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Margaret Thatcher

TV Interview for ITN (Middle East, Falklands) [*"We wouldn't be the country we are unless we were prepared to fight for ... freedom and justice and liberty"*]

I

Prime Minister the statement from the Common Market Foreign Ministers used the words 'vigorously condemned Israel,' and that is something presumably with which you agree. Why have you decided to 'vigorously condemn' Israel?

PM

Because she has gone across the borders of Israel, a totally independent country, which is not a party to the hostility and there are very very great hostilities, bombing, terrible things happening there. Of course one has to condemn them. It is someone else's country. You must condemn that. After all that is why we have gone to the Falklands, to repossess our country which has been taken by someone else and the whole of the Ten vigorously condemn what has happened to the country which has been taken by someone else and the whole of the Ten vigorously condemn what has happened.

I

You mention ...

PM

... Also in the Security Council Resolution of course.

I

You mention there the Falklands. That, of course, must be uppermost in your mind. Why was it not possibly for Mr. Nott to be more specific about casualty figures this afternoon?

PM

Because we just haven't got the full information and do you remember right at the beginning when we heard that the Sheffield was in difficulty we gave what we thought was the true figures and then they turned out to be larger. We were very upset at that and we try therefore to get the figures and let the next of kin know first. When an incident happens, like the one at Dove Cove the other day it is terrible, I don't need to indicate that *A helicopter flew overhead, after which the interview started again.* [end p1]

I

Prime Minister, the Foreign Ministers of the Ten vigorously condemned Israel. That is something with which you would obviously associate yourself. Why have you vigorously condemned Israel?

PM

Because the Lebanon is an independent country and she is not a party to the hostilities, and the United Nations forces, and this country Lebanon has been invaded. There is very very heavy armed conflict taking place and there must be considerable loss of life. It's just exactly what has happened in a way in the Falklands. The Falklands were invaded and the forces would not withdraw. We in fact are going down there to see that they do withdraw. I hope that the Israeli forces will withdraw from the Lebanon.

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The Falklands is plainly uppermost in your mind. Why was Mr. Nott not able to give more details on casualty figures this afternoon?

PM

Because we have not got them. And if he had got them then we'd give them but we like to make sure of the numbers first and we like to make sure if we possibly can that the next of kin are informed. That does mean holding up until we are certain. I think if we imagine the terrible scene there when a landing ship is bombed and you heard the great bravery of the helicopter pilots on going in to get the sailors who were wounded out. The first thing you think of then is getting the wounded out and getting them to a station where their wounds can be dressed and where they can be looked after. So they will have to go in a number of different directions and it takes some time to follow each and everyone up. The important and immediate thing is to get them treatment. And communications are not easy either. I know just how worried people would be. I would be exactly the same and we will get news to them just as soon as we can.

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Were you influenced by what happened after the Sheffield went down?

PM

I think there has been once or twice when we have given [end p2] numbers which have turned out not to be right and we are very conscious of that. And also we are very conscious of the anxiety of people who are waiting. You see you don't know quite what to do. If you announce the names of the ships then everyone is worried on those ships if you don't announce the names of the ships then everyone is worried who has a relative down there. And we just try to do the best we can with the information we've got.

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There is I think considerable concern being expressed that because of the delay in further military action that British lives may be lost during this waiting period.

PM

Oh, no, I wouldn't have thought that at all. On the contrary—I think if you have to have everything in its proper position and with the proper back up there and to hand before, the Commander Maj.-Gen. Sir Jeremy Moore will make his final assault. When he makes it is a matter for him. He knows his people, he knows the disposition of his supplies. He's a professional. So are the troops professional. I can't fight a battle on the Cabinet table. I go to the professionals and say that I have trust in you and I am going to leave you to get on with it in the best way with the minimum loss of life. There are dangers, there are risks everywhere.

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No British lives you feel are being needlessly lost by any delay?

PM

No, I do not. On the contrary, I think that he is determined when he finally decides to make the assault to do it so that everyone has the full back up, the full reserves, the full supplies of munitions and equipment ...

I

Prime Minister, what are the days like for you? Do you, as it were, dread every hour of every day that the news may not be what you want?

PM

You don't dread every hour—you think about it every hour—you can never get it out of your mind even though with part of your mind you are doing something else. Another part of your mind is always down there. And everytime you read a telegram [end p3] or someone comes in with a note—is it bad news? But one is always against that—very conscious of the things that one is fighting for. Those things matter. We wouldn't be the country we are unless we were prepared to fight for those things. To fight for freedom and justice and liberty. And fight for democracy. Just as our fathers and forefathers fought for us. We are making certain that they are preserved for future generations. And so yes there is sacrifice, there is tragedy and we have to look after everyone who suffers in that way. We must remember the things, the positive things which we enjoy and we must indeed see that they are passed on to our children.

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Thank you very much indeed.