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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Prime Minister

A.J.C. $\frac{23}{7}$

23 September 1983

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Dear John,

Falklands at the General Assembly: US Position

You may have seen (New York telno 856 - enclosed) that Sir John Thomson has canvassed the possibility that the Prime Minister might seek to persuade President Reagan to abstain on the Argentine draft resolution on the grounds that it is prejudicial and does not live up to the criteria the Americans themselves laid down last year.

We have considered it realistic to assume that the Americans will vote for a resolution that was substantially the same as last year's and that it will be very hard indeed to move them. The draft resolution for which the Argentines are lobbying is indeed substantially the same as last year's and in our brief for the Prime Minister's visit to Washington we have suggested that she might concentrate on urging the Americans to keep as low a profile as possible and discouraging them from seeking to amend the Argentine draft.

Sir J Thomson has reported separately that Mrs Kirkpatrick also took the view that the US vote would have to be positive if the resolution were to all intents and purposes the same as last year. For what it is worth Mrs Kirkpatrick claimed, in the same conversation, to have always favoured a US abstention and undertook to press for an abstention this year if the draft resolution were substantially different. She thought it conceivable that Latin American hard-liners might insist upon toughening up the present draft.

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The most authoritative version of the criteria laid down by the Americans last year was in a message from the President to the Prime Minister. Mr Reagan said that the US would not vote for a resolution which prejudged the question of sovereignty or the outcome of any negotiation or which imposed unrealistic deadlines on negotiations or other processes of peaceful settlement. We do not think it would be productive to try to argue with the Americans as to whether these criteria were fully met by the resolution actually put to the vote. If the Americans were to be impressed by our representations they would be more likely to press the Argentines to dilute their draft than to switch their vote. Dilution of the draft could easily lose us the votes of our European partners and many other countries.

While we can not be absolutely certain what it is we shall be voting on until the day, it would on the other hand be very odd for the Argentines to toughen their draft after having lobbied so widely. If they nevertheless did so, we would of course seize the opportunity to press the Americans to shift to an abstention. But on the present text we believe the line suggested above remains the right one.

Yours ever

John Holmes

(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street