

Lord Carrington tells why he resigned

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By David Cross

Lord Carrington said last night that he had resigned as Foreign Secretary because there had been a great national humiliation over the Falkland Islands.

The shock to the British Parliament and people had been very great he told BBC television's *Panorama* programme. He had been in charge of Britain's foreign policy and did not believe that it was right for him to "behave as if nothing has happened. I thought the honourable thing to do was to resign", he said.

Nevertheless, Lord Carrington said, thumping his fist into his cupped hand to emphasize the point, "I agree 100 per cent" with Mrs Thatcher's decision to send a large naval force to the South Atlantic. "I back her absolutely to the hilt. There is no question whatsoever of that."

In this interview and another with a BBC television news reporter, Lord Carrington admitted that he had been wrong to underestimate the Argentine threat to the Falkland Islands. But he believed that with the same intelligence he had been receiving, any other foreign secretary would have acted in the same way.

For more than 20 years, successive Argentine governments had been blowing hot and cold about their claims to the sovereignty of the Falklands.

British and Argentine officials had held very amicable talks in New York in February about the sovereignty dispute. It was only when the delegates returned to their respective capitals that it became clear the Argentine

military government was losing patience.

He had then received a message from the Government in Buenos Aires stating that progress at the New York talks had not been good enough. But all the advice he received continued to suggest that Buenos Aires wanted to resolve the sovereignty dispute by the end of the year and would resort to force only after that.

Lord Carrington conceded that there had been bellicose noises in the Argentine press at the beginning of March but this had not been unusual. The Government in Buenos Aires had decided only as recently as last Monday to launch an invasion, he believed.

Asked whether he thought British intelligence about Argentine intentions was wrong, he said that it was his judgment of the information which had been wrong. He still believed that the landing of the Argentine scrap metal merchants on South Georgia had originally been fairly innocent.

He had not wanted to leave the foreign office. "Who wants to resign from being Foreign Secretary? But you can't ignore it", he said. He had to take responsibility for his actions and his judgment had been seriously questioned.

He did not see how he could be very valuable to the Government during the coming weeks if his judgment was constantly being questioned.

Foreign Office officials were shattered by Lord Carrington's decision to resign. He had been widely regarded by them as one of the best British foreign secretaries for many years.