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File AH

ccs FCO
MOD

Mr Ingham

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

FREDERICK FORSYTH'S PROPOSED BOOK ABOUT THE FALKLANDS

The Prime Minister had a word with you last Friday about your minute A09044 of 19 July 1982 about the book about the Falklands which Mr Frederick Forsyth would like to write. Since then I have been waiting to hear whether the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary or the Secretary of State for Defence wished to have a meeting with the Prime Minister, as you had suggested they might, to discuss your minute. I have now heard that neither of them thinks that a meeting is necessary.

When she saw you, the Prime Minister said that she believed that we should help Mr Forsyth to write his book but only on the conditions set out in your minute. In particular she agreed that those whom Mr Forsyth interviewed should be instructed not to disclose confidential information about Ministerial discussions, the content of advice given to Ministers and diplomatic discussions in New York. She strongly endorsed the view of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that in dealing with Mr Forsyth, they should confine themselves strictly to facts which were already public knowledge. She did not intend to see Mr Forsyth herself: nor did she think other Ministers or you should give him an interview.

She also agreed that the help to be given to Mr Forsyth could not be exclusive. Other would-be authors of books about the Falklands had let us know of their wish to write such books before Mr Forsyth had done. Sir Philip Goodhart, for example, had told her several weeks ago that he wanted to write a history of the Falklands episode. He would have to be given the same facilities as Mr Forsyth, if he wanted them. Even if the help given was not exclusive, she thought it would be reasonable to ask that part of the proceeds of books written with such assistance should be given to the South Atlantic Fund.

You said that you would now proceed accordingly with Mr Forsyth. A major difficulty would be identifying the five hundred participants in the Falklands episode from whom Mr Forsyth wished to select fifty for interviews in depth. It would be necessary to agree on the instructions to be given to these people.

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I understand that although the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary agrees, as does the Defence Secretary, that we should respond to Mr Forsyth's approach on the basis set out in your minute, he is concerned about the burden of work on his department which giving help to Mr Forsyth on the proposed scale is going to create. Sir Antony Acland will be pursuing this point and a number of others with you directly.

I am sending copies of this minute to Mr Fall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Mr Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

AWH.

29 July 1982

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