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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

28 May 1982

Dear Brian,

Prime Minister's attendance at the Second United Nations Special Session on Disarmament

The Prime Minister saw your Secretary of State, Mr. Hurd and Mr. Blaker this morning to discuss her attendance at UNSSD II.

The Prime Minister said that she was wondering whether, in view of the Falklands crisis, it now made sense for her to speak at the Special Session. She supposed that there must be a real prospect that a fair number of delegates would walk out when she began her speech.

The Foreign Secretary said that subject to developments in the Falklands situation over the next fortnight, his advice to her was that she should go to New York. Nothing had happened to change the fact that multi-lateral and properly verified disarmament remained a positive objective of the British Government. He believed it unlikely that there would be a mass walk-out in protest against our Falklands policy, and he found it difficult at present to envisage circumstances which would prevent her attending the Session. It would be damaging to the Government's position both in the House and in public if she did not go and speak. Mr. Hurd added that there was no sign at present that Britain was likely to be hounded in the United Nations.

The Prime Minister said that, in the light of Mr. Pym's advice, she would confirm her earlier decision to attend the Special Session. But the background to the Falklands crisis would make her speech itself doubly important. It would be all the more necessary for our ideas on disarmament to be expressed in fresh language. She thought that the speech should have, if possible, an historical perspective. It would probably also be desirable to talk about security as well as disarmament as such, if the speech was to be properly balanced and rounded. Above all, it had to be a speech which contained a message which ordinary people, and in particular the British public, would readily understand.

/ Mr. Blaker

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- 2 -

Mr. Blaker said that a comprehensive speech by the Prime Minister on the lines she had in mind would be an invaluable reference point for the Government for the future.

Mr. Hurd said that it was important that the Prime Minister's speech was a speech about disarmament and not about the Falklands.

The Prime Minister said that she might want to consult a number of people outside Government about the speech. In the first instance she would have a word with Hugh Thomas to see what ideas he could offer.

In a brief discussion about bilateral meetings which the Prime Minister might have while she was at the Special Session, it was agreed that she should see the Secretary General, but that any other meetings need not be arranged until nearer the time. She would also have to give television interviews while there.

I am sending copies of this letter to Peter Craine in Mr. Blaker's Office and Stephen Lamport in Mr. Hurd's Office.

Yours ever,

Anne Whitmore.

Brian Fall, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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