Thatcher to Cameron* (Cambridge: cCambridge Polity Press, 2016) chap. 2.

²¹⁹ Anderson, *The Falklands War, 1982*, 89.

²²⁰ Middlebrook, *The Argentine fight for the Falklands*, chap.19.

The war also had a positive impact on the lives of the Islanders. The islands became a popular tourist destination as the islands offer the opportunity to visit the battlefields and see the wildlife. Regular flights and more frequent shipping also came as a result with the radio services and television also improving. The future of the islands now looks as bright as ever because of potential oil fields in the proximity of the islands making the islands a potentially rich area in the future.²²¹

²²¹ Anderson, *The Falklands War, 1982*, 92.

CONCLUSION

The influence of Margaret Thatcher cannot be underestimated. Only a few people managed to make such a difference in the world. One of the things Margaret Thatcher will be remembered the most is the Falklands War. It is difficult to say if there would even be a war without Margaret Thatcher. Many British politicians did not consider the Falklands to be essential for the United Kingdom. Some of them were willing to give the islands to Argentina under President Leopoldo Galtieri and his military junta. However, that was not the case for Margaret Thatcher. She decided to fight for the right of self-determination of the islanders who felt British and wanted to stay as a part of the United Kingdom, even though she knew the decision might not raise her popularity. The United Kingdom was struggling during those times. People were fighting for their jobs, and seeing their country spending money to defend small islands in the middle of nowhere was strange, to say at least.

Nevertheless, even though many factors played against Thatcher thanks to her role during the negotiations between the United States, Security Council and other countries involved in the dispute and her decision to fight against the Argentinean use of force, she managed to give the islanders what they wanted. This dispute was not only the case between Argentina and the United Kingdom, but it also set an example for other disputes and maybe managed to prevent similar conflicts elsewhere. Thatcher showed how important it is to stand for what people believe no matter what the others say.

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