

7.4.82

### Introduction

I come to the House to open this debate less than two days after becoming Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. I am deeply conscious of the heavy responsibilities that have been placed upon me. I shall discharge them to the best of my abilities. My predecessor lifted high the reputation of Britain and British foreign policy. He made full use of his great skills and gifts and his especial flair. He registered some important achievements. He was a very fine Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, and the nation owes him its gratitude.

He had under him a very fine diplomatic service, which has served us and continues to serve us well. I look forward to working with it.

/The circumstances

The circumstances of my predecessor's departure were most unfortunate and I come to my new post at a critical time in the history of the Falkland Islands. I shall bring to this task all the determination I can command, and I approach it in a spirit of realism and, I hope, of calm.

Determination, because we intend to show Argentina and the whole world that Britain is resolved to succeed in this crisis. Realism, because I shall proceed in full recognition of the major difficulties that lie ahead. And calm, because we must give the most careful consideration to the practical options open to us and reach the right decisions as we advance towards our objectives.

The House knows what these objectives are. They were stated by my right honourable Friend the Prime Minister on Saturday. We intend to see that the Falkland Islands are freed from occupation and returned to British administration at the earliest possible moment. To do this we must look forward in confidence, and not backwards in anger.

/Argentina's

## Argentina's Aggression

The whole House and the country is struck by the appalling nature of the aggressive action the Argentine regime has committed. As recently as the end of February, as the House is aware, we had held talks with Argentina about the Falkland Islands. The Argentine Government were fully aware of Britain's position: that is to say, total firmness on the right of the Islanders to determine their own future; but subject to that, willingness - ~~even~~ <sup>indeed</sup> desire - to deal with the Falkland Islands problem by means of fair negotiation.

Why did Argentina's ruler suddenly decide in the last days of March to resort to arbitrary and brutal aggression? I suggest that part of the answer lies in the very brutality and unpopularity of the Argentine regime itself. Inflation is raging in Argentina, at the rate of 140% a year. The regime is notorious for its systematic contempt of all human rights. <sup>Since 1976,</sup> there

/have been

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have been thousands of arrests and killings, often described in a tragic and disgraceful euphemism as "disappearances". Only a few days before the invasion of the Falkland Islands there had been riots in Buenos Aires and many people had been arrested. Harassed by political unrest at home, and beset by mounting economic difficulties, the regime turned desperately to a cynical attempt to arouse jingoism among its people. The Falkland Islanders have thus become the victims of the unprincipled opportunism of a morally bankrupt regime. Our purpose is to restore their rights.

#### Recent Developments

Since the debate on Saturday there have been a number of developments and I should bring the House up-to-date. The Governor of the Falkland Islands and the marines from Port Stanley have been evacuated to this country. I am sure that the whole House will wish to join me in paying tribute to them.

/The Governor,

The Governor, Mr Rex Hunt, conducted himself with courage and dignity amid the danger and confusion. He proved himself worthy of the trust which the British Government had placed in him and of the manifest respect which he had inspired among the islanders. The Royal Marines proved equally and characteristically trustworthy. They did all that could possibly have been expected of them. They gave the invaders a sharp taste of what even a very small detachment from the British armed services can do when attacked by overwhelming force.

On Saturday, the Argentines occupied South Georgia. The small detachment of Royal Marines on that island put up a gallant and spirited resistance. But of course they could not stand up against overwhelming strength.

/The Argentines

The Argentines have also been consolidating their presence in the Falkland Islands themselves. Our estimate is that they may now have an occupation force of something over 3,000 men, and that the number ~~is~~ <sup>may</sup> still <sup>be</sup> rising. While we have no reports of direct maltreatment of the islanders, it is quite obvious that the occupation force has no intention of treating them other than as a conquered population. Tight restrictions have been placed on their activities. It is essential, at the very least, that the Argentine authorities respect their international obligations to the civilian population under the Fourth Geneva Convention, which deals with the behaviour and responsibilities of occupying powers.

/Current Actions

## Current Actions

The House is aware that we have despatched a large task force towards the South Atlantic. We are confident that it will be fully adequate for any action that may be required in exercise of our undoubted right of self-defence under the United Nations Charter. This task force is an essential part of the means for attaining our objectives. It gives us the strength from which to urge a settlement, and in the end it may only be strength that the regime in Argentina will understand.

There will be time before the task force reaches the area to do everything possible to solve the problem without further fighting. We would much prefer a peaceful settlement. We will do all we can to get one. And we shall welcome and support all serious efforts to that end. The House and the country should be in no doubt about that. But if our efforts fail, the Argentine regime will know what to expect: Britain does not appease dictators.

/This is a

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This is a tense and difficult period. We are using the interval immediately ahead for maximum diplomatic activity. The need is for all the world to bring pressure on Argentina to withdraw her armed forces from the Falkland Islands. Britain herself has already taken various measures. We have broken diplomatic relations with Argentina. The British Ambassador in Buenos Aires and most of his staff are being withdrawn. We have informed Argentina that their Consulates in Liverpool and Hong Kong must now be closed. We have increased our broadcasts in Spanish to Argentina and in English to the Falkland Islands.

A small British Interests Section will continue to work in the Swiss Embassy, and we are most grateful to the government of Switzerland, who are most expert in these matters, for agreeing to this arrangement. We have been advising the many British subjects living in Argentina to depart unless they have special reasons for remaining. We have frozen Argentine assets in this country. We have stopped

/official



official credits for exports to Argentina. We have banned the export of arms to Argentina. And, as the House was informed yesterday, we have imposed an embargo on the import of all goods from Argentina from midnight last night.

The despatch of our naval force and the economic measures we have taken should show the Argentine regime quite clearly that we mean business. Yet, if we are to convince them that aggression does not pay, we shall also need the support of the world community and all who believe in freedom.

The Security Council of the United Nations promptly and decisively endorsed the British view of the invasion of the Falkland Islands. It adopted - the day after the invasion - a Resolution put forward by Britain. That Resolution demands an immediate cessation of hostilities and an immediate withdrawal of all Argentine forces. And it calls on the governments

/of Argentina

of Argentina and the United Kingdom to seek a diplomatic solution to their differences and to respect the United Nations Charter. Britain immediately accepted the injunction to seek a diplomatic solution and observe the Charter.

But Argentina displayed her contempt for world opinion by coldly declaring that she would not comply with the Resolution. This Resolution is mandatory. It represents the expression of world opinion. It is binding in international law. I hope that the Argentine regime will be brought by the pressure of world opinion to fulfil its legal obligations.

The whole world has an interest in the fulfilment of this Resolution. There are many such territories across the world which are vulnerable to aggression from more powerful neighbours. The preservation of peace depends on the exercise of responsibility and restraint.

/It depends

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It depends on the strong not taking the law into their own hands and imposing their rule on the weak. It depends on the international community supporting the principle of self-determination and punishing those who wilfully and forcibly violate that principle. It is the Falkland Islanders who today are being deprived of their right to live in accordance with their wishes.

If the world does not oblige Argentina to restore their rights, tomorrow it will be someone else's turn to suffer aggression and occupation. The world will become an even more dangerous place.

Since 4 April, the government have been making these views known to a large number of countries across the world. We have urged them to take measures, similar to those that Britain has taken, to bring Argentina to her senses. Yesterday, my right honourable Friend the Prime Minister (added her personal weight to our efforts by) sending a personal message

/to our

to our partners in the European Community and also to other very friendly countries.

Active discussion is now under way about measures by the European Community against Argentina. We have also been in close contact with the members of the Commonwealth, many of whom have responded with support which bears witness to the strength and value of our Commonwealth links. All this diplomatic activity will continue.

The case for other countries to follow Britain in taking economic measures is very strong. The Argentine economy depends greatly on export earnings and on raising finance to pay for imports and cover the external deficit. The scope for measures by our friends is extensive. About 40% of Argentina's exports go to our major partners, including the members of the Community. Argentina frequently tries to raise funds in the leading financial centres of the Western world.

We are

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We are asking our friends to do everything they can to help us. They may not be able to take exactly the same measures as Britain herself - unison is rarely the answer in this kind of situation. But the supply of arms and military equipment to Argentina must be stopped in present circumstances. And I hope that our friends and partners will encourage their banks to make no new loans to Argentina. I hope, too, that they will follow us in terminating official export credits. Above all, we are asking friendly countries to take measures against imports from Argentina. I ask also that they should announce what they are doing. This will impress Argentina, and encourage others to follow suit.

We are confident of the support of the world community and in particular of our friends. With this support, we hope to make it clear to Argentina that withdrawal from the Falkland Islands and a negotiated settlement constitute the only legal and acceptable approach in the dispute and the only one which is in Argentina's own interests.

/The first

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The first responses to our approaches to friendly countries have been encouraging. Many countries across the world have condemned Argentina's aggression. Our friends in Europe and the United States were among the very first. Moreover, New Zealand has severed diplomatic relations with Argentina. Canada has placed an immediate ban on military supplies to Argentina, Canada and Australia have withdrawn their Ambassadors from Buenos Aires. The Netherlands, France, Belgium and Germany have taken action on arms sales. We hope that this list will soon grow much longer.

Meanwhile our naval task force is on its way to the South Atlantic. It is a formidable demonstration of our strength of will. The challenges which they may be called upon to face may also be formidable. I have no doubt that they will be equal to it. I know the House will join me in offering full support to those who are now embarked in defence of British territory and to protect the rights which we and the Falkland Islanders hold equally dear.

/Conclusion

Conclusion

It is intolerable that the peaceful people of the Falkland Islands, who are British by choice and by inheritance, should be the victims of unprovoked invasion by a powerful and covetous neighbour. It will be far from easy to reverse this situation. The difficulties speak for themselves. We shall spare no effort to reach a peaceful solution. The Falkland Islanders have reacted with courage and dignity to the rape of their Islands. I assure them now that Britain will stand by them. We have always said that their wishes are paramount. We shall do all in our power to show that their confidence in us is justified.

I know that our objective of liberating the Falkland Islands is shared in all parts of this House. If we in this country are to achieve our objective as swiftly and as peacefully as possible, then we must all unite in our resolve to succeed. Of course there has been criticism of the government's handling of the matter before the invasion. We are acutely conscious of that.

Yet I believe

Yet I believe that I judge the mood of the House and the country rightly when I say that the Government have their support in the determined course we have taken to solve the problem. What we in Britain must now do, with the support and backing of all freedom-loving countries right across the world, is to see to it that Argentina's intolerable defiance of the international community and of the rule of law is not allowed to stand.