

TV EYE - "FALKLANDS: DO THEY STAY BRITISH?"

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No 10 Press Office

DENIS TUOHY:

Tonight TV Eye interviews the Foreign Secretary, the Right Honorable Francis Pym.

THEME MUSIC

DENIS TUOHY:

Britain's five thousand troops on East Falkland are advancing towards Port Stanley, and tonight we want to look ahead of the news of the fighting to discuss with the Foreign Secretary two key questions. If we take the Islands what should the Government then do to settle their long-term future? And what does our commitment mean for our special relationship with America and with NATO? In the Pentagon in Washington President Reagan's Secretary for Defence is Casper Weinburger. I asked him tonight what he thought would be the likely military outcome of the conflict in the South Atlantic.

CASPER WEINBURGER:

Well, I don't know that I have too much basis to guess, but certainly if the British forces are able to get across the Island quickly and capture Port Stanley that would seem to take care very nicely of at least the initial phase.

DENIS TUOHY:

Well, looking further than the initial phase, the phrase that you just used, what would you say are the major obstacles to total success? Is it likely to be air power, sea power, land power?

CASPER WEINBURGER:

No, I think that would be total military success at that point, assuming that the Island can be blocked from reinforcement or re-supply from the Argentine mainland. What I had in mind was that after that why then some kind of more permanent arrangements for the governance of the Falklands I suppose would be worked out. At least this is what I understand the British Government has been saying.

DENIS TUOHY:

Well, the United States Government, having initially declared itself to be even-handed in the dispute, has of course since come down on Britain's side, but by so doing angered much of Latin America. Now, that

DENIS TUOHY:

(Continued) being so, as the casualties mount and as the fighting gets fiercer, how solid is your Government's support for Britain?

CASPER WEINBURGER:

Oh, I think it's completely solid. I don't think it depends on individual outcomes of daily events, it's a completely solid commitment, and we recognise that it does have some disadvantages for us within the hemisphere but as you've decided to act on a matter of principle so have we.

DENIS TUOHY:

Can you confirm Mr Secretary what reports from Washington today have been saying, that the United States is supplying Britain with Side-winder missiles, with bombs, with ammunition?

CASPER WEINBURGER:

No, those reports are just as you say, reports and rumours. We have taken the position that we are going to carry out the President's directive which is to assist England with material and logistical support, and that we're going to carry out the commitments and the arrangements, treaties, understandings that we've had for many many years, but we aren't going to go into any detail about any of them.

DENIS TUOHY:

But there is one particular report which, if true, would be very significant, and that is one carried by the UPI news service that there is an American General, General Jeremiah Moore, a specialist in radar systems, on board the QE2?

CASPER WEINBURGER:

Well that again we would not discuss and wouldn't get into any detail on any of those matters at all. The President has said that we would not carry our support to the point of operational assistance or anything that involved US troops, and I have to say that at the moment it clearly appears that you don't need any help, you're doing very well.

DENIS TUOHY:

The significance of the questions, which I'm sure you readily would accept in terms of significance Mr Secretary, is that those stories, those kind of stories, if true, would imply a deeper commitment by the United States to Britain's cause at the expense of its relations with Latin America?

CASPER WEINBURGER:

Well, the commitment is exactly the one stated by the President, and it is a full and complete one. This doesn't in any way change our desire, which I understand you and everybody else share, and that is to try to get the matter settled as quickly as possible so as to reduce the amount of... the number of casualties. But the commitment of the United States is complete and clear and the way in which we're carrying it out is, as the President said, by furnishing logistical and various material support, and that is what is...all that thus far Britain has indicated that it requires.

DENIS TUOHY:

The British Government's aim now is to secure that Argentina has to surrender, and yet there are members of the US Congress who believe that something less than total victory would be in the best security interests of Britain and of the Western Alliance, what is your view on that?

CASPER WEINBURGER:

Well, my view on that is that a military engagement that once starts should be carried forward to successful completion, and I think that's what the British forces are planning to do, and I think it's within their capacity to do, though it obviously would be a major military feat of arms to do that because the normal ratios that are considered to be required for the assault of a defended island are certainly not there. Normally you think you need about three or four to one superiority to carry a defended island by assault. And here the ratio is the other way.

DENIS TUOHY:

Casper Weinburger, the American Secretary of Defence. At home Reporter Peter Gill has been looking at what happens if and when we take the Islands. Maybe a long-term military commitment with a permanent garrison of up to five thousand men. But what of the political future for the islanders?

PETER GILL:

Dawn last Friday, British troops on British soil again, on their beach-head at Port San Carlos. The first community to be liberated brought a Falkland islander living in England in touch with her son through the words of an IRN reporter.

I saw the first of many islanders driving a tractor calmly down between the troops, ferrying ammunition and supplies up from the beach. On the back, the eighteen year old son of the settlement manager. His

(Continued) name, Philip Miller.

PETER GILL:

I asked Philip's mother how the people of San Carlos would have reacted to Argentinian rule.

I feel that, in fact, if anything the attitude will have hardened very considerably, and they will not tolerate anything to do with Argentina.

PETER GILL:

Do you think your attitude, maybe their attitude, would be any different if they were sitting in Port Stanley now with a very uncertain immediate future with the British advancing on them?

I feel very much for the people in Port Stanley at the moment, it must be extremely difficult for them, and one hopes they're not suffering any retributions because the British troops have arrived. I'm very conscious of this. But I really think that the Falkland islander has a tremendous spirit, tremendous spirit that is difficult for anybody else to understand. And I think they'll be thinking "Good, the British are in Port San Carlos, they're coming for us".

PETER GILL:

The Falklands before the storm. A British community living at peace with itself. Then there were just three policemen, now it's a battlefield for twenty thousand troops. But can the clock be turned back? The objective is to restore British sovereignty: For John Nott this week sovereignty negotiations with Argentina were out of the question.

RT. HON. JOHN NOTT:

We wouldn't have done this with the full support of the British people only to arrive there, have suffered tragic losses of our men, only once we're there to say, "Well, thank you very much, but we're now going to sit down with you and discuss sovereignty".

PETER GILL:

The restoration of British rule would mean the return of the Governor Rex Hunt. And instead of the Argentinian military there would be the eight man Executive Council, the Governor's Cabinet. And the key to Britain's case for holding the Islands, the elected members of the Legislative Council. Falkland islanders in Britain begin to look to the future. The first of

PETER GILL:

(Continued) a series of press conferences. The constitutional future is by no means assured. As well as straight forward British rule other ideas are mooted. Joint rule with Argentina, a United Nations trusteeship, and Falklands independence has also been raised. How does Councillor John Cheek react to such ideas? First, joint rule with Argentina.

CLLR JOHN CHEEK:

I think the Argentinians can fly their flag in their own country but not in ours. No, there's no way the islanders will accept any form of Argentine rule. It's a rather nasty dictatorship and we don't want to become part of it.

PETER GILL:

What about the possibility of a United Nations trusteeship over the Falklands?

CLLR JOHN CHEEK:

The UN themselves have no teeth, they've nothing to back up what they say. We've seen this with Resolution 502. Excellent, the Resolution, but once it was passed there's no way of enforcing it.

PETER GILL:

Now, another suggestion has been floated even in the last few days, and that is the notion of the Falkland Islands becoming independent, and yet your security being guaranteed by some sort of international arrangement. Maybe some of, you know, a major power like the United States. Does that sound a credible option to you?

CLLR JOHN CHEEK:

In fact the idea's been floated around the Islands oh, I suppose, five, seven years ago. I wouldn't dismiss it out of hand. It would rely a lot on who was guaranteeing our security. But again, what the people themselves would say. But my own personal views, I wouldn't dismiss it out of hand.

PETER GILL:

What do you regard as the likeliest option if the islanders are given an entirely free choice? And after all, the Government here is saying that it's up to the islanders to decide their own future. What do you think that decision is going to be?

CLLR JOHN CHEEK:

Without doubt to remain a British colony. But with all these things we're not demanding anything from Britain. Ultimately it's up to Britain what they give us. At the moment they say our wishes are paramount, but that can always be changed. Ultimately it comes

CLLR JOHN CHEEK:

(Continued) down to what the British Government are prepared to give us.

PETER GILL:

It's not just a doubtful constitutional future that confronts the Falklands, their economic well being has so far rested solely on the sheep farms. There have been complaints of British neglect. I asked the author of a major report on the Islands, Lord Shackleton, whether his plans for economic growth depended on the Argentinian link?

LORD SHACKLETON KG PC OBE:

I just hope in the long run we shall arrive at a sensible relationship. It's so much in the interests of everybody that there should be this sort of regional co-operation, but if it's not forthcoming, again as I said in my report, providing there is the will, there's no reason why the Falkland Islands shouldn't be self-sufficient. There's a much too easy belief in Government circles that they will be a drain. We've, as I've reported again, we've made, over the years, twice as much money in taxes out of their profits repatriated here as we gave in the way of aid.

PETER GILL:

A major stake in Falklands profits and their commercial future is held here in industrial Derbyshire. This is the headquarters of the Coalite Group, which since 1977 has owned the fuel distributors Charringtons, and through them the Falkland Islands Company. So Coalite finds itself owning a million and a quarter acres of the Falklands, that's almost half the total land space. And in addition to that, three hundred thousand sheep. In the past the Falkland Islands Company has been criticised for its lack of investment. What about the future? Coalite Chairman Ted Needham.

TED NEEDHAM:

It all depends if the environment now for investment is made right I think that we and other people will obviously be prepared to look very constructively at investment.

PETER GILL:

In what sort of areas?

TED NEEDHAM:

Well, if you...we are not expert in fishing, for example. There is an awful lot of fish off shore which is at present the waters are fished very largely by the Eastern Bloc countries. We've no expertise in fishing, but we wouldn't be averse to having a look with people who are expert in it at putting some money into it. Oil exploration, we

TED NEEDHAM:

(Continued) aren't experts in that, but we have interests in the North Sea Oil exploration with Mobil and Sovereign, and so that there we have some sort of fringe interest and would get involved. I hope that there will be good opportunities for commercial decisions to be made. These have all been stifled by the sovereignty issue in the past.

PETER GILL:

A grey day on the South coast of England. Bill Luxton and his family have a particular commitment to the restoration of British rule. He was the Executive Council member who, at two hours notice, was told by the Argentinians to pack his bags. He was then brusquely deported. When do you hope you and your family will be able to return to the Falklands Bill?

BILL LUXTON:

Well, it's a little late to start this afternoon, but tomorrow would be fine.

PETER GILL:

As soon as you can?

BILL LUXTON:

Yes.

PETER GILL:

Back home Bill Luxton fears that his farm may have been used as an Argentinian landing stage. But it's not just the restoration of his property that he's looking for.

BILL UXTON:

I would very much hope to see the Governor and the Chief Secretary go back and things start up as they were before, and start picking up the piece and try and put the colony back together again after all the damage which the Argentinians have done, and that's very substantial.

PETER GILL:

The Luxton family may not have long to wait for their journey home.

DENIS TUOHY:

So eight weeks after the Argentinian invasion the key questions remain unresolved. What's going to happen in the fighting? What's the future for the islanders? And what about the wider implications for the defence of the West? Here's Llew Gardner with the Foreign Secretary.

LLEW GARDNER:

Mr Pym, before we move to some of those wider questions, Mrs Thatcher today said that our troops have started to advance across the Falklands. May I start by asking you, as a member of her War Cabinet, weighing the balance sheet of losses and of gains, how you believe the conflict is going?

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

I think it's gone extraordinarily well. This enormous task force has gone eight thousand miles across the sea and has made a landing on one of the islands in the Falkland Islands without any loss to the soldiers who were landed. Yes, it's cost us some capital ships, but it was an amazing achievement, one of the biggest movements of troops that has ever been seen.

LLEW GARDNER:

Did it surprise you that it was done like this? I mean, at the start of it all would you have said it could have been done?

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

Yes, because of the professionalism of our services. I think it's a remarkable achievement but I wouldn't speculate tonight about any of the operations that may or may not be happening.

LLEW GARDNER:

No, I wouldn't ask you to. But I would ask you one perhaps political question about operations. There's been considerable Tory and newspaper pressure for the bombing of the bases on the mainland. Mr Nott, I believe, told Tory MP's last night that this was not military...great military difficulties. Is it politically feasible to bomb them?

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

That is certainly a controversial question. We have closed no military option. At all times we've kept them all open because one does not know how circumstances will change. But that certainly would be a change in scale and it may or may not happen. And no decision of course of that kind has been taken. But all through this, as the military pressure built up, and that was part of our strategy throughout, neither I nor any member of the Government has closed any option that might have to be used. But naturally we still hope that eventually we might be able to persuade the Argentines to withdraw and achieve a negotiation by peaceful means.



LLEW GARDNER:

What is, you say negotiation by peaceful means, what is now the object of the conflict in the Falklands? Are we fighting for total victory, a surrender and subsequent withdrawal of the Argentine troops, or are we fighting to bring them to the negotiating table in a less obdurate frame of mind than when they last left it?

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

Oh, we're there to repossess the Islands. The whole strategy has been designed to persuade the Argentines to withdraw, we've had diplomatic pressures, we've tried to negotiate, we've had economic pressures with support all round the world, there's been the sustained military build-up. All designed to get the aggressor and the invader off the Islands. So far they have shown no indication that they intend to go, and that being so our forces are now on the island and their objective is to repossess those Islands.

LLEW GARDNER:

And yet you did use the word in your previous answer, the word 'negotiate'. It's the first time that word has been used in a positive sense at all by a member of the War Cabinet this week I think?

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

Not at all. I've never stopped saying that if they will change their minds, they will withdraw and they will conform with Resolution 502, then we are in a different situation. They've shown no inclination whatever to do that so far.

LLEW GARDNER:

What do we negotiate about Mr Pym? Mr Nott, as we just heard a minute or two ago, says we're certainly not negotiating about sovereignty. What do we negotiate about?

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

What we're trying to do is to get a ceasefire coupled with a withdrawal, to get the Argentines off the Islands. If they won't go by peaceful means, if they won't withdraw of their own accord, then we are going to repossess them by force. That's been made clear all along. It's their choice and it's up to them.

LLEW GARDNER:

And after that?

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

After that then, of course, we have a new situation. It depends exactly how it ends, but what I can foresee is a period, which

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

(Continued) will take quite some time, when the islanders will want to rehabilitate themselves and re-establish themselves. We hope there won't be too much damage on the island, but that is an unknown factor. They will want to consider how they can best plan for their future, what arrangements can be made for their own prosperity. And that I think will take them quite some months, quite a long time to work out. And as we've made clear all along, we want to take full account of any wishes that they may express. We've heard tonight, and I'm sure this is true, that almost certainly they would wish to continue as before. But many new factors have come into it now. They have been invaded by a large country, Argentina, their nearest neighbour, which is a new factor. And I think we've got to think very carefully about their security.

LLEW GARDNER:

Mr Cheek was a little cynical perhaps of this consulting the islanders. He seemed to think in the long run that they'll get what Britain decides they'll get?

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

I thought he was very fair. He closed no doors, he said there were a number of possibilities, and I think I share with him the view that it will take quite some time for them to work out what they themselves would like, and we certainly want to give them every help and assistance that we can in that process. But I think it'll take some time. You see, you've got to think of the economic development of the island. What are the circumstances in which that's going to be best for them and for their children, and how can their security best be arranged? All these matters have got to be thought about with them. And, as I say, I think that'll take some time.

LLEW GARDNER:

If we drive the Argentines from the Islands, as now seems possible, does that mean we don't have any future negotiations with the Argentines about the future of the Islands, or is there a period after they've licked their wounds and recovered their pride that we start talking to them again, as we did for twenty years after all?

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

Indeed we did. The difference is this, that the British Government is in no doubt about our sovereignty, no doubt at all. We've been there for nearly a hundred and fifty years. And it's British territory and the citizens living there are British citizens, and they're having a miserable time now, and our thoughts are constantly with them.

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

(Continued) The Argentines believe that the Islands are theirs, we think their claim is invalid, but at least we acknowledge that they think they have a claim. And that's what we were negotiating about before. And throughout the whole of this period we have said that yes, we would be prepared to sit down and discuss that with them again, but they've shown no willingness to do that. And whatever else, however else any dispute that there might be over sovereignty is going to be settled, it certainly ought not to be settled by force. But at the moment they have opted for that, they've invaded to take over the Islands, they talk about de-colonisation. What they're actually doing is to colonise those Islands by force. And we certainly don't intend to see that an invader and an aggressor can keep the benefits of what they have taken. So that is the position there. What I think is going to happen now, unless they change their minds, which everybody hopes for, is that we will repossess the Islands, and then, under a British administration, there will be this period of rehabilitation and reconsideration for the future, and all the time we shall have in our minds what is going to be in the interests of the islanders and what they themselves prefer.

LLEW GARDNER:

I think I said to you right at the start of that though will we be talking to the Argentines again about them? Let me put to you what the Washington Post said this week. They said, "Does it, i.e. the British Government, believe there is any ultimate way to ensure the future of the Islands without consulting the Argentines directly?" Do you so believe?

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

Yes, because you've got to take the wishes of the people into account. After this trauma they will want to weigh what has happened. They have been invaded, they've got to think about how to build their future, and it may be that, upon consideration, they will take a different view. We're only assuming at the moment that they will, but we don't know that. And I say it will take quite a long time before they can come to a conclusion about that. And it might be that they would prefer one of the options that has been referred to. Mr Cheek tonight said he didn't think that they would, and I quite understand that, but you can't be sure. So we've got to go through that process. And I don't think anybody can answer it in advance. Our position is that we won't

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

(Continued) close any door to any future possibility, but let's take their wishes fully into account, and I think it'll take quite a long time before they can weigh up what is going to be the best future as far as they're concerned.

LLEW GARDNER:

Foreign Secretary, you said yes at the beginning of my question. I'm not quite sure whether you were saying yes it does believe that there is no ultimate way to ensure the future of the Islands without consulting the Argentines directly. Aren't we going to have to talk to them if we're going to ensure the safety and future of those islanders whatever they want?

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

Well, that is very very much up to them. I think the best future for the Falkland islanders will be if there is peace in the whole region, if there is stability and friendship in the whole region. And there are many friendships existing not only between islanders and the mainland, but between the mainland and Britain, and of course the United States and many other countries. And on the whole people are more prosperous, the economic future is brighter when there is stability in the region rather than tension. So what one would hope to see at the end of it all, despite what Argentina did, is that there can be friendships rebuilt and stability and peace. And that's the way to create prosperity and happiness for the people living there.

LLEW GARDNER:

Friendships rebuilt means talking to people again, doesn't it?

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

Oh yes.

LLEW GARDNER:

And that means negotiation?

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

Eventually of course. I always said, throughout the last two months, in every debate in the House of Commons, in the end there has to be a negotiation, in the end there has to be talk. And everybody would far rather talk than have a war.

LLEW GARDNER:

Is it true that Secretary Al Haig has informed this country that an all-out military victory that humiliated the Argentines would not be in the best interests of either Britain or America because it would stir up anti-British and anti-American feeling in Latin America?

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

No he hasn't indicated that, but he has indicated, what is certainly true, that if this result, if the Argentine withdrawal can be achieved without force it would be infinitely better, and I totally agree with him about that.

LLEW GARDNER:

However, a humiliation of the Argentines could have severe repercussions for America and her relationships, could it not?

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

Yes it could, but of course that would be by Argentine choice. They fired the first shot, they invaded the island, they're in the wrong as everybody acknowledged. And I think that's why, after his long efforts to try and get a peaceful negotiation, Mr Haig and the American Administration came down on our side. But it would be infinitely better if this absolutely unjustified aggression ceased and the Argentines withdrew.

LLEW GARDNER:

Foreign Secretary, we have suffered casualties, casualties that you spoke of at the start, they are said to be within the limits of those anticipated, is there an unacceptable figure beyond which we would have to say enough is enough?

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

Mr Galtieri, the President of Argentina, once said in some interview that he would be prepared to expend forty thousand casualties in order to secure those Islands. What a monstrous, horrifying thought! Throughout this exercise in the build-up of military pressure which was only a part of the strategy to cause the Argentines to withdraw, we have been using minimum force. Now we are invading and we have invaded, we have got a landing, and no doubt there will be other military operations, and the consequences of that cannot be predicted. But throughout this we have conducted on that basis. And the fact that there are casualties and there has been damage is by choice of the Argentines. So all along, of course, we want to have the minimum number of casualties.

LLEW GARDNER:

I'll ask you quickly at the end Sir, how long before we have peace do you think, how long will it all take?

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

I cannot predict that. The sooner it ends the better of course. But you can never be sure when you engage in an operation of this

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

(Continued) kind. But what is wrong is that Argentine ever invaded it, and what is right is that they should be made to withdraw if they will not volunteer to withdraw.

LLEW GARDNER:

Mr Pym, thank you very much indeed.

RT. HON. FRANCIS PYM:

Thank you.

LLEW GARDNER:

And from TV Eye on a night that our troops are advancing towards the sound of Argentine gunfire, that's all we have for you tonight. From TV Eye goodnight.

THEME MUSIC

END