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LONDON
FALKLANDS DIPLOMACY
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Item 2 .

Cue: During the lengthy negotiations on the Falklands dispute, the British government has considerably modified its negotiating position in an effort to secure an agreement. Our Diplomatic correspondent, David McNeil, looks at what the government would now find acceptable.

In shifting its ground on the terms of a settlement, the government is acknowledging the obvious - there can be no going back to the way things were before the Argentine invasion. That act has changed the lives of the Islanders and the amount of say they have in their system of government. In the days immediately following the occupation, Mrs. Thatcher and her colleagues laid down a number of demands which they said must be met. The Argentine forces must be withdrawn and British administration must be restored to the Islands. Negotiations on sovereignty could be resumed but the wishes of the Islanders would remain paramount. Some of these demands are still at the centre of Britain's negotiating stance. Withdrawal must take place and the government will have nothing to do with any proposals that pre-judge negotiations on future ownership. But in two important areas, the British position has been watered down. The government is no longer insisting on the restoration of British administration and the wishes of the Islanders are no longer paramount - instead their aspirations and interests are to be taken into account. They've lost their veto powers. These changes first became clear when Argentina rejected the Peruvian peace plan which, when the details were published, confirmed the shift in the ^{British} government's standpoint. That plan was acceptable to the government - Mr Pym said as much in the House the day after the proposals had been turned down by Argentina. It's reasonable to assume therefore that the same concessions would be reflected in any peace formula produced by the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Perez de Cuellar. Given the angry response to the concessions from the right-wing of the Conservative Party, Mrs. Thatcher will be most reluctant to give any more ground as the Argentine junta strives to secure the greatest possible reward for its aggression. The Cabinet in London will want to see the Perez de Cuellar package as a whole before deciding whether to accept or reject it. And this time, the answer may well be no - not because of what the plan might contain but because it may not provide guarantees of a sufficiently binding nature. The government has become thoroughly disillusioned with the way the government in Buenos

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Aires works - or doesn't work according to your point of view. The Inner Cabinet will take a great deal of convincing that an agreement acceptable to Argentina will be implemented to the full. It's not something that the government is prepared to take on trust. Our Ambassador to the UN, Sir Anthony Parsons, will be seeking cast-iron guarantees of Argentine good faith and in that context the Americans could be asked to provide some assurances. They are still very much in contact with the Argentine leadership - a senior American government troubleshooter General Vernon Walters recently had talks in Buenos Aires. The United States wants to retain some influence over a government which forms a major part of President Reagan's anti-communist strategy in the western hemisphere. They may be backing Britain, but as soon as this affair is all over, the Americans will want to re-build a number of Latin American bridges. Those now working for a diplomatic solution to the conflict are keenly aware of the damage that would be caused if this dispute were to be resolved solely by military means. A British military victory involving the complete surrender of the Argentine forces on the Islands would enable Mrs. Thatcher to restore the British administration she is at present willing to forgo. But Argentina could hardly be expected to come to the negotiating table after a humiliating military defeat. So Britain would be stuck with the task of defending the Islands against counter-attack at great financial cost for an indefinite period - hardly the solution successive British governments have been seeking. They've been telling the Falkland Islanders for years that a realistic long-term solution to the problem lay in some form of close association with Argentina. Already the military losses on both sides have created the sort of charged atmosphere that could make meaningful co-operation impossible for months and perhaps years to come. An all-out military battle would leave a residue of bitterness and ill-will that could last for generations.

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MILITARY OPTIONS
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Item 1.

As I hear Admirals, Marshals and Generals supplementing their pensions with punditry fees I am struck by a great fantasy. It's of a presenter of one of our current affairs programmes. He reads the latest news headlines from the Falklands and then he says, 'Well, we've been joined in the studio by Lance Bombadier Henry Smith who commanded hut twelve during the '44 campaign. Tell me, Bombs, what will the task Commander do next?' As I say, fantasy. The point of course is that during the past few weeks, the whole military campaign has been so predictable, that anybody with some military knowledge, a deep interest in the subject and a grasp of the politics involved, would have been able to plot the course of the war so far. The counter-invasion of South Georgia, the setting up of no-go areas such as the total exclusion zone, the bombardment of the Falkland Islands and even the commando raid. But we've now arrived at the difficult part. Invasion. Earlier this morning Rear Admiral Woodward's flagship, the Hermes, was about ninety miles to the north of the Falklands. In steaming time, that's four hours or so away. He's now capable of calling up his assault force of amphibious craft, landing craft and troops anytime within, say, twenty-four hours. So, the theory is, that if the political go-ahead came from Whitehall, then a task force assault on the Falkland Islands would begin tomorrow night. Let's ignore the political decision and look at some of the problems for the task force and for the Argentines. The Argentine troops on the islands have as we all know had resupply problems. Even food is a problem - proving that man cannot live by sheep alone. They have been living in makeshift conditions, which soldiers are used to, but Argentine forces are not necessarily used to living like that for so long a period and without the diversions that troops accept as compensation for hardship. Their runways have suffered continued bombardment, some of their dumps and stores have been destroyed, they've lost valuable aircraft and just as important, during the past four days, they must have been at a high state of readiness. This can be an exhausting process. We don't know the state of their morale but, given all the pressures of the past four days or so, together with the now obvious proximity of the task force offshore, in the air and in the Falkland Sound, then morale must be something of a problem. But, they do have a great deal of good equipment including aircraft missiles. And these missiles work: unfortunately they are so

effective that one of them shot down one of their own Skyhawk jets the other day. They have also mobile radar units which could be used to direct Argentine land based aircraft onto the task force. But in spite of their overall problems, when it comes to fighting, it would be foolish to dismiss the seven or eight thousand troops in the Falklands as tired, ill trained, underfed conscripts. As well as being unnerving, the wang of a four and a half inch shell is capable of concentrating wonderfully the military mind. There's another disadvantage for the Argentines. During the rapid raids and bombardments they were not able to call up their land-based jets in time to take on the Harriers and frigates. The distance is too great for a short reaction time. Furthermore, the Argentine night fighting capability is not extensive. However, just as the Argentines must not be underrated, the chances of the Task Force must not be overrated. For example, if an invasion gets under way, then the Task Force would have to gather quite close to the Islands and would not have the manoeuvrability that it has at the moment. It would also have to be in the area for some time. So, it would then become very vulnerable to an Argentine air attack. Furthermore, the Argentine mainland command would have plenty of warning of a large-scale operation. Classically, it would begin with Harriers bombing Falkland positions, of other aircraft airborne or on immediate standby, of concentrated electronic jamming or a naval bombardment from ships such as HMS Plymouth and then the positioning of the Fearless and Intrepid, the Royal Marines large assault ships. Such a concentration of forces so close to the islands would be signal enough. Even if the landings were limited, say, on West Falkland, using a small number of troops pegging away at the Argentine positions - it would still be a very open and dramatic action. And as we heard at the weekend, from the Defence Secretary John Nott, there could be heavy casualties. And having taken some territory, they would have to hold it, although their's would be an easier task than the Argentines' so far. Finally of course, the military hope for a diplomatic solution, however feeble that hope. But there has now come sense of inevitability about military action. A bombing of the runway at Port Stanley is no longer Page One headline news. It is as if like Colonel Fazackerley, events will continue whatever. As most will remember, the Colonel was the wonderful character in Charles Causley's verse:

Colonel Fazacherley Butterworth-Toast
 Bought an old castle complete with a ghost
 But someone or other forgot to declare
 To Colonel Fazack that the spectre was there

As I recall, the Colonel comforted by fine sherry wine, goes into dine, ignoring the rantings and clanking of the spectre, who, if you'll forgive

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the pun, gives up the ghost and quite the castle. Among the military I talk to, there is a sense that the diplomatic rantings and clankings will not disturb the alarming process that could end in a bloody clash this week.

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