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Statement by the Taoiseach, Mr. Charles J. Haughey, T.D.,
to Dail Eireann on the Falklands Crisis at 3.30 p.m. on
Tuesday, 18 May, 1982.

I propose to make a statement informing the House of the latest position on the Falklands crisis particularly in the light of last night's meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg.

In my statement to the House on Tuesday last, 11 May, I explained comprehensively the principles that have guided the Government's policy in relation to the crisis in the South Atlantic and the development of our attitudes and actions in the light of those principles and the evolution of what has been a constantly changing situation.

I know that the consistent and constructive approach we have adopted has received very wide support among our people. I am also satisfied, on the basis of reports from our diplomatic missions, that our policy has earned us considerable respect in many countries around the world.

Given the now very dangerous situation in the South Atlantic to which we have given the closest attention on a daily and at times hourly basis, I feel I should again set out the main elements of the Government's position and also to clear up some of the erroneous statements and assertions made in the House last week by the Leader of the Opposition.

The Government's concern in this crisis has been motivated from the start in the belief that we had an obligation to be helpful

in trying to avert conflict and to ensure that the crisis would be defused and settled in a way that would be satisfactory to both parties.

Our membership of the U.N. Security Council imposes a particular obligation on us to play an active and constructive role in contributing to the best of our ability to resolve existing or new disputes and conflicts. This in fact is what we have done in the present crisis.

Our ^{close links} friendly relationship with both parties in dispute, reinforced the concern we share with all States for the avoidance of armed conflict. The Irish Government and people grieve for the loss of young lives and sympathise deeply with the bereaved. Indeed, our overriding concern throughout has been, as indicated on 10 April by our Minister for Foreign Affairs, to do what we can to help avert a larger conflict and further casualties. Other objectives have been to uphold the principles of the rule of law and the peaceful settlement of disputes and to promote progress towards an honourable settlement achieved through peaceful and diplomatic means. Because it addressed those objectives and because of Argentina's unlawful armed intervention in disregard of a unanimous call by the Security Council we supported Resolution 502.

It was our assessment from the outset that implementation of the resolution could best be secured by an active role on the

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part of the United Nations which has a range of resources available for precisely this purpose. Our Permanent Representative put down a marker in relation to the availability of those facilities in his speech on the occasion of the adoption of Resolution 502. In the period immediately following, more detailed consideration was given to the nature of a United Nations effort including the appropriate elements of a further Security Council resolution that would be required to give the necessary authority for some of the steps that appeared appropriate. Thus, far from it being true, as suggested by Deputy FitzGerald that we were on the 4th May bereft of ideas for a resolution of the Security Council, the main elements of such a resolution had been identified a month earlier.

Follow-up on these ideas was held over while the diplomatic efforts of the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Haig, were under way.

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When it became apparent on 1st and 2nd May that the U.S. efforts had been unable to overcome the difficulties in the way of an agreement, the Government issued a statement on 2nd May expressing serious concern at the deteriorating situation. We urged that the possibilities offered by the United Nations should be fully exploited and that further military escalation be avoided, otherwise the task of negotiations would be all the more difficult.

This appeal was quickly followed by the sinking of the Argentine vessel, the General Belgrano with substantial loss of life which in turn was rapidly followed on the Tuesday by the destruction of the British ship, HMS Sheffield, with further casualties.

We were simultaneously aware from the reports reaching us from New York - and again contrary to what has been unwarrantedly suggested by the Leader of the Opposition last Tuesday - that the United Nations Secretary-General was offering his services to the parties for a further attempt to reach a peaceful settlement. The essential point, completely missed by Dr. FitzGerald, is that on the basis of what was happening on the seas of the South Atlantic, what was being said publicly by spokesmen on both sides and what we were learning from our diplomatic sources and contacts, it appeared all too possible that neither party had a positive attitude to the immediate involvement of the United Nations. To people and Governments throughout the world there appeared to be a grave danger that what one British newspaper has termed "the logic of war" would gain the ascendancy and that the search for a negotiated solution would come to an abrupt end.

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In these circumstances, the Government acted in a manner that pulled people up short and that helped to halt the drift towards a major conflict involving all the forces on both sides, with all the dangers of other countries being drawn into the maelstrom. We took an initiative to restore primacy to diplomacy and the search for a peaceful and mutually acceptable settlement. The Government's statement of the 4th May had two major elements. The first of these was an indication that we would seek an immediate meeting of the Security Council.

As usual, we could rely on Deputy FitzGerald's characteristic inability to see the wood for the trees. In his statement in the Dail he completely ignored the actual sequence of events that followed the Government's statement. Instead, he made a series of unsupported and baseless allegations in relation to our call for a meeting of the Security Council. He wrongly speculated that the Government did not take into account the advice and information available to us from our diplomats.

We took it fully into account. He incorrectly suggested that the request was hurriedly withdrawn. In fact, it is still on the table. He alleged that the meeting was indefinitely postponed.

In fact, on 5 May a series of informal meetings and consultations took place giving rise to a statement by the President of the UN Security Council.

I have already dealt with his suggestion that we had no clear idea of the appropriate elements in a draft resolution of the Security Council. With this he coupled comments suggesting he believed the Government statement either did include or should have included all the elements of such a resolution. Again, he misses the point that the essential object of the statement was, as Ambassador Dorr has well expressed it, to shout stop. What was needed for this purpose was a shout, sharp text, not a lengthy statement going into all the details of our views.

The place to unveil the full terms of a resolution which we at all times envisaged as including a reiteration of the call for withdrawal of Argentine troops, as well as other elements relating to the further role of the United Nations, was of course New York, and the time was at the appropriate stage and within the framework of Security Council discussions.

I return to the question evaded by Deputy FitzGerald: what sequence of events followed our call? Certainly, the Secretary-General suggested to us that a formal meeting of the Council should be held over until the final results of his contacts with the parties were known. Deputy FitzGerald made great play with this. He is welcome to any debating point he believes himself to have scored. For our part, the Government, far from being discomfited, are happy that with the prospect of a formal meeting of the Security Council in the background, the Secretary-General was able to establish a framework for negotiations. There is no doubt - and the Secretary-General has himself acknowledged on more than one occasion - that our call strengthened his hand and ensured that instead of grinding to a halt, diplomatic negotiations returned to the centre of the stage and took place where they should take place - within the U.N. framework.

On the question of EEC sanctions, I would expect Deputy FitzGerald to understand the importance both of Irish neutrality and of solidarity within the European Community and of the need carefully to balance these important considerations and of the difficulty of doing so. However, since he has shown himself

to be confused, I will try again to explain the position.

The Government went along with sanctions with reluctance. We had reservations about the apparent tendency towards a proliferation of economic sanctions, the effectiveness of which is very doubtful, especially when they cannot be universally applied. However, a persuasive case was made that in this instance the primary effect would be to give a clear political signal that forceful seizure of territory was intolerable and could not be perpetrated with impunity. On this basis and in a spirit of Community solidarity, we fell in with the consensus of our partners on the clear understanding, certainly so far as we were concerned but I believe generally, that the measures were intended to reinforce political and diplomatic efforts to secure a peaceful negotiated settlement in accordance with Resolution 502. By the 4th of May, in the circumstances I have already recalled, the situation had completely changed. ^{The level of} ~~Full scale~~ ^{intensified} ~~hostilities~~ had commenced and it appeared that backs might be turned, on both sides, on negotiations. We were faced with the prospect that sanctions would operate and be seen to operate in a situation of military escalation. In these circumstances and in view of our neutrality, the Government had to review our support for sanctions. We indicated that in our view their continuation in a situation such as appeared to be then emerging, would no longer be appropriate. We were conscious that the relevant Community Regulation contained provision for a review before the expiry date of 17th May of whether the measures should be

extended, amended or repealed. This required a proposal from the Commission.

While our view was put to his colleagues by the Minister for Foreign Affairs last weekend, no such proposal was tabled. Our partners considered that the measures should remain in force. There was a consensus that the measures were intended to advance a diplomatic settlement, not a military solution. Since negotiations were once more in train and there had been a marked reduction in hostilities in this constantly changing situation, it was felt that it would not be right to lift the sanctions in advance of the expiry of the Community Regulation which, of course, under Community law, remained binding on us. On the other hand, it was agreed that a decision on any extension of the measures after 17th May should be left over until closer to that date. Clearly, Member States wished to be in a position to monitor the evolution of the situation and to decide their attitude by reference to the continuation and progress of meaningful negotiations, on the one hand and the possible escalation or de-escalation of hostilities, on the other.