

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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European Political Co-operation

Report on Meeting of Political Committee, Brussels

9 April 1982

1. The Political Committee held a special meeting to discuss the Falkland Islands situation. Ireland was represented by Mr. P. MacKernan, Political Director, Mr. D. Connolly, Permanent Representation, Brussels, Mr. B. Moran, Political Division, Mr. A. Agnew, Economic Division and Mr. R. H. O'Toole, European Correspondent.

2. The Presidency opened the meeting and gave the floor to the UK. The UK referred to the strength of the national mood in the UK over the Falklands crisis. Wednesday's debate in the House of Commons underlined the British government's determination and the commitment of the Prime Minister and other members of the Government to take the necessary action. It was a mistake to compare the situation with Suez in October 1956 when there had been deep divisions within Britain; the attitude was more akin to the spirit of September 1939 when national unity transcended the opportunities for party advantage. The national resolve to wipe out what Lord Carrington in his resignation letter had called a "humiliating national affront" should not be underestimated. The UK reaction is not just super-nationalistic, however, as there is a very strong conviction that if the Argentines were seen to profit in any way from an act of naked aggression, there could be serious consequences for aggression against other territories whether independent or not.

3. The Security Council Resolution No. 502 of 3 April is the key text which set out the parameters of a solution. It is the UK objective to secure compliance with the terms of the resolution. The UK is convinced that Argentine compliance can be achieved provided that a clear balance of advantage for Galtieri to do so can be constructed. Such a balance could be created by the following three elements:

- (i) Element of Strength: This consisted of the British task force, the zone of exclusion due to apply from 0400 GMT on Monday, 12 April, a determination to use the task force and

and to apply the exclusion zone on the basis of Article 51 of the UN Charter. Without the element of strength, there would be no effort of compliance by Argentina.

(ii) Political Measures: The UK was deeply appreciative for the support given by those member states on the Security Council, by the Ten in their statement of 2 April, by the Presidency in organising the various meetings at Community level. Pressure could be maintained by further national statements and possibly statements by the Ten as circumstances unfolded. However, if governments of the Ten had difficulties, they could at least be helpful with their silence. Among the possible political measures which the UK thought partners should consider are:-

- breaking off diplomatic relations or recalling Ambassadors for consultations (Belgium has recalled its Ambassador but France does not wish to withdraw Ambassadors on the grounds that Heads of Mission could serve as a concrete and practical channel for further diplomatic pressure on Argentina. No other partner responded to this suggestion).
- Action at the UN Special Committee on the Non-Use of Force. (The UK had made a statement to the Committee on 7 April denouncing the Argentina invasion as a conspicuous breach).
- The UN Special Committee on Decolonisation would meet on 24 April but the UK did not think that this was the best forum in which to be active.
- The Committee on Disarmament. (The UK made a statement on 8 April).
- The Spring Meeting of ECOSOC is due to start on 13 April and the plenary session on 15/16 April would consider a proposal by Costa Rica proposing an International Year and Day of Peace. The UK proposed to make a statement on this issue denouncing the action of Argentina. Co-ordination among the Ten in New York might also take place when the time was ripe.

- Towards the end of April (26 April) ECOSOC would consider Human Rights under item 9 of its agenda and the UK had considered tabling a resolution but is disinclined to do so for the moment because any new UN resolution might detract from Security Council Resolution 502. The UK and the Ten could however make statements on Argentina's bad human rights record and their scepticism about Galtieri's promises to respect the rights of the Falklanders.
  
- Other means of indicating disapproval to the Argentines who are distinctly startled by the strength of the international reaction (e.g. statement of 2 April by the Chairman of the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation, failure by the Non-Aligned meeting in Kuwait to discuss the issue).

(iii) Economic Measures: The UK said that Argentina was very vulnerable to economic pressures. Its total external debt, both short and long term, was of the order of \$34.5 billion and the amount needed in 1982 to refinance this debt would be \$ 4.4 billion. In order to raise this money, Argentina was dependent on three sources: liquid foreign exchange reserves mainly held in bank deposits, export receipts and continued borrowing. The UK had frozen Argentine assets in British banks, had banned imports to the UK of Argentine goods, and was discouraging and preventing further loans to Argentina. The UK wanted partners' support on the last two of these measures. The specific elements on which the UK sought further support are:-

- a ban on exports of military supplies, including arms and equipment already ordered, licensed and paid for;
- a ban on imports from Argentina to the Community on the basis of Article 224;
- support for the Commission proposal to delete Argentina from the GSP scheme;
- no new export credits to Argentina;
- discourage further lending to Argentina.

The UK concluded by saying that the first task of the Political Committee is to finalise a political stand in order to facilitate the task of COREPER in reaching economic conclusions.

4. In a tour de table, which began with Denmark, all partners expressed support for the UK and the objective of implementing Security Council Resolution 502. Denmark said that the Danish government had made a statement on the issue and the Ten should follow up their statement of 2 April by their readiness to take further steps aimed at bringing pressure to bear on Argentina. Denmark was prepared to go as far as a common basis could be found within the Ten. Germany said that it strongly supported Britain as its ally and friend. The Government had decided to end all deliveries of military supplies. Germany had tried to influence Brazil's position. Greece referred to the condemnation by the Greek Prime Minister on 7 April. On economic measures, Greece was willing to go along with all measures decided by all other Community partners. France said that its attitude was guided by two principles: First, no illegitimate act of force should go without sanction, particularly if it flouted the authority of the UN Security Council; Second, it was necessary to show solidarity with the UK - a friend, partner and ally. In addition, it was in the European interest that this solidarity be expressed - it would be a great loss if it was not expressed. It was important to ensure that the Security Council resolution be followed up in all its parts. France was ready to consider the various political measures open to the Ten and was favourable to economic measures by all Community member States.

5. Ireland said that the serious situation which had arisen as a result of the Argentine military intervention had a number of important implications for Ireland. First, it has implications for our traditional bilateral relations with two countries with which we had full diplomatic relations. Second, it has implications for the Community, which was being called upon to take sanctions. Third, it has implications for our participation in international fora, especially the UN Security Council, and our desire to see upheld the principles of international law. Although the Irish position on the question of ultimate sovereignty of the Falkland Islands did not coincide with that of the UK, our position at the Security Council was firmly against the Argentine recourse to force and the violation of international law that had occurred. We were in favour of using the means at our disposal to help achieve the specific objectives of the Security Council Resolution. And since the UK request for support was made on the basis of that Resolution, we were also conscious of the necessity to show Community solidarity. However, solidarity was a reciprocal and dynamic process (implying that support by the Ten on this issue should evoke a British response in due course on economic issues). As regards the specific economic measures sought by the UK, these would of course have to be discussed fully by colleagues in COREPER, but it should be possible to agree on measures that would be taken by all of the Ten in common and with the specific objective of bringing about full implementation of the Security Council Resolution.

The UK suggestions for political action in various UN fora would have to be considered further. There seemed to be one lacuna in the UK approach and that was the question of when and if there would be further resort to the UN Security Council. This question was particularly relevant to the issue of sanctions. Notwithstanding the threat of a Soviet veto, the US had in fact requested the Security Council to impose sanctions in the case of the Iranian hostage crisis and it was only after a Soviet veto that the US and the Community had decided on sanctions against Iran. It would be important to focus on the precise purpose of sanctions and relationship to the enforcement provisions set out in the UN Charter, especially if any armed conflict should take place, since the act of imposing sanctions was a step with consequences for the relations of the Ten with the region as a whole. Finally, Irish representatives had been instructed to be as helpful as possible in the UN Security Council if and when the timing was right to consider elements of a diplomatic solution in which the UN would have a role to play.

6. Italy underlined the importance of the UN Security Council Resolution and the need for Community solidarity with the UK. With these in mind, Italy was ready to discuss what common economic measures could be taken. Foreign Minister Colombo had discussed the matter with UN Secretary General de Cueller in Rome and the latter had indicated that the UN was ready to help towards a solution when asked to do so. Luxembourg expressed full support for the UK and was ready to take the economic measures requested including action against imports from Argentina and further action in various international organisations. The Netherlands viewed the Argentine invasion as a flagrant breach of international law and expressed strong support for the UN Security Council Resolution. The Netherlands had decided to put an embargo on military supplies to Argentina and was ready to consider the UK request for economic measures in COREPER. The Commission said that it was ready to undertake the necessary steps for the Community institutions to follow through on a political decision. Belgium said that its position was founded on two principles: (i) the breach of international law that had occurred and (ii) solidarity with the UK. Belgium had recalled its Ambassador in Buenos Aires for consultations and had called in the Argentine Ambassador in Brussels to protest against the invasion. Arms supplies to Argentina had been suspended and Belgium was ready to join with other partners in taking common political and economic steps against Argentina.

7. Following the tour-de-table, the UK intervened to reply to the discussion. At the initial stages of the crisis, the UK had focussed its diplomatic action mainly on the Commonwealth countries, particularly since 7 members of the Commonwealth belonged to the Latin American/Caribbean/OAS region. The reaction from the Commonwealth was encouraging. The UK appreciated greatly the eloquent statements of European solidarity and referring to the Irish intervention said that a forceful expression of European solidarity on this matter could have quite a significant impact on attitudes in Britain to the Community. On further action at UN Security Council, the UK did not favour a second discussion at this time. The Resolution of 3 April was clear and simple. A new discussion could introduce new elements and perhaps a new resolution and complicate the search for a solution. The line-up in voting might not turn out to be the same as it had on the previous occasion. The UK would therefore refrain from raising the matter for the moment in the UN Security Council. The UK clear preference was for a peaceful solution to the crisis and in order to create the conditions for such a solution it was important to multiply the political and economic consequences of Argentina's failure to adhere to the terms of the Security Council Resolution. There was every reason to think that apprehension was growing in Buenos Aires about such consequences. The UK wanted the meeting of Political Directors to publicise a communique setting out the Community's position so to provide a framework for subsequent discussion by COREPER of economic measures.

8. The Presidency read out a draft text, which appeared to have been prepared in advance of the meeting, and drafting commenced on the basis of the elements in Presidency's text. Denmark wanted prior agreement on a political text that would provide a basis for Community action under Article 224 of the EEC Treaty. Ireland was prepared to participate in drafting a text that would indicate the overall political direction of what all of the Ten would be prepared to do in common with the aim of implementing UN Security Resolution 502. However, time would be required for the various ideas/elements to be cleared in capitals before publication. The UK wanted decisions at the meeting and not recommendations to capitals. It could accept the elements of the Presidency draft but wished to delete the reference to the Ten supporting "any initiative leading to return for a peaceful solution of the conflict" as this could be interpreted in Britain as implied criticism of the UK action in sending the naval task force to the South Atlantic. Ireland reiterated that while its delegation could participate in drafting on a referendum basis, it was under instructions to seek approval of any decision proposed and time would be required to obtain such approval. It was agreed that the Political Directors would agree a *releve de conclusions* in the normal manner (i.e. it would remain

a confidential and internal document) and that when the Presidency had received clearance by the deadline at 1200 GMT on Saturday, 10 April, a modified version of the releve would be published as a Ten statement. In the meantime, COREPER could take the confidential releve as a point of reference for its consideration of the economic measures. (Attached as Annexes I and II are the texts of (i) the releve de conclusions (ii) the Ten statement as finally issued).

9. Before the meeting adjourned for lunch, the UK gave a brief account of the previous night's meeting in London between Mrs. Thatcher/Mr. Pym/Mr. Nott and Mr. Haig and the US party (Annex III).

10. The Presidency asked delegations to keep open the possibility of further meetings, depending on developments. The matter could be discussed at COPOL on 22/23 April and by Ministers en marge of the Council on 26/27 April.

*Phot*

Political Division  
10 April 1982.

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