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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Sir Robert Armstrong KCB CVO  
CABINET OFFICE

8 July 1982

PUS DIST  
(12.7.82)

*My dear Robert,*

PS/S of S AUS(D Staff) CDR  
2nd PUS Sec/DPBC

FREDERICK FORSYTH'S PROPOSED BOOK ABOUT THE FALKLANDS

1. With your letter of 28 June you enclosed a copy of Frederick Forsyth's letter to the Prime Minister proposing that he should write a book about the Falklands crisis and seeking official help in gaining access to those whom he wishes to interview and who would he hopes be given permission to talk. I should be happy to discuss this proposal with Frank Cooper, Terry Lewin and yourself, but it may be helpful if I set down some of our preliminary thoughts and reservations about this project.

*likely to be true*

2. The main difficulties in granting Mr Forsyth the official cooperation he seeks are those to which you drew attention in your letter. Unless he can be persuaded - and I think this is most unlikely - to confine his account to the invasion of the islands on 2 April and what happened subsequently, his book is bound to cover to some extent the same ground as the official Review. We surely cannot provide him with any assistance on events leading up to the Argentine invasion until the Review has been completed and its report published. Even interviews arranged for Mr Forsyth after publication of the Review might cause problems if they appeared to challenge its findings. Mr Forsyth has already expressed strong views about the Review (a copy of his article of 17 June in the "Daily Express" is enclosed) and the research for this book could well reinforce his prejudices. There is also the inquiry to be undertaken by the Parliamentary Select Committee on Defence, mentioned in your letter of 29 June. I cannot imagine that the members of the Select Committee would be too pleased to discover that Mr Forsyth is trespassing on their preserves.

3. To grant Mr Forsyth the assistance he is seeking would also set a very undesirable precedent. As he himself acknowledges, there will be a flood of books on various aspects of the Falklands crisis published during the coming months. We already know of the joint effort by Simon Jenkins and Max Hastings and a paperback being prepared by the Sunday Times Insight Team. But other

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press and television correspondents are doubtless also hard at work on their own Falklands experiences and interpretations. Once it becomes known that Mr Forsyth is receiving official assistance in the preparation of his account, despite the fact that he can in no way be described as an "official historian", it would I believe be impossible to refuse similar facilities to others. To do so would leave us open to allegations of commercial favouritism for an author who stands to gain very substantially from the project.

4. Mr Forsyth is capable of writing a compelling and exciting account of the Falklands crisis which might well become an international best seller and act as a boost to British morale. Whether his book would be accurate and impartial is less certain - a short passage about the Foreign Office in The Day of the Jackal was wrong in every detail, and the misleading statements in his Daily Express article do not inspire confidence.

5. I see from Frank Cooper's letter to you of 6 July that the Ministry of Defence rather share our own lack of enthusiasm about Mr Forsyth's project.

6. Copies of this letter and its enclosure are being sent to Frank Cooper and Terry Lewin.

*Antony*  
*Antony*

Antony Acland

Why there must

BY FREDERICK FORSYTH

Best-selling author and former foreign correspondent

... article, the one again, over Port Stanley, a fact which should about... justifiable by anyone to all... The joy will be blended with pride in the... of our father's wife and hope... will be done by and to the price in... and injury... But there is one way that... can be authorized, and this has... to do with Argentina... for certain purposes will only to... a danger the conventional... our... contains the... but the... made... that... and... others... and... that... there is... these... and... every... and... every... will... to... these... as... about... that... have... been... could... never... have... been... could... from... the... nation... There... will...



# Why there must be no cover-up

THE British flag flies again over Port Stanley, a fact which should arouse justifiable joy among us all.

The joy will be blended with pride in the valour of our fighting men, and both will be muted by grief for the price in death and injury.

But there is one way those sacrifices could be adulterated, and this has nothing to do with Argentina.

I fear certain pressures will seek to sweep beneath the convenient carpet of our national emotions the inconvenient fact that Britain, too, made errors; that this crisis provided terrible lessons, in the learning of which others died; and that we owe it to them to insist those lessons be truly learned and changes made.

I fear, too, that powerful vested interests will quietly seek to ignore those lessons, for entrenched interests dislike change on principle.

We should never have been caught by surprise from the outset. There was

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**By FREDERICK  
FORSYTH**

Best-selling author and  
former foreign correspondent

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an awesome miscalculation. Or *was it* miscalculation? In the immediate aftermath of April 2, there were widespread suggestions that our Intelligence from Argentina had let us down.

Whether these printed assertions stemmed from unattributable briefings, deliberate leaks or dinner-table asides, I do not know.

But two things I do know. One is that those who made them were aware that our Secret Intelligence Service cannot and will not defend itself.

The second is that "The Firm" did not let us down. The information available well before April 2 was comprehensive, up-to-date and spot-on accurate.

In which case, it looks as if it was ignored or pooh-poohed. If so, the dread word "negligence" must hang unspoken in the air.

There *should* be an inquiry, a damned searching one. It should be an independent inquiry by a strong and trusted figure *outside* the departments concerned. And if some gentlemen have to be dismissed, so be it.

Our propaganda was appalling in many ways. It was strange that throughout, Argentina—which politically, diplomatically, economically or militarily could not organise a brawl at a Celtic-Rangers match—ran rings around us in the world's Press and screen coverage.

Ah, one may say, that was because they told lies. Lies are easy. But that's not the reason. The reason is, our officialdom is disgracefully bad at propaganda.

Our country's (official) propaganda is firmly in the hands of bureaucrats who, like the service chiefs, are inculcated from teenage with the notion that the media are to be told nothing, if not less.

For the protection of genuine secrets, OK. For the promotion of our country, no.

The Task Force had not one single American, German or French war correspondent with it, and yet their reports would have swamped the United States and Europe.

There was no thought for a facility for sending pictures, so Buenos Aires hogged the TV screens, newspapers and magazines.

Today, words are bullets, pictures are missiles, films are bombers. The Government, while conceding the vital importance of world opinion, failed through its appointed servants, even to begin to understand the nature of the beast.

This is a second lesson that we have simply got to learn.

Handwritten signatures and initials, including "Spartan" and "H.P.", and a date stamp "17 JUN 1982".