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15th June 1982

Dear Prime Minister,

Amid the tidal wave of congratulations that must now be flowing in to you, and to which I add my own, I am aware of how exceptionally busy you must be. I will therefore keep this extremely brief.

I believe a book could and should be written about the Falklands Crisis and most notably about the British Task Force. I believe it should be a good book, the right book; for those who died down there, for those who survived, and for this country. I believe it should have not simply national but global appeal and a worldwide reception. I believe I can write it.

I ask you to glance at the attached memorandum so see if, in your view, the ideas expounded therein merit consideration and further discussion with your advisers.

Yours sincerely,

Frederick Forsyth.

MEMORANDUM FOR A PROPOSED BOOK ABOUT THE
FALKLANDS CRISIS.

Proposal. To write a book about the Falklands Crisis from start to finish and most notably about the British Task Force and those who served in it.

Timing. It should ideally be launched not a day beyond one year from the raising of the Union Flag above Port Stanley on June 14th 1982. Such a task would involve hard, intensive research, numerous interviews, meticulous collation of research and brisk writing, all of which I believe I could deliver. Also a titanic effort by the publishers, which I believe I could arrange.

Rivals. In the wake of yesterday's victory a blizzard of books will be undertaken and many will appear. Some will be skimpy, rushed, inaccurate as writers and publishers race to beat each other to the bookshops. In years to come there will no doubt be the official history, heavy with notes, appendices and references. What I have in mind is something between those two.

Type. The book proposed would have two themes, intermingled to carry the reader along the narrative of a story in parts so gripping as to defy all creative fiction. One theme would be the straight narrative of what happened from start to finish. The other would be the story as seen through the eyes of fifty participants, from the highest to the humblest.

(One might here recall 'The Longest Day' and 'A Bridge Too Far' by Cornelius Ryan; and 'Is Paris Burning' and 'Oh Jerusalem' by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre. The difference is that in all these works the story as it appeared to the participants on all sides is described; my proposed book

would not include the Argentine version of events. Apart from any other factor, there simply is not the time.)

The first strand or theme would tell the reader what happened; the second would describe through the words of the participants what it felt like. It should describe the anger and the shock, the excitement and the tension, the fear and the sorrow, the ~~despair~~ and the grief, the skill and the courage, the discipline and the misery, the comradeship and the exhaustion, the cold and the boredom, the burden of responsibility and the elation of victory.

It should bring the reader from the Cabinet Office to the Admiral's planning room, to the boggy foxhole and the blazing deck. It should take the reader ~~from~~ the cockpit of a Harrier in a dogfight to the towers of Manhattan; from the galley of Sir Tristram to the computers of Northwood; from the embassy in Washington to the last wild charge of the Paras into the machine guns of Goose Green. It should show the reader the lonely frogman slipping through the kelp, and the fearful wife shopping for her toddlers in Portsmouth, and the nurses tending the wounded on the Hecla; it should describe the dimmed Vulcan cockpit high above an unseen ocean and the Sea King swinging in the black smoke above Bluff Cove. In short, it should be a panorama.

Problems. There are two principal ones. The first is that of time. If such a book were to be ready in time its preparation would have to involve some element of official cooperation in two areas. One is that of access; to select fifty participants would probably involve selection interviews with ten times that number. These participants will soon be

scattered; to fresh units, fresh ships, fresh squadrons and different hospitals. Without access the research would take years. The second area is that of permission to talk. If every officer and man had to clear his interview through the appropriate channels, again the research would take years.

The second problem is that of repetitiveness. If other writers have culled every anecdote, every interview, every incident, every exploit and every impression long before the proposed book could emerge, it would finally appear to be simply a mish-mash of pieces culled from the preceding twenty paperbacks.

Requirements. I do not believe the book proposed above should be designated as the 'official' work, because at the mention of that word junior ranks will never talk frankly or openly. They will smell the presence of senior 'brass' and remain scrupulously polite and unyielding. On the other hand, I do believe I can get the participants to talk about their experiences and their feelings, frankly albeit privately, if I can show that it has been cleared 'on the nod' and there will be no sanction against any person. What is needed is permission at the highest level to have access to the people who were involved, from the highest to the lowest. For this, it would be understood the manuscript would be submitted for scrutiny, so long only as excisions were solely for genuine secrets unwittingly revealed and not for grumbles and candid comments.

Summation. I believe the proposed book should and could be gripping but not sensationalist, accurate but not ponderous,

fair but not servile, patriotic but not shrill. In short, I believe it should 'tell it the way it was.'

Frederick Forsyth
Tilford,
Surrey.

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