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ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE,
WESTMINSTER, LONDON, SW1P 1QJ

8 May, 1982

Dear Mrs. Thatcher,

We have hesitated before writing to you since we realise the appalling strain you have endured since the Falklands crisis began. Our anxieties, however since hostilities commenced, have now reached such a point that we feel we must express them to you. We do so as we both set out for Rome at the Holy Father's request. We do not know the precise reason.

You may perhaps be aware that after the sending of the Task Force a statement was published in the Catholic press giving some ideas about the moral issues underlying the crisis. Under the principles of the just war the United Kingdom has an unmistakable claim to take the necessary steps to overturn the Argentine aggression even if this involves, as a last resort, the use of force. X However, even then, the point was made that traditional Christian morality insisted on other conditions to ensure that our conduct of hostilities remained morally justified, namely that there should be due proportion between the end to be achieved and the means used, and that there should not be an escalation of hostilities. We seriously question whether this is the case at the present time. X

Events since then have taken a serious turn for the worse and we are far from being alone among Christian churchmen in feeling grave anxiety about what has happened recently and what, to judge by reports, appears to be the accepted position of yourself and Her Majesty's Government.

The recent serious loss of life, the extension of the exclusion zone, the refusal to disavow the possibility of action against the Argentine mainland, all these sit uneasily with the declared intention to seek peace and a negotiated settlement.

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In our considered view, the Christian conscience of our people, while affirming our right to self defence, will not accept a use of force disproportionate to the original issues at stake; it will not approve a major escalation in armed hostilities and the extension of the war to the mainland of Argentina. Recent suggestions of the cease fire and plans for U.N. Trusteeship for the Islands would by contrast appear to be very positive and helpful.

It would be seriously unjust if anyone were to criticize Christian opinion in these matters as hostile to national interests. We too love our country passionately and are enormously sensitive about her conduct in the world and her position and prestige. We fear lest the true interests of our people could be damaged by such a use of force as might do violence to humanity, world peace and to mutual tolerance and good will among peoples.

At this moment of decision we offer our prayers and those of our Roman Catholic communities for peace and a just solution to the crisis without further bloodshed and suffering.

We have sent a telegram to our episcopal brothers in Argentina urging them to join us in a similar approach to their Government.

Yours sincerely,

Basil Hume
Archbishop of Westminster

Gordon J. Gray
Archbishop of St. Andrews
and Edinburgh

The Rt. Hon. M. Thatcher