



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

7 December 1983

Dear Mr. Owen

You wrote to me on 21 November about our policy towards Argentina and Chile.

Our policy is both logical and clear. We have a commitment to defend the Falkland Islands in the wake of Argentine aggression. I have already welcomed the restoration of democracy in Argentina and expressed our willingness to enter into talks aimed at restoring normal relations between the countries starting with commercial relations. My hope now is that, like the people of Argentina, the Falkland Islanders will be left in peace to choose how they wish to be governed. But Argentina has yet to declare a definitive cessation of hostilities or to respond to the suggestions we have made for the normalisation of our relations. In these circumstances, I am frankly surprised that you should think it odd that we should be telling our American allies of our concern over the possibility of deliveries of military equipment to Argentina which could seriously increase a future threat to the Falklands.

As to Chile, the situation is quite different. She poses no threat. And her concern to bring about some improvements in the quality of her armed services does not in our judgement go beyond the legitimate requirements of any country in similar circumstances which is forced to respond to the acquisition of new weapons during recent years by neighbours

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who have threatened her. In this context our position on human rights is clear. We continue to be concerned about abuses of human rights in Chile. We have made this concern clear to the Government in Santiago both in our own bilateral exchanges and also in company with our European partners. The fact that we maintain normal relations with Chile is not to be taken as marking approval of her human rights performance. We continue in our policy of not selling arms to Chile which, in our judgement, are likely to be used for internal repression.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

The Rt. Hon. Dr. David Owen, MP.