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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

19 October 1984

A NAVAL HISTORY OF THE FALKLANDS CAMPAIGN

The Prime Minister has considered the Defence Secretary's minute of 17 October about the proposed unclassified account of naval operations during the Falklands campaign. Subject to the views of OD colleagues, and subject to necessary clearance of the text, the Prime Minister agrees that this work should proceed to publication.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to members of OD and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Charles Powell

Richard Mottram, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence.

DSGACY

BT





MO 5/21

Prime Minister  
Agree to proposed  
publication, subject to  
clearance of the  
text?

PRIME MINISTER

Yes mt

CDP  
18/x

A NAVAL HISTORY OF THE FALKLANDS CAMPAIGN

You will wish to be aware that, following inter-Departmental discussions last year, I agreed that a proposal to commission an official history of the Falklands campaign should be put on ice. While there was a lot to be said for commissioning a history before the memories of those involved faded too far, I felt that, for some time yet, there would continue to be considerable political sensitivity about many aspects of the affair. I believe that it is still too early to be considering an official history. The political difficulties remain; and practical problems of funding and access to papers suggest that 1986 might be a more realistic target date.

2. Before the decision to put this proposal on ice was reached, it was agreed at Admiralty Board level that it would be highly desirable, in view of the plethora of instant Falklands history which was already on the market or in preparation by unofficial authors, that a properly produced unclassified account of the naval operations during the Falklands Campaign should be published as soon as possible. The main aim of this account would be to provide an accurate overall picture for the personnel of the Fleet and supporting organisations whose individual horizons were limited at the time. After some consideration, it was concluded that the Head of the Naval Historical branch, Mr David Brown, would be more suitable than any outside author to produce this account, which was to be factual and restricted to events; there was to be no critical discussion of national or defence policy in the period leading up to the Argentine invasion, or during the campaign to recapture the Islands.





3. Mr Brown has found a publisher, Leo Cooper, and has now forwarded his manuscript for clearance. It is intended that the work should be accompanied by a disclaimer to the effect that there had been no official sponsorship or involvement and that the views expressed did not represent those of the Ministry of Defence or the Naval Service. However, as Mr Brown is the Navy's official historian it is inevitable that whatever disclaimer is produced the public will regard the work as having tacit official approval. The work will therefore be scrutinised carefully in order to ensure discretion in matters of security and political sensitivity. Allowing for this process and the time required thereafter for publication, I would not expect the book to appear before about the middle of next year.

4. I should be glad to know whether my OD colleagues would be content for this work to proceed to publication, subject to the necessary clearance of the text. As the book has already been the subject of inaccurate press comment an early decision in principle would therefore be helpful.

5. Copies of this minute go to my other OD colleagues and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

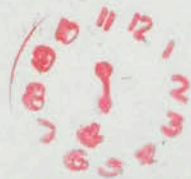
Ministry of Defence

17th October 1984





18 OCT 1984



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