

# Briefing Note

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THE FALKLAND ISLANDS - THE PRIME MINISTER'S COMMONS SPEECH, 14.4.82

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Parliament was recalled on 14th April so that the Government might report and the House discuss the latest developments. Opening the debate, the Prime Minister said, "Our objective, endorsed by all sides of the House in recent debates, is that the people of the Falkland Islands shall be free to determine their own way of life and their own future". Their wishes "cannot be freely expressed, let alone implemented, while the present illegal Argentine occupation continues. That is why our immediate goal ... has been to secure the withdrawal of all Argentine forces .... and to secure the restoration of British administration. Our strategy has been based on a combination of diplomatic, military and economic pressures ...".

## Diplomatic Measures

Mrs. Thatcher paid tribute to the "tireless efforts" of the American Secretary of State, Mr. Haig, who had paid two visits to Britain and one to Buenos Aires. "We made clear to Mr. Haig that withdrawal of the invaders' troops must come first, and that the sovereignty of the Islands is not affected by the act of invasion".

She briefly outlined the negotiations so far, adding, "These discussions are complex, changing and difficult, the more so because they are taking place between a military junta and a democratic government of a free people ... We seek, and shall continue to seek, a diplomatic solution, and the House will realise that it would jeopardise that aim were I to give further details at this stage".

## Military Measures

The Prime Minister declared: "Diplomatic efforts are more likely to succeed if they are backed by military strength". She referred to the naval exclusion zone of 200 miles around the Falkland Islands, which came into effect on 12th April. "We see this measure as the first step towards achieving the withdrawal of Argentine forces. It appears to have exerted influence on Argentina whose navy has been concentrated outside the zone ... If the zone is challenged, we shall take that as the clearest evidence that the search for a peaceful solution has been abandoned. We shall then take the necessary action".

The naval task force, which is proceeding with all speed towards the South Atlantic, comprises two aircraft carriers, five guided missile destroyers, seven frigates, an assault ship with five landing ships and supporting vessels. A number of civilian ships has also been chartered or requisitioned, including the Canberra for use as a troop ship, and the Uganda, which will be available as a hospital ship. "Recourse to the merchant marine is traditional in time of naval emergency and their response has been wholehearted on this occasion as in the past".

Mrs. Thatcher described how men and equipment were being flown out to Ascension Island to meet up with the Task Force, and Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft were now patrolling the South Atlantic in support of our fleet.

The Ministry of Defence had announced additional measures to provide extra capability for the force over an extended period, including the recommissioning of a second assault ship, HMS Intrepid, which will



significantly add to the amphibious capability of the Task Force. Arrangements were in hand to adapt a large cargo ship for the sea lift of additional Harriers, "which will nearly double the size of the Harrier force in the South Atlantic".

### Economic Measures

The Prime Minister said: "We have been urging our friends and allies to take action parallel to our own. We have achieved a heartening degree of success". The most significant measure was the decision of our nine partners in the European Community to join us in stopping all imports from Argentina, "unprecedented in its scope and the rapidity of the decision ... an effective demonstration of Community solidarity". Last year about a quarter of all Argentina's exports went to the EEC. Our partners "were the first to realise that if aggression were allowed to succeed in the Falkland Islands, it would be encouraged the world over". Australia, New Zealand and Canada have also decided to ban imports from Argentina, to stop export credits and to halt all sales of military equipment. Many other Commonwealth countries had supported us by condemning the Argentine invasion. Compared to this almost the only country whose position has been moving towards Argentina is the Soviet Union. "We can only guess at the cynical calculations which lie behind this move".

### Force not ruled out

The Prime Minister described how the Government had recently received a message from the British Community Council in Argentina urging a peaceful solution to the present conflict. "We have replied, recognising the contribution which the British community has made to the development of Argentina - but making it plain that we have a duty to respond to the unprovoked aggression against the Falkland Islands... Of course we too want a peaceful solution, but it was not Britain who broke the peace. If the argument of no force at any price were to be adopted at this stage it would serve only to perpetuate the occupation of those very territories which have themselves been seized by force".

### Guiding Principles

The Prime Minister concluded: "In any negotiations over the coming days we shall be guided by the following principles. We shall continue to insist on Argentine withdrawal from the Falkland Islands and dependencies. We shall remain ready to exercise our right to resort to force in self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter until the occupying forces leave the Islands. Our naval task force sails on towards its destination...". Any diplomatic solution "must safeguard the principle that the wishes of the Islanders shall remain paramount. There is no reason to believe that they would prefer any alternative to the resumption of the administration which they enjoyed before Argentina committed aggression".

"The eyes of the world are now focussed upon the Falkland Islands. Others are watching anxiously to see whether brute force or the rule of law will triumph. Wherever naked aggression occurs it must be overcome. The cost now, however high, must be set against the cost we would one day have to pay if this principle went by default. And that is why, through diplomatic, economic and if necessary through military means, we shall persevere until freedom and democracy are restored to the people of the Falkland Islands".

DJN/JV