



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

1 August 1983

WBM
~~Prime Minister~~

Dear Willie,

JH
 4/15
 1/8

Falkland Islands

The Prime Minister may wish to be aware of the attached leaflet, one of a series published by an organisation called "ECOROPA". As the leaflet acknowledges, it is largely the work of Tam Dalyell MP. The full title of the organisation is "European Group for Ecological Action" and it seems to be based in France. We do not know what sort of circulation the leaflet is getting, nor whether it is confined solely to this country.

Yours ever

(J E Holmes)
 Private Secretary

W Rickett Esq
 10 Downing Street

FALKLANDS WAR

The Disturbing Truth

It is with deep regret and in the face of considerable pressure that we publish this leaflet. As the facts over the Falklands war have gradually become known, we have been forced to conclude that it was ordered by Mrs. Thatcher for base political reasons; that it was completely unnecessary since alternatives existed; that it involved nuclear weapons; that news of it was manipulated; that it has left us dangerously over-committed financially and militarily and that it has not deterred Argentinian intentions toward the Falklands.

The war cost 255 British lives, with a further 770 seriously wounded (and over 800 Argentinians were killed). These casualties will have been incurred to the best of ends if, as a result of the truth being published, Parliament never again permits our political leaders to commit such an unforgivable folly. The Falklands war has been the subject of a sustained propaganda campaign in which Mrs. Thatcher has sought to present herself as having saved Britain from humiliation inflicted by a fascist dictator. The reality is tragically different.

Through a series of questions and answers we attempt to put the record straight. This is not an apology for the Argentinians: the behaviour of the military junta was inexcusable from start to finish. Those who have acted irresponsibly stand accused. It is for the reader and the British public to decide who is guilty and what must now be done. The evidence is clear and simple.

Q.1. What led to the Argentine invasion?

A. The belief, instilled into successive generations of Argentinian school children, that the 'Malvinas' were an integral part of their country, which had been snatched by British piracy in 1833. In 1910, so uncertain was the British Foreign Office about Britain's claim that it asked the Foreign Office lawyers to make a report. The view was

expressed that our claim was doubtful - so doubtful that successive British governments never dared to go to the International Court at The Hague. From the mid-1960s until April 1982, successive British governments conducted negotiations - presumably in good faith - but lacking any determination to succeed. By planning to invade, Galtieri not only thought he could bring negotiations to a head, but could do so when he desperately needed to divert public attention from trade union upheaval, inflation, the growing clamour over the 'Disappeared Ones' and the mothers in the Plaza de Mayo.

Q.2. Did we receive warning that an invasion was intended?

A. Yes. M16 performed superbly - though their task was not difficult in the environment of 100,000 Anglo-Argentines and 17,000 British passport-holders. Argentina's decision to invade was made on January 12, 1982, and the British agents were told, in the expectation that they would pass the information to London. This they did - and the SAS were informed that they were going to the Falklands in February, 1982. According to the Franks Committee, on March 3, 1982, Ambassador Williams in Buenos Aires sent an urgent telegram giving warning of precisely the military action suggested by the Joint Intelligence Committee in Whitehall (Franks, paragraph 95). Admittedly, the senior Foreign Office official did comment: "He's only an emotional Welshman - not too much notice should be taken of him!" But Mrs. Thatcher, in her own handwriting (Franks, paragraphs 147 - 152) did scribble on it: "We must have contingency plans". How can a person who wrote that, if she has any respect for the truth, tell the Commons (October 26, 1982) that the Falklands crisis came "out of the blue" on Wednesday, March 31?

Q.3. What attempts were made to bring about a diplomatic solution prior to the invasion?

A. Seriously, none. The Argentinians were allowed to interpret British actions (such as the withdrawal of HMS Endurance) and American messages (through General Walters, Jean Kirkpatrick, Jose Sorsano and others) as a nod and a wink to get the problem solved by a fait accompli.

In international affairs it is generally acceptable to compromise by shifting from a hard position to a soft position. It is wholly unacceptable and totally irresponsible to give the impression of taking a soft position, and then instead, adopting an ultra hard one.

Q.4. Could the war have been avoided?

A. Almost certainly. It is 'the quarrel of two bald men fighting over a comb'. Prior to the Argentinian invasion, the British Foreign Secretary should have gone to Buenos Aires and sought an acceptable lease-back arrangement, which would have avoided the conflict. If this proved unacceptable, Britain could have sought assurance that (a) those Falklanders who wished to leave be given compensation, (b) those who want to stay be given the same rights as the Welsh-speaking Patagonian communities, and (c) the work of the British Antarctic Survey and the Scott Polar Research Institute would be guaranteed.

These assurances would almost certainly have been

given. Yet even if this process of negotiation was thought unacceptable to Britain, the matter should have been placed in the hands of the United Nations, in which case the Argentine invasion would then have met with world-wide opposition - including that of Latin America. We have it on good authority that the Peruvian peace plan was acceptable to the junta - until the sinking of the *Belgrano*.

Q.5. Who took the decision to engage in war?

A. Margaret Thatcher.

"When you've spent half your political life dealing with humdrum issues like the environment.....it's exciting to have a real crisis on your hands." (Margaret Thatcher on May 14, 1982, during the Falklands campaign).

Q.6. Was Parliament consulted in advance?

A. In advance, no. The imprimature of Parliament was required for the despatch of the task force and in a truncated three-hour debate on Saturday, April 3, in which the most vigorous dissenters were not called by the Speaker, and in which Labour and SDP leaders revealed their ignorance of Latin America, the majority of an emotional House of Commons sent the task force on its way - few MPs imagining that it would get beyond the Western Approaches. The shadow Foreign Secretary, Denis Healey, was in the United States, and it is still far from clear what discussion took place between Government ministers and the Shadow Defence Secretary.

"She has become a complete dictator, ordering war without consulting Parliament, and she is dragging the masses, shouting and cheering behind her" (A Message from the Falklands, Penguin, £1.95).

Q.7. What military/diplomatic advice was given?

A. Air Chief Marshal, Sir Michael Beetham, Chief of the Air Staff, expressed grave reservations, particularly about the shortage of air cover in the face of land-based Argentinian aircraft. The Army also had reservations largely for the same reasons. But the Navy, particularly in the person of Sir Henry Leach (since the Chief of the Defence Staff, Admiral Lewin, was in New Zealand) were exceedingly anxious to send a task force - because they wanted to provide a justification for their surface ships, then under dire threat through Treasury defence cuts.

The considered and long-held Foreign Office view was that "Fortress Falklands", as they have termed it over 15 years, was unsustainable in the event of a serious Argentine attack.

Q.8. What use did we make of the UN?

A. The skill of Sir Anthony Parsons and the contacts and goodwill he had fostered during his time in New York, were cleverly used to give a cloak of respectability to the sending of the task force, by getting what amounted to the neutralisation of the Security Council. The Government made cynical and selective use of UN Resolution 502: Mrs. Thatcher's initial and sanctimonious endorsement of it, was followed by her deliberately ignoring it since it called for the withdrawal of *all* forces. Privately, Secretary General Perez de Quellar was to observe that the Falklands were a problem which, with a little goodwill, could be

Q.9. Why was the General Belgrano sunk?

A. There is strong reason to believe that on the morning of Sunday, May 2, 1982, the British Prime Minister, at Chequers, was faced with a compromise in the form of the Peruvian peace plan, endorsed by the UN, which most of the world, and the Labour opposition, expected her - and Argentina - to accept. Seemingly, she thought that were she to do so, and hold the task force back, she would be discredited in the eyes of most of the right-wing Tories, and that she would be unable to capitalise on the wave of euphoria that she had set in train. We therefore believe that, for the sake of her own position, behind the back of her Foreign Secretary (who was in the US), without consulting our UN representatives to our American allies whose hemispheric relations were bound to be dangerously affected, in the clear knowledge that Argentina had ordered withdrawal of marine and land forces, Mrs. Thatcher ordered a massacre so as to make peace impossible.

When the *Belgrano* (an antique ex-US cruiser, a survivor of Pearl Harbour, and due to become a floating museum in 1983) was torpedoed, she was 59 miles outside the total exclusion zone and steaming away from it. She was stated to present a major threat to the task force. In reality she was never such a threat and photographs revealed that she was not, as had been claimed, carrying Exocets. Her escorts, however, were - but to have sunk one of them would have caused far fewer casualties and thus might have still allowed a peaceful settlement.

Already that weekend three operations had been launched against Stanley airfield. The stated intention was to crater the runway. But, in reality, not just H.E. bombs, but cluster bombs and air-burst shells were used, entirely ineffective against the runway but causing many casualties - as intended.

Q.10. Is it true that nuclear weapons were taken to the South Atlantic?

A. Yes, both from Gibraltar and the RFA Fort Austin, on carriers, destroyers and frigates and from Portsmouth, - though after a major row some, not all, of the nuclear weapons were withdrawn before the fleet reached Ascension Island. Efforts to retrieve nuclear depth-bombs from the graves of Sheffield and Coventry have been only partially successful, and attempts to find nuclear-bombs from the two 'downed' Sea King helicopters have been unsuccessful.

Q.11. Who authorised this?

A. According to Keith Speed, sacked Navy Minister, he would have been extremely surprised and angry if the fleet had not taken nuclear weapons. On March 28, the crew of the RFA Fort Austin were told by the barmaids of Gibraltar that they were going to the South Atlantic and not back to the UK as they anticipated after 5½ months in the sweltering Persian Gulf. Since the Prime Minister says that the Falklands crisis came "out of the blue" three days later and since the fleet with nuclear weapons sailed two days

earlier, how come that the barmaids of Gibraltar had better information on the destination of the fleet carrying nuclear weapons than she in Downing Street?

If Mrs. Thatcher did not know that nuclear weapons were being moved to a theatre of war, vast ramifications follow for the control of nuclear weapons. If she did know - as we believe - no less vast consequences follow.

Q.12. Under what circumstances would these have been used?

A. Conceivably, if Britain has lost *Invincible* or *Hermes* and was facing defeat. There were contingency plans for nuclear attacks on the Argentine mainland. Nuclear weapons would have been necessary since Britain lacked the capability for collective conventional attack. Britain, as a signatory to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, has clearly and unforgivably infringed the Treaty by taking nuclear weapons to the South Atlantic.

"What is happening here is barbaric and totally unnecessary." (A Message from the Falklands, Penguin, £1.95)

Q.13. Did the Argentinians have any such weapons?

A. Some reports suggest that Argentina may have had and would have used them in response. They will certainly be available for use in the second Falklands War.

Q.14. Why did we have no adequate defence against Exocet?

A. Because it is extremely difficult to counter air-launched missiles from aircraft that are out of range of ships' defences. In the second Falklands war, with the new Exocets bought from France since 1982, with the Gabriel missiles bought from Israel and fitted to the newly acquired A4 Skyhawks, the results could be still more devastating.

Q.15. Is it true that many of the Argentine weapons were supplied by Britain?

A. Alas, yes. Forty British companies were involved. Crucial Exocet guidance parts came from Bepi of Galashiels, £50 million worth of Argentine ammunition from a firm in Mrs. Thatcher's home town of Grantham (which she sponsored as a candidate for the Queen's Award for Industry prize in 1982), and a mass of high technology has gone to the Argentine military from British Aerospace, Hawker Siddeley, Rolls-Royce and many other big names of British industry. For further details of Britain's part in promoting the arms trade, see Ecoropa leaflet no. 9.

"The picture that Nott and his cronies are giving is not true. The Argentinian air force has the latest attack aircraft and missiles, which we just do not have." (A Message from the Falklands, Penguin, £1.95)

Q.16. Did our allies really support us?

A. Leading newspapers in France, Germany and Italy were amazed and contemptuous of the British reaction - a response that has deepened as the facts have become known. Governments that had reacted against the invasion became increasingly critical and their support was largely cosmetic. The French, for example, never recalled the technical team who taught the Argentinians how to marry an Exocet to the wing of an aircraft. The Germans carried on completing the Argentinian frigates (for which Rolls-Royce supplied the engines). The Canadians carried on supplying uranium

Q.17. Was it an easy victory?

A. No, although our forces did all - and more - than could possibly have been expected of them. If the German-made bombs that hit our ships had exploded, we would have lost nine more. If the torpedo which struck *Invincible* had exploded, the task force would have been in terrible difficulty. The 'Canberra' and other ships were sitting targets for crucial hours during the landings. The troops' guns immediately before the surrender of Stanley were down to 20 rounds a gun. The task force, which comprised over 70% of our sea fighting capability and which carried a significant part of our best assault troops, came exceedingly near to disaster. Of course risks are taken in war, but the task force had been irresponsibly committed to a task for which it lacked the air cover and, in the event, was saved not only by the gallantry and efficiency of the services, but by luck. Without this luck, Britain would have suffered a military catastrophe.

".....and above all, the tragedy, and horror of the British lives that have been lost which have been spent quite willingly by Mrs. Thatcher and Mr. Nott to make up for the political ineptitude and pig-headedness of the Government." (A Message from the Falklands, Penguin, £1.95)

Q.18. Who actually suffered as a result of the war?

A. Not the Prime Minister, whose war it was, and whose Government's popularity soared. Not the military junta who largely reside in retirement writing their memoirs. Not the politicians on the benches of the House of Commons who despatched the task force. The people who lost were the British and Argentinian parents, widows and children of those who will never return, and those who did return but are dreadfully maimed. And the 1,800 Falkland islanders whose land is mined, who still have absolutely no long-term security and who continue to be treated by Whitehall as junior colonials.

When in due course, negotiations cede sovereignty to the Argentine the huge post-invasion investment made by Britain will fall straight into the Argentine pocket.

"The place I wanted to bring my children up has been spoilt, spoilt by this invasion. The life-style I came down here to find is gone. It's gone forever." (An islander in Eyewitness Falklands by Robert Fox.)

Q.19. What is the cost of the war?

A. To date £3,800,000,000 - about £160 per household in Britain. The cost of keeping the forces on full alert, in the face of low-intensity Argentine operations, is mind boggling. This money will have to be found by the British taxpayer.

Q.20. How vulnerable are the Falklands now?

A. Against direct invasion probably not very vulnerable, if an £800,000,000 airport is built, and hugely expensive diversionary runways are constructed. Against bee-sting attack, taking out one or two ships, or against delayed - action mines, very vulnerable indeed. The Argentines have

carte blanche for a war of financial attrition.

Q.21. Have the Argentine any weapons left?

A. Helped by international loans, to which Britain contributes, Argentina has more than replaced her armament, mostly from Britain's 'allies' including the US, and her services have learned many lessons. As the military establishment chillingly put it: "We have a dept to cancel."

Q.22. What did the Franks Committee conclude?

A. They took nothing after April 2, 1982, into consideration. Their conclusions that no blame attached to the Government up to that time was inconsistent with facts in the body of the report.

Q.23. What about the Falkland Islanders and their future?

A. Their fragile life-style has gone for ever. In the absence of negotiation about sovereignty, they live under the shadow of a second Malvinas/Falklands war. A peace treaty has not been signed. With up to 25 per cent of our naval capability tied down in their defence, it grows daily more obvious that this intolerable expense will only be sustained until Mrs. Thatcher's personal future, for whatever reason, is no longer directly tied to this untenable situation.

"Their attitude to the British is a mixture of continued deep distrust, disappointment and a sullen acceptance of the military, the realities of the new occupying army amongst them. Six weeks have passed since liberation and the Falklands people - as distinct from the Falklands establishment - are profoundly dissillusioned."
(Simon Winchester of the *Sunday Times*. The Falklands War.)

Q.24. What can I do about it?

A. Publishing the truth is but the first step: it falls to the readers to act upon it. Here are some suggestions:

1. Buy as many leaflets as you can afford and spread them around - see below for Hints on Easy Leafleting and Order Form.

2. Write, in your own words, to your MP and say what you think about it. His or her address is - The House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA. If you don't know his/her name, address it to 'The Member for.....(name of town or borough.) Send a copy to your local paper.

The Questions in this leaflet were posed by Ecoropa and were answered by Tam Dalyell, MP, formerly chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party Foreign Affairs Group (1974-76) and opposition spokesman on Science until being sacked by Michael Foot in 1982 for his courageous and outspoken views on the Falklands war. He was called to give evidence before the Franks Enquiry into the Falklands in October 1982. He has written *One Man's Falklands* published by Woolf at £1.95. The information he gives has been corroborated by many others.

Hints on Easy Leafleting

Leaflets are most effective if given personally, especially to people known to the leafleter: your place of work, if you are lucky enough still to have one, is a good place to start. Then local shops, pubs, clubs and bus stops: canteen notice boards, cafes and launderettes,

At the railway station give them to people so that they can read them as they travel. You can knock on doors in your village or street. Keep a pile handy for people who come to your door. If you have some left over apart from sending them to friends or enclosing them with other payments, cards etc., you can put them through letter-boxes, leave them in the library (by arrangement with the librarian) or the doctor's surgery - most doctors will co-operate.

Order Form

Leaflet no. 11 - Falklands War - The Disturbing Truth
100 Leaflets - £2.85 200 Leaflets - £3.95
500 Leaflets - £8.50 1,000 Leaflets - £15.00

All prices include postage and packing.

If you can spare more than the amount shown, it will enable us to send leaflets to those who cannot afford them. Or if you wish to support the Campaign but are unable to distribute leaflets, these can be given to others to distribute.

Other Ecoropa Information Sheets, prices as above:

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No. 7. Nuclear Power - The Facts They Don't Want You To Know
No. 8. Defending Britain Without The Bomb
No. 9. Britain and the Arms Trade
No. 10. Chemical and Biological Warfare

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