

Tms - 6 APR 1982
The following are the letters of resignation from Lord Carrington, Mr Humphrey Atkins and Mr Richard Luce, published with the Prime Minister's replies. Although Mrs Thatcher accepted the Foreign Office resignations, she asked Mr John Nott to stay in his post as Defence Secretary. Their correspondence is also published. All the letters bore yesterday's date.

Lord Carrington

Dear Margaret

The Argentine invasion of the Falklands Islands has led to strong criticism in Parliament and in the press on the Government's policy. In my view, much of the criticism is unfounded. But I have been responsible for the conduct of that policy and I think it right that I should resign. As you know, I have given long and careful thought to this. I warmly appreciate the kindness and support which you showed me when we discussed this matter on Saturday. But the fact remains that the invasion of the Falkland Islands has been a humiliating affront to this country.

We must now, as you said in the House of Commons, do everything we can to uphold the right of the islanders to live in peace, to choose their own way of life and to determine their own allegiance. I am sure that this is the right course, and one which deserves the undivided support of Parliament and of the country. But I have concluded with regret that this support will more easily be maintained if the Foreign Office is entrusted to someone else.

I have been privileged to be a member of this Government and to be associated with its achievements over the past three years. I need hardly say that the Government will continue to have my active support. I am most grateful to you personally for the unfailing confidence you have shown in me.

Yours ever, Peter

Dear Peter,

It was with very great regret that I heard this morning of your unalterable decision to resign your office as Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. You explained to me very clearly why you thought that, as the Minister responsible for the Government's policy towards the Falkland Islands, you should, in honour, leave the Government at the present time.

I did my utmost throughout Saturday and Sunday to dissuade you from this course; and so did other friends. I have been unsuccessful, and it is with the greatest reluctance that I accept your decision. The news of your resignation will be received with a heavy heart not only by your colleagues in the Cabinet but also by all those with whom you have worked at home and abroad these last three years.

You have given the nation the most outstanding service as Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. Your achievements have been many and great. You have preserved and strengthened our very close links with the United States and you have enabled us to play our full part in the European Community. Perhaps, above all, the greatest single achievement for which you will be remembered will be the way in which you brought Rhodesia to independence. The absence of your wisdom and your humanity, your patience and your skill from our counsels will be an immense loss for us all.

I shall find your continuing support in the weeks and months to come an enormous encouragement; and I am strengthened by conviction that you have great service still to render our country.

Yours ever, Margaret