



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

28 April 1982

I enclose a copy of a letter to the Prime Minister from two Welsh Nationalist MPs, putting on record their Party's view on the Falkland Islands.

I have not promised a reply in acknowledging the letter, but I should be grateful for a suitable brief draft for the Prime Minister's signature. This may need to be slightly different from the standard letter on the subject.

I am sending copies of this letter and enclosure for information to Derek Piper (MOD) Adam Peat (Welsh Office) and Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office).

John Holmes, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

28 April, 1982

Mrs Margaret Thatcher PC MP,
Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
LONDON SW1

Dear Prime Minister,

Since it would appear from your recent comments, and those coming from the USA and Argentina, that events are moving towards armed conflict between Britain and Argentina in relation to the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), we are duty bound to write to you to make a last minute appeal for the Government to avoid war on this issue. Over the past three weeks we have made our position clear to the Government on this issue, but we have not done so in a vociferous manner so as not to jeopardize any negotiations towards a peaceful settlement that were then taking place. From the tone of recent comment it would seem that the Government is now determined to go to war, and we must now speak out unequivocally.

We are therefore writing to express our complete opposition to the military offensive now being pursued by the Government in the South Atlantic in relation to the Falkland Islands (Malvinas). We feel it essential at this stage to disassociate ourselves publicly from the Government's position and to indicate that there is at least one political party in the House which does not wish to pursue an unstable and immoral military solution to the present impasse between Argentina and the British state.

We take this position after strong representations from many individuals and organisations in Wales, many of them made in view of the close historic and cultural links between the peoples of Argentina and Wales. These links have been maintained between peoples regardless of the form of government imposed upon the Argentinian people. Through our connections we are well aware of the historic claim on the Malvinas advanced by successive Argentinian governments, a claim which is widely supported by the Argentinian peoples, including those of Welsh descent.

We believe that the present conflict has been brought about by a failure to negotiate a status for the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) in relation to its nearest mainland state, in line with the General Assembly resolution of the United Nations in December 1965.

We are firmly opposed to the military take-over of the islands by the Argentinian regime but believe that the response to this should

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be internationalist rather than nationalistic. We believe that by engaging in hostilities the British Government itself will be in breach of Resolution 502 of the Security Council and that to respond to territorial aggression by military offensive action rather than by international arbitration is to threaten the international rule of law.

As a party, Plaid Cymru has been firmly committed to the United Nations, and to the resolution of international disputes through internationally recognised machinery. If there is a case for deployment of force in this situation, it should be on an internationally agreed basis rather than through individual nationalistic action.

The resolution of conflict over territories of disputed sovereignty must in our view be undertaken by multilateral action, rather than by unilateral military force.

A war in relation to the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) cannot be justified on any grounds - least of all the well-being of the 1,800 Falklanders who would suffer most, not only from the conflict itself but from the long-term difficulties which even a "successful" war would create. We would point out that there are ten times as many British citizens in Argentina, a large element of whom are of Welsh descent, who would also suffer directly or indirectly from such a war. We would further point out that Trelew, the town with the largest Welsh-descent community in Patagonia, has a strategic airstrip - and that any bombing of Trelew by Britain, leading to loss of life, would create widespread revulsion and horror in Wales. Similarly, there is a significant population in Comodoro Rivadavia, who would suffer from any air attacks on that port.

The long-term future of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) must be in association with the South American mainland. Any other concept defies the logic of geography and economics. But the establishment of such links cannot be made against a background of war - it would blight the prospects for the Falklands for a generation. It would also put an unacceptable cost on the British taxpayers of maintaining an armed garrison on the Falklands not knowing when they would next be attacked. Every consideration dictates the need for a peaceful resolution of this problem. Furthermore, Britain will be unnecessarily poisoning relations with every other country in the Spanish-speaking world if a war is fought on this issue.

You have stated that the interests of the population of the Falklanders must be paramount. We would join the voices which question whether they override all the other interests and wishes

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of the peoples of Britain. But in any case, we would question whether the Government now know the wishes of the 1,800 Falkland Islanders. Certainly, a person from the Falklands who was interviewed on television from Montevideo at the weekend following his escape from the Falklands gave a very strong impression that the last thing the Falkland Islanders want is to be caught in the middle of a bloody war. It was revealing that British officials in Uruguay were seen to intervene to stop him from commenting in this way, - even more revealing was the way in which a subsequent BBC television news bulletin later that evening cut out the intervention of the British officials from the story.

We do not believe that either the Government or the peoples of Britain know the wishes of the Falkland Islanders at this point in time, and that any war propagated in their name rests its justification on a false assumption.

We would urge you to seek a resolution of this issue under the United Nations, with the withdrawal of Argentine troops and the British Army, and for an UNO peacekeeping force, under the UNO flag (and that flag only) to take over the islands. We would ask you to state that you would accept any UNO and international court decisions on the future sovereignty of the islands.

If you do follow a path of war, we have no doubt that the international sympathy extended to Britain following the Argentine invasion, will evaporate. Britain will be seen as the party which instigated bloodshed, and attitudes around the world will harden against the British position. In the third world, it will be seen as nothing more than a hangover of imperialism and those countries will distance themselves from Britain as a result.

In Wales too, it is our firm belief that there is not a majority of people who want a war on this issue, and certainly not a war which could escalate into a nuclear conflict of international proportions. The issue in no way justifies putting the peace of the world in jeopardy.

We would further point out that in the House of Commons there exists a substantial minority who are opposed to a war on this issue. Our party certainly is opposed, and small though we may be, we would ask you to note that whatever the posturing of other parties in the Commons, you do not have all-party support for armed conflict on this issue. We would further ask that no war be declared, nor de facto war conditions created, without the House of Commons having the right to vote on this matter on a substantive motion. Not to put a meaningful question before the Commons on this issue would be an outrage.

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We implore you to put the lives of people from Argentina, the Falklands and the countries of Britain on a higher premium than Britain's hurt pride, and to show an example to the international community that you are determined to find a peaceful method of resolving international conflict. To set an example of war on this issue will eliminate any influence that Britain could use in other conflicts which could lead to even more serious wars.

Many individuals and organisations in Wales have expressed revulsion to us about the Government's decision to deploy two battalions of Welsh Guards as replacements for the Parachute Regiment. We can assure you that there is strong reaction among many sections of representative opinion in Wales at the prospect of soldiers of Welsh nationality in the British Army engaging in combat with soldiers of Welsh descent in the Argentinian Army. We hope that those who are prepared to use arguments about "kith and kin" in their own contexts will be able to understand the validity of this feeling.

We urge you most strongly to refer this issue to international arbitration through the United Nations immediately and to comply with Resolution 502 by ceasing hostilities.

Yours sincerely,

Dafydd Wigley

Dafydd Wigley *PPMA*
MP for Caernarfon
President Plaid Cymru

Dafydd Elis Thomas

Dafydd Elis Thomas
MP for Meirionnydd
Vice-President Plaid Cymru
