

## 190. Draft Letter From President Reagan to British Prime Minister Thatcher<sup>1</sup>

Washington, April 29, 1982

Dear Maggie:

In view of the military and diplomatic developments of the past few days, as well as your recent letter of this morning,<sup>2</sup> I wanted you to know my views on where matters stand and how the United States will proceed.

We have just now received an Argentine response which in effect rejects our proposal.<sup>3</sup> We will therefore issue a statement Friday<sup>4</sup> on our view toward the crisis and on the steps we are taking in light of the Argentine position.

I am sure you agree that it is essential now to make clear to the world that every effort was made to achieve a fair and peaceful solution, and that the Argentine Government was offered a choice between such a solution and further hostilities. We will therefore make public a general account of the efforts we have made. While we will describe the US proposal in broad terms, we will not release it because of the difficulty that might cause you. I recognize that while you see fundamental difficulties in the proposal, you have not rejected it. We will leave no doubt that Her Majesty's Government worked with us in good faith and was left with no choice but to proceed with military action based on the right of self-defense.

You have made clear throughout this crisis that, while you have wanted above all a peaceful settlement on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 502, your government was prepared to use military means to remove Argentine forces from the Islands. Neither your good will in wanting peace nor your readiness to use force if necessary were

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, S/S Special Handling Restrictions Memos 1979–1983, Lot 96D262, Super Sensitive April 1–30 1982. Secret. A typewritten notation at the top of the draft indicates that it was produced at 2:30 p.m., April 29. No additional drafting information appears on the letter. Bremer sent the draft to Clark under an April 29 covering note, noting that it was for “urgent” approval by Reagan and stating that the message should be transmitted “as soon as possible.” A typewritten note on the covering note states that the draft was transmitted to Clark by LDX only. (Ibid.) No copy of the letter as approved and sent from Reagan to Thatcher has been found in Department of State or White House files. However, Thatcher quoted extensively from the letter in her memoirs, indicating that she received it, and noted that Reagan’s message was “very satisfactory.” (Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 211) A British copy of the message, as sent to London, is published on the Thatcher Foundation website.

<sup>2</sup> See Document 188.

<sup>3</sup> See Document 189.

<sup>4</sup> April 30. See Document 196.

ever in doubt. I know that you are as saddened as I that it has not been possible to avert hostilities, and I am heartened that you have made clear that no more than minimum essential force will be used.

It is as important as ever that we preserve the ground for a negotiated solution. While it may be possible forcibly to remove Argentine forces, the future will be fraught with instability, animosity, and insecurity if a mutually acceptable framework for peace is not ultimately found. Therefore, we should continue to work to secure a just peace. For our part, we will make clear that we stand ready to assist the parties toward this end.

Our shared principles have assured from the outset that we would work with common purpose. As you know, we have refrained from taking those actions in direct support of your position that would have made our diplomatic mission impossible. You have shown clear understanding for our judgment on this and have offered every encouragement to our effort to find a peaceful solution. This reflects the highest degree of statesmanship and confidence on your part.

There can be no doubt about our full support for you and the principles of international law and order you are defending. You can count on that support in whatever forum this issue is debated. You can also count on our sympathetic consideration of requests for assistance. We will also announce that Argentina's refusal to withdraw its invasion force and to negotiate in good faith have made it necessary for the United States to adopt a new posture toward Buenos Aires. Al Haig will be in touch with Francis Pym concerning the specific measures we will take.<sup>5</sup>

We will of course want to stay in very close touch in the days and weeks ahead. I remain convinced that our combined efforts can yield a just settlement which will strengthen the principles for which we stand, and I can only hope for the least amount of bloodshed before that goal is reached.

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<sup>5</sup> See Document 191.