The Falklands War

edited by
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CCBH Oral History Programme

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Published by
Centre for Contemporary British History
Institute of Historical Research
School of Advanced Study
University of London
Malet St
London WC1E 7HU

ISBN: 19 0516507 2

A version of this witness seminar has been published in the *Proceedings of the Strategic and Combat Studies Institute*, Occasional Number 46 (2003). A 'Falklands Roundtable' on official US perceptions of the conflict was held by the Presidential Oral History Program and is available at: http://millercenter.virginia.edu/programs/poh/falklands.html

The Falklands War

Held at the Joint Services Command and
Staff College (JSCSC), Watchfield, Wiltshire
on 5 June 2002

Chaired by Geoffrey Till
Paper by Lawrence Freedman
Seminar edited by Andrew Dorman,
Michael D. Kandiah and Gillian Staerck

Centre for Contemporary British History

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FIELD MARSHAL THE LORD BRAMALL OF BUSHFIELD	KG, GCB, OBE, MC, JP, Chief of General Staff
CAPTAIN MICHAEL	CB, Commodore of Amphibious Warfare.

CLAPP

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ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET SIR HENRY LEACH	GCB, KCB, DL, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff
MAJOR GENERAL JULIAN THOMPSON	CB, OBE, Commander 3 Commando Brigade
ADMIRAL SIR JOHN (SANDY) WOODWARD	GBE, KCB, Flag Officer First Flotilla and Senior Task Group Commander

From the floor:

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JOCK GARDNER	Naval Historical Branch
DR ERIC GROVE	University of Hull
PETER FREEMAN	
SULLE ALHAJI	
COMMANDER MIKE BEARDALL	
MAJOR SERGIO PRADO	Argentina
LT COMMANDER NICHOLAS TINDALL	Royal Navy
LT COLONEL RICHARD PERRY	

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This witness seminar, jointly organised by the Centre for Contemporary British History (CCBH, then Institute of Contemporary British History, ICBH) and King's College London, was held at the Joint Services Command and Staff College (JSCSC) at Watchfield (near Swindon), Wiltshire on 5 June 2002. A version of this witness seminar has been published in the *Proceedings of the Strategic and Combat Studies Institute*, Occasional Number 46 (2003). Participants included Rear Admiral John Lippiett (Commandant of the JSCSC), Professor Geoffrey Till (chair), Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman (paper-giver), Air-Chief Marshal Sir Michael Armitage, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Michael Beetham, Field Marshal The Lord Bramall of Bushfield, Captain Michael Clapp, The Rt. Hon. Lord Parkinson of Carnforth, Air Marshal Sir John Curtiss, Sir Nicholas Henderson, Sir Roger Jackling, Major-General Sir Jeremy Moore, The Rt. Hon. Sir John Nott, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach, Major General Julian Thompson, and Admiral Sir John (Sandy) Woodward.

JOHN LIPPIETT Thank you to all those who have put this together; it was lots of organisation and I know it will be very worthwhile. I am particularly grateful to the witnesses themselves for coming forward and supporting us in this way. There are many memories to be had from the events of 20 years ago. I am aware that there are some of those in the audience who were indeed at school in those days, and the generation beyond and above were the commanders and their political masters who held centre stage then and are on the stage now. For me, 20 years ago, I was flying out to Gibraltar to join my ship as a First Lieutenant and I definitely knew not of two things: I had not a clue I was about to go to war and I had not a clue that 20 years later I would be the Commandant of the Staff College introducing such an august body. We are delighted to have you here; we are fascinated to hear your views and I know this afternoon will be very useful, not only to us, but to historians in the future. I now turn to Professor Geoffrey Till, who will chair this afternoon's proceedings.

GEOFFREY TILL

Sir John Nott, *Here Today, Gone Tomorrow: Recollections of an Errant Politician* (London: Politico's, 2002).

I would like to start with a quotation from Sir John Nott's latest book.* This is what he says on page 307: 'There will always be other (equally) important battles being waged consecutively with the soldiers'/sailors' battle on the ground. I think we need a Staff College session on this.' Well this is it! The order of proceedings today will be that we will have a brief scene-setting introduction by Professor Freedman and then we start immediately into session 1, where we will focus on the run-up to the Falklands conflict, aiming by about teatime to get to the repossession of South Georgia. We will resume after tea and focus then on the conduct of the main campaign, and maybe end up with a few lessons for today. To start the ball rolling could I please ask Professor Freedman to set the scene. He is here as the official historian of the Falklands conflict for the Cabinet Office.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN

My memory, I perhaps should say, was that on 1 April 1982 I became Professor of War Studies at King's College and then on 2 April I had a war. The only shift in my position after that was on 1 August 1990, when I became Director of the Centre for Defence Studies at King's, and as some of you will recall there was a war on that day too when Iraq invaded Kuwait. So you will see my main contribution to world peace is to stay exactly where I am!

I want to congratulate the organisers on this event and on the timing: we were 20 years ago just between Goose Green and Fitzroy in terms of event, and of course we are now just a few days before the rematch on Friday.

I want to do a bit just of scene setting. I don't want to talk for very long because, as you will have noticed, I am the only person on this platform without an important designation in front of them indicating the role they played at the time, and I think it is important to hear from them. I just want to say a little bit, by way of scene setting, about what was happening with the previous government (not really represented here), but the way that the Falklands had been handled in the late 1970s.

James Callaghan (Lord Callaghan of Cardiff, 1912-2005), Labour politician. Prime Minister 1976-9.

In 1974 the newly-elected Labour Government found itself involved with mediating between Turkey and Greece in Cyprus, a former British colony, which had been in turmoil following a military overthrow of the government led by Archbishop Mikarios III. On 20 July 1974 Turkey invaded the island.

Ted Rowlands (Lord Rowlands), Labour politician. Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 1975-6 Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs 1976-9.

An American, talking about the Falklands afterwards, was asked, 'I suppose this was an issue that was a bit on the back burner for you?'; to which he replied, 'Back burner? It wasn't even on the stove!' I think that, for many people, was really the position of the Falklands as a pressing issue in political life. It has to be said though that Callaghan,* both as Foreign Secretary and as Prime Minister, *was* interested in the Falklands and interested in it largely because of another island, which is Cyprus.* Having been burned by the Cyprus crisis, which came just after the start of the Labour government in 1974, he came to the conclusion that islands that you didn't pay much attention to could cause you a lot of trouble. He stuck to that and when he appointed Ted Rowlands* – who is now mainly known in the Falklands in terms of his indiscretion in the House of Commons about intelligence in the first Commons debate, but who was in fact the Minister of State for the Falklands – this was the line

that Callaghan gave him: he was in a sense the minister for little islands that people forget about, but which pop up and cause you trouble. And during this period you see the government grappling with the issues that they really handed over as a legacy to the next government. Again I think that was Callaghan's view: that this was the sort of problem that you never solved, but you succeeded as a government to the extent that you handed it over to your successors.

And I think that was the way that he viewed the Falklands. It couldn't be solved, because it carried an irresistible force and an immovable object. The irresistible force was the determination of Argentina some way at some time to get the islands back; the immovable object was the Falkland islanders, who in 1968 by yet another government had been given a pledge which, whatever their fears, all governments took extremely seriously, that nothing would be done to change their constitutional position if they didn't agree to it. And of course they didn't. So a lot of what was being done was an attempt to find routes round the diplomatic problem, of which a number commended themselves, but the *status quo*, holding on to it for dear life, rarely commended itself. There were a variety of things such as access to resources and the dependencies rather than the islands, or a condominium, which lasted for some time as an idea, or lease-back, which was an idea that came to the surface during the Labour years and was pushed a bit more than tentatively during the Conservative years. But in all of it there somehow had to be found a way to keep the islanders reasonably content that they were not being sold out, while persuading the Argentineans that there was room for diplomatic negotiations that could at some point lead to what they wanted. Of course over time this was bound to become more and more frayed, as it became in a sense, as it seemed by early 1982, largely an excuse for procrastination.

In all of this, and this is the final point I want to make on the background, the military options were always understood to be extremely poor. Again, there is not a lot of difference between the sort of briefings that John Nott will have received and those received by the previous government, in terms of just how difficult it all was. Callaghan did have the view that he didn't want to get into a difficult period in the Falklands without a warship around, and that was really the origins of the famous episode in 1977, when a couple of frigates and a submarine were sent to the South Atlantic. But this was not an exercise in deterrence, because nobody was ever told that they were there. It was a precautionary measure and there were other precautionary moves taken at different times. So there are some interesting questions about whether, when you were aware you were entering a difficult time, there were things that you might have done, but there was never an explicit deterrent policy operated – largely on the grounds that few would have thought it really that credible.

The final point I wish to make by introduction is just to draw attention to some thoughts that come out of a book by Eliot Cohen on

Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: New York Free Press, 1992).

Charles de Gaulle (1890-1970), French general and statesman. President, 1958-69.

Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), American politician. President, 1809-1865.

Georges Clemeneau (1841-1929), French politician. Prime Minister, 1906-9, 1917-20.

David Ben Gurion (1886-1973), Israeli soldier and politician. Prime Minister, 1948-53, 1955-63.

statesmen and war*, that hasn't been published here yet, where he looks at De Gaulle,* Lincoln,* Clemenceau* and Ben Gurion,* really to challenge the view that the job of politicians in war is to give clear political direction to the military and then let them get on with it. He challenges this by showing that civilians in war do a good job not by what is now called micro-management, but by immersing themselves in the detail sufficiently to challenge, to interrogate, and also, as he points out, often to hire and fire their senior officers if they think they don't have a grasp of the strategic vision, to understand the role of alliances, and to recognise that these things will limit the military operations which you may have to undertake. I think it does set up some quite interesting questions as to the way that the political command – and the military command – was managed over this period, which I hope we will find out some more about over these next few hours. Certainly one of the questions that strikes me is that you just have to bear in mind that, even if the politicians were inclined to micro-manage, it was extremely difficult for them to do so because of the problems of distance, timing and communication. I am sure others will come back to this point, but we do have to look at the map and the time zones quite regularly to understand what it is that the gentlemen you are about to hear from were trying to grapple with during those very testing months of two decades ago.

TILL Thank you very much. We will start the proceedings with my asking everybody on the stage to identify themselves and to say what they were doing during the Falklands conflict.

MICHAEL CLAPP I was the Commodore Amphibious Warfare, responsible for jointly planning the landing of 3 Commando Brigade with Julian Thompson and then for executing the landings. These landing took about a week to complete. When they were over I brought the Divisional Headquarters and 5 Brigade into San Carlos Waters and landed them. My staff and I then supported the land operations both by sea and with support helicopters. We carried out most inshore naval operations to the west of a dividing line between us and Admiral Woodward. We remained in San Carlos Water until after the completion of the land battle.

JULIAN THOMPSON I commanded the 3rd Commando Brigade and I went south with Mike [Clapp] and together we planned the landings. I was the landing force commander *de facto* though not *de jure*, because by that stage the chain of command had changed pending the arrival of Jeremy Moore. When he arrived I reverted very happily to being a brigade commander and my brigade took part in all but one of the major land battles in the campaign.

SIR JOHN CURTISS

I was the AOC 18 Group and I then became the Air Commander for the Falklands, that is to say all RAF aircraft that had not embarked in the taskforce.

SIR ROGER JACKLING

I was head of DS11, which was the Ministry of Defence department that dealt with relations with the Foreign Office and other government departments, the parliamentary dimension of public presentation, rules of engagement, prisoners of war and the generation of alternative options during the campaign.

SIR MICHAEL ARMITAGE

I had joined the Defence Intelligence Staff in the very week that the crisis blew, but I didn't cause it! I was Director of Service Intelligence, which meant that I was the number two to General Glover, who was the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff Intelligence. He did most of the briefings, I understudied him and we worked shifts.

SIR HENRY LEACH

First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff.

LORD BRAMALL OF BUSHFIELD

Chief of the General Staff and therefore a member of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, together with my naval and Air Force colleagues.

LORD PARKINSON OF CARNFORTH

I was chairman of the Conservative Party at the time, but I was also Paymaster General and became Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster – two of the longest titles in the government with the smallest departments – and I was a member of the War Cabinet.

SIR JOHN NOTT

I was the Defence Secretary.

SIR NICHOLAS HENDERSON

General Alexander Haig, American solider and politician. Secretary of State, 1981-2.

I was the British Ambassador to Washington and my initial aim was to try to persuade the London government, which wasn't terribly easy, that what Haig* was engaged in, firstly, trying to achieve a negotiated settlement was not inherently against our interests. And secondly, when it was shown the Argentineans were not prepared to negotiate satisfactorily, my aim was to try to get as much materiel support from the United States, as well as political support, as was possible.

SIR MICHAEL BEETHAM

I was Chief of the Air Staff.

SIR JOHN WOODWARD

I was the senior Task Group Commander in the South Atlantic until my superior arrived. My job was primarily to keep the Argentinean air force and navy neutralised before, during and after the land battle.

SIR JEREMY MOORE

I had three jobs. The first one was what was called Major-General Commando Forces. I had to mount 3 Commando Brigade to rein-

force in the amphibious shipping to go to war. Second, I moved to Northwood after one week where I was Land Deputy to the Commander-in-Chief Fleet, who was also the commander of the taskforce. Thirdly I went south and took over as Commander Land Forces Falkland Islands from Julian Thompson. A reference by my friend Sandy Woodward here does not mean that I became senior to him, although in sheer book terms I was senior to him, but that was irrelevant. We were co-equal task group commanders, though had it arisen (but it didn't) he would have been *primus inter pares*.

TILL Thank you very much. I will start by asking the really obvious question, which must be at the back of everybody's mind: why did it happen? I am particularly interested in whether we were seeking to deter Argentina at all. I wonder if I could ask my two colleagues from the War Cabinet for their view. Were you aware that there was something going on that needed to be deterred?

NOTT I think the problem with a gathering like this is that you tend to look at the Falklands as a sort of isolated incident on its own; you have to look at the Falklands in the context of the times. The Warsaw Pact was a direct threat to the independence and freedom of the United Kingdom and was growing stronger, not weaker. That was the context of the Falklands.

So far as deterrence was concerned in those far-off islands, I don't think I ever thought about it. I don't think it ever passed through my mind that we needed to deter an invasion of the Falklands. It didn't seem a real threat until about four days before it happened, although I was aware of the scrap merchants landing on South Georgia, and I had seen some intelligence briefings on the Falklands. I had been part of a Cabinet committee, chaired by Margaret Thatcher,* when we had decided to recommend to the House of Commons a negotiated leaseback of the Falklands. So we had actually been considering some kind of agreement with Argentina before the invasion happened and it had been thrown out by the House of Commons, especially by the Falklands lobby in the House of Commons. As for deterrence in the Falkland Islands, I never ever thought about it. I didn't even know, frankly, where the Falkland Islands were!

Margaret Thatcher (Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven), Conservative politician. Prime Minister, 1979-90.

PARKINSON I was like the rest of the Cabinet I suspect, in not being aware that there was any real threat of conflict. It came as quite a surprise to me when it actually happened. As I mentioned one of my jobs was chairman of the Conservative Party at the time, and I remember I was driving up to Cambridge on the morning that the Argentineans actually invaded. I felt very pleased, because for the first time in about a year ahead of this we had actually taken a lead in the polls and, having been eight points behind, we had gone in front. So I was in a very rosy frame of mind when out of a clear blue sky came this terrible news that the Argentineans had landed. What was par-

ticularly difficult that day was that one was listening to radio hams in the Falklands saying that Argentinean troop carriers are rumbling past our door, and then poor Humphrey Atkins* was going to the House of Commons saying 'we have no information'. The government sounded incredibly weak and ill informed and my immediate reaction was 'Oh my God, what a mess we are in'.

Sir Humphrey Atkins (Lord Colnbrook, 1922-96), Conservative politician. Deputy-Foreign Secretary, 1981-2. He resigned following criticisms that the FCO had mishandled affairs prior to the Falklands War.

But I had had a little experience of South America, because I had been John [Nott]'s number two in the Department of Trade and he made it quite clear to me that my job was to do the travelling. So I had actually been to Argentina, I had met President Videla,* I also had a brief meeting with Galtieri,* but Videla was President at the time. I had also been to Chile, I had been to Peru and had met Belaunde Terry* who subsequently came forward with a peace plan. So I probably knew rather more about South America than most of the War Cabinet, the politics of it and the trade figures and so on, but I had never really given much thought to the Falklands. I do remember having the overriding impression that we had been desperate to get out of them, one way or another, for quite a long time. I remember during the Heath government a huge effort was made to persuade the Falkland Islanders to think more kindly about the Argentineans and I remember Nicky Ridley,* who was a friend of John [Notts]'s and mine, having a very difficult time in the Commons when he came forward with this proposal for lease-back, which went down like the proverbial lead-filled balloon. But I don't think anything had prepared me for the idea that the Argentineans might invade and therefore, like John [Nott], the idea of deterring them hadn't occurred to me. I was actually in Argentina trying to promote trade, closer trade relations, with Argentina to build up the status of the civil government, which was running the economy under the control of the military government. We were desperately trying to build up the status of the civilians. And I remember getting off the plane in Argentina and the very first question I was asked was 'What is your attitude to the Malvinas',* I said, 'We call them the Falklands and they are British', and the matter was never raised with me again because they were desperately keen to promote trade. So nothing prepared me for the invasion and certainly nothing made me think about deterrence.

Lieutenant General Jorge Rafael Videla, Argentinean soldier and leader. President, 1976-81.

General Leopoldo Galtieri (1926-2003), Argentinean solider and leader. President, 1981-2.

Fernando Belaunde Terry (1912-2002), Peruvian politician. President, 1980-5.

Nicholas Ridley (Lord Ridley of Liddesdale, 1929-93), Conservative politician. Minister of State, FCO, 1979-81.

Malvinas is the name the Argentineans call the Falklands Islands.

TILL If I can follow up on that question, and I will address this to anybody up here on the stage: what therefore was the reading that the British government took of the Argentine occupation of South Georgia? Was this seen as of no particular moment?

HENDERSON Can I just say that the view in 1981, as far as I know, in Whitehall was that there was increasing pressure from Buenos Aires that we should be prepared to negotiate about sovereignty, and a recognition by quite a few people in Whitehall that we must either negotiate about the sovereignty of the islands or strengthen our defences there. What then accelerated the whole programme were

two things. First of all, Galtieri became leader of Argentina, I think in December 1981, and he and his cohorts were prepared to accelerate and intensify the Malvinas programme, largely in order to deflect domestic criticism which was very intense. And the second event, which Sandy Woodward can tell you about more than I, was that they were originally planning to land in the Falklands I think in September 1982. What then at the last minute made them accelerate the programme was the information that was published in London of the despatch in March 1982 of a British submarine from, I think, Gibraltar. That then decided that they must accelerate their programme and land before we produced a sufficient defence force in the South Atlantic.

WOODWARD

I have it on the evidence of a certain Hugh Scully,* of whom you may know, who went to interview Admiral Jorge Anaya* and he said, 'We interpreted the sailing of an SSN* from Gibraltar on 26 March as coming South' – it actually went North – 'and that the Brits would keep one on station indefinitely thereafter, so therefore the September operation wasn't really going to be on and we had about twelve days in which to fix it'. Therefore, Admiral Anaya rang Rear Admiral Lombardo,* their C-in-C South, and said, 'Can you bring forward the September operation – it was fully planned and the key people were fully briefed – to next Wednesday?' I will give you 24 hours to check. Lombardo, in good staff manner, came back within 24 hours and said, 'Yes, sir'. So they did it. So, if we were caught with our trousers down it is not too surprising, the Argentineans only had five days notice themselves.

I am not sure that I agree with Lawrence Freedman about deterrence. I agree with something else that was said: we hadn't done anything much since Callaghan. In Callaghan's time we sent a frigate, as well as *Dreadnought*, our only SSN running at the time. Now you don't see the SSN (that's a submariner speaking), that is what they are for, you use them as they are needed. Put a frigate up front and it shows that you have some resolution. In 1981, in response to what was seen as the primary threat, we planned to put most of our forces in central Germany, which seemed sensible at the time although within four years this would be revealed as rubbish, and we were talking about removing *Endurance* in public. So it is hardly surprising that the Argentineans didn't fuss too much about our reaction. I don't think we deterred them at all. They didn't expect us to do what we did. The advice had been, to my knowledge since about 1974, to the politicians of the day and through the Chiefs, that on the whole if they did invade there was nothing you could really do: we can't afford a locally stationed defence force sufficient to defend against invasion. And we never considered what to do if they *did* invade. Never developed a plan.

Hugh Scully, journalist. Subsequently executive producer of the 1992 Channel 4 television series *The Falkands War.*

Admiral Jorge Anaya, Argentinean naval officer. Chief of Staff of the Argentine Navy, 1981-2.

SSN is a nuclear-powered submarine.

Vice-Admiral Juan J. Lombardo, Argentinean naval officer. On 7 April 1982 he was appointed Comandante del Teatro de Operaciones del Atlántico Sur, and thus the Argentinean Navy was under his overall command during the time of the Falklands War.

NOTT

We had a trip-wire policy; we had a few Royal Marines on the islands. It was the only sensible policy at the time. I don't know

Sir Richard Luce (Lord Luce), Conservative politician. MP for Arundel and Shoreham, 1971-4; Shoreham, 1974-92. Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1979-81; Minister of State, 1981-2 and 1983-5. Lord Chamberlain of HM Household, 2000-.

what else we could have done when we had a huge and real threat to the United Kingdom from the Warsaw Pact. On the SSN, of course we should have kept that secret. Richard Luce,* who by the way is now Lord Chamberlain (I don't know whether there is any connection), went to a party meeting in the House of Commons and was baited by the Tory members about why we weren't doing anything about South Georgia: why we weren't reacting to the situation in South Georgia. And I think must have implied that we had already despatched a nuclear submarine. The next day the newspapers were absolutely full of the news that we had sent a nuclear submarine, and it is a pity it leaked. The big 'what if' of history is: what would have happened if we had had one or two nuclear submarines there. Is anybody seriously suggesting that that would have deterred the Argentineans?

WOODWARD I am damn sure of it.

NOTT Right, okay, well that's a big 'what if' of history.

WOODWARD I'm a submariner.

NOTT You are a submariner. I have no doubt that if Margaret Thatcher had immediately agreed rules of engagement to allow us to sink Argentine merchant ships approaching the Falkland Islands, then a nuclear submarine could have sunk them. But what I am saying is – if we had got together and tried to decide whether we would give rules of engagement for the sinking of approaching Argentine merchant ships, it seems to me extremely doubtful whether we would have agreed them before a landing had even happened. Admiral, you have to live in the real world!

WOODWARD They are not privy to our rules of engagement. They are deterred by our being there, they didn't know that our politicians were saying 'keep your hands tied behind your backs'. As far as they are concerned we have got two SSNs who will sink their ships, by which means nearly all their Falklands forces had to travel to go. It is quite clear from the interview with Admiral Anaya that was exactly so. That is what made him do it earlier.

NOTT I see. So we would have had SSNs going backwards and forwards to the Falklands Islands?

WOODWARD If we had done that it wouldn't have happened.

NOTT I asked Henry [Leach] where our SSNs were and Henry said they were all up in the North, busy on operations. Isn't that right Henry?

LEACH

That is correct. We had despatched the one from Gibraltar, we had earmarked another a few days later and we had put a label on a third, but at the time the deployment of the third did not seem either necessary or desirable.

But if I could come back a moment, I think that it becomes slightly academic as to whether however it had been played at the time might have been an effective deterrent to the Argentines, and I would take the view that pretty well whatever we did at that time would not have been effective as a deterrent. I think that the state of the Argentine had deteriorated to such an extent – there was after all rioting on the streets in Buenos Aires, the economy was in a mess, the long-held suspicion about the dirty war, wherein thousands had clandestinely disappeared, many never to be seen again - was now perceived as reality by the Argentine people and the mob was howling at the gates. And the one thing in the Argentine (and Sir Nicholas Henderson will probably endorse this) that was an immediate panacea, to give their government time, to buy time to let them sort out their own appalling internal problems, was the Malvinas. You may say that that was entirely emotional, indeed it largely was, but that was how it was perceived in the minds of the Argentines. I think that quite honestly *that*, coupled with the ineptitude of Galtieri (who was drunk by noon every day), added to the astonishing paranoia against the British off the head of the Argentine Navy, Anaya, despite the fact that he had been *Attaché* in London for some years (what had happened to him over here to sour him to that extent, I have never understood), the sum of all that was that they had to act vigorously and fast and the only real option was the Malvinas. I don't personally believe that if we had sent all three nuclear submarines at the time, at the outset, backed by whatever other force, it would have served as a deterrent on that occasion.

TILL

Could I ask your two colleagues about what the MoD and the intelligence view was as to whether Argentina at that stage of the game was so set on its course, whatever that was, that nothing could be done that would prevent them continuing with it?

ARMITAGE

No, we had no indication at all of their intentions, although of course we had some idea of their capabilities. The problems were first of all that there had been a number of defence cuts over the years and in the intelligence sphere, as in many others, we were trying to do too much with too little. In the Defence Intelligence Staff, as I recall, we had one-and-a-half desk officers looking after the whole of Central and South America. And although the South American Group of the Joint Intelligence Committee* responsible for the area had met some 18 times in the previous nine or ten months before the crisis, they were focussed on the Guatemalan threat to Belize.

The Joint Intelligence Committee analyses intelligence and advises the Cabinet on formulation of policy.

This leads to another point that I think John Nott referred to: the

question of the noise of international events, which drowned out whatever signals we were getting from the Falklands. We were looking not only at the Warsaw Pact,* but there were problems in Poland, there was trouble in the Gulf between Iran and Iraq, *and* there was the threat to Belize. And as has been pointed out, most people's focus of attention, with the limited staff we had in the Ministry of Defence, was on those areas.

The Warsaw Pact (Warsaw Treaty Organisation) was a military treaty signed in 1955 by the Soviet Union, Albania (until 1968), Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Romania. It was disbanded in 1991.

So we had no indication at all that there was likely to be an invasion, and in Argentina itself we were even more thin on the ground. We had no way of following the manoeuvres of the Argentine army, for example, although the Naval *Attaché* was very sharp and sent us all kinds of information about fleet manoeuvres and the Military Attaché was very much on the ball. But none of this was enough to persuade Whitehall that there was going to be an invasion.

JACKLING

Can I just come back to the question of deterrence. There had over the previous two or three years been a running correspondence with the Foreign Office about whether or not we should keep *HMS Endurance* employed in the South Atlantic. And it is a characteristic of relations between the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office that the Foreign Office is always writing letters in support of keeping bits of defence capability which are expensive and not particularly effective at what the Foreign Office thinks they used to do. But I can absolutely confirm what Admiral Woodward said. We were operating in the context of a government strategy to find a political solution to the problem of the Falkland Islands; a *modus vivendi* between the islands and the Argentine which would be very much in the interest of the population of the Falkland Islands. There was very little that the forces deployed in that area could do to deter any military adventure by the Argentines and, quite frankly, it never crossed our minds in the period either side of Christmas 1981 that they would launch such an adventure. I remember the Franks Commission interrogating us rather sharply about the absence of contingency plans for reinforcing the Falkland Islands and being rather unpersuaded by the evidence we gave, which was that such plans were only relevant if there were airfields to which you could fly with the reinforcements required.* And of course there weren't in those days. But I have to say, having been in the policy division that dealt – rather increasingly – with the Falkland Islands throughout this period, it frankly never entered our imagination that the Argentine would launch a full-scale military invasion.

Following the conclusion of the war the Prime Minister constituted a committee under the chairmanship of Lord Franks to report in the circumstances of the war. In Jan. 1983 they produced *Cmnd. 8787, A Report of Privy Councillors,* which is commonly known as the Franks Report.

BEETHAM

The Chiefs of Staff used to review all our overseas commitments in our defence committee, wherever they might be in the world, on a regular basis and the Falklands was reviewed in its turn. But as Sandy Woodward was saying earlier on, the advice always given was the Falklands from a defence point of view was too difficult, unless

one was prepared to put in a number of resources. Important among these was expanding the runway at Port Stanley. If you had a reasonable airfield there, with reasonable facilities, you could if you had an emergency have flown in reinforcements using Ascension Island as a staging post. But money for doing all this was in short supply and there were much higher priorities as judged at the time.

WOODWARD I believe that was thrown out on the crosswind problem: there was only one runway.

BEETHAM There was only one runway, but it was thrown out more on the basis that the defence review one had, our main priorities being in Europe, outside commitments had to be taken out of the resources we had. Where were we going to find the resources in that situation to extend the runway. It was not cheap to extend the runway, albeit we have done it now, which was money well spent, but it wasn't taken, as has been made clear around the table, as being that serious a threat compared to all the other things that went on.

ARMITAGE One illustration, if I may, of how far from the military thinking the Falkland Islands were and had been for some time, is shown by the collision between the Air Force and the Navy about the future of aircraft carriers, which came to a head in I think 1966, 15 years before this crisis. Numerous papers were produced on both sides proving the case one way or the other, about the Pacific, the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean. The one place that as far as I recall was not mentioned in anybody's paper, was the Falkland Islands.

TILL The conclusion that seems to come from all of that is that nobody in the British government took the Argentine occupation of South Georgia as being a particularly significant event. Would I have that right?

HENDERSON The Argentinean scrap-metal merchant's invasion: that's later, you see, that's later. That's March.

BEETHAM I think when it happened there were certainly alarm bells ringing, but I don't think people seriously thought even at that stage that that meant the Argentineans would invade the Falkland Islands itself.

LEACH And of course the alarm bells had rung annually for certainly the previous sixteen years, but it had all blown over in a matter of months.

HENDERSON If I could say on this idea of a negotiated settlement, I think it was perfectly apparent to everybody dealing with it in the foreign service that by the late summer of 1981 it was hopeless to think you could have a negotiated settlement unless in some way you were prepared to talk about sovereignty. This was the dilemma. We were not prepared to talk about sovereignty. It was put up to ministers – this was the alternative, either reinforce or negotiate about sovereignty – and they said we can do neither.

TILL The temperature seems to have gone up when the message indication came through that the Argentine fleet had in the course of its exercises suddenly changed course. And there was this famous meeting on the Wednesday a couple of days before the Argentine invasion actually took place. How quickly did the participants in that meeting, and in the government generally, come to the realisation that real conflict had suddenly become a lot more possible?

NOTT Immediately, because Roger Jackling came to my office on the Wednesday with the intercepted signals.

JACKLING It was in your flat, I think.

NOTT Was it? No I don't think so, it was in my room in the House of Commons. Anyhow, immediately I got in touch with Margaret Thatcher. Henry Leach, I believe, saw the signals in the MoD, or they were shown to him in the MoD, and came to look for me, initially, because he was rightly suspicious that some feeble compromise would be sought. I had immediately got in touch with Margaret Thatcher and met her, I think within half an hour, in her room in the House of Commons. We spent, I think, three-quarters of an hour before Henry Leach arrived, going round and round in circles, wondering what we could do diplomatically. I sent a signal to Nico Henderson in Washington, and we tried to get in touch with Reagan* direct, so we spent three-quarters of an hour wondering what we could do diplomatically to forestall this threat. At which point of time Sir Henry [Leach] arrived. Now there is a great dispute of enormous historical importance as to whether Henry Leach was wearing his uniform or whether he was wearing civilian clothes! In my famous book, which all of you of course are going to buy, I said that Henry Leach was in uniform and that Margaret Thatcher was very much taken with men in uniform, particularly with handsome Admirals like Sir Henry Leach! So were you in uniform Henry?

Ronald Reagan (1911-2004), American politician. President, 1981-9.

LEACH I *was* in uniform.

TILL So at that stage of the game it really did look as though this country was embarked on a course that could lead to conflict. It wasn't still

thought of as something that could possibly be responded to diplomatically?

NOTT Oh yes, there was an attempt on the Wednesday, and even on the Thursday, to respond to it diplomatically. But by the Wednesday evening, and Sir Henry Leach's very admirable intervention with the Prime Minister, we were also in the process of preparing for war. But I think Sir Henry [Leach] and Sir Nico Henderson are the best people to comment on that.

HENDERSON When the invasion of South Georgia took place, I don't think we were absolutely certain of what this did foretell. But we certainly were all extremely worried about it and there was the possibility that it was a precursor to invasion of the Falklands. At that stage I took it up with the US government at a high level and they replied in two ways: they said it wasn't serious, they were scrap metal merchants, nothing else; and secondly, this is the extraordinary thing, Reagan had had an absolute assurance from Galtieri, from the Argentinean head of state, that Argentina had no intention of invading the Falkland Islands. This is one of the difficulties we were always up against – the Americans were relying on completely different information from what we were trying to tell them.

TILL In retrospect, do you think they were as surprised by events as we were?

HENDERSON Yes, I think, so: because America was very close, politically and diplomatically, at that stage (we are talking about March 1982) to Argentina. They were using Argentina and depending upon them a great deal for support with the problems they were having in Central America and they were disinclined therefore to discount assurances they got from Argentina that they were not bent upon aggression. And we had great difficulty. In the end I showed Haig intelligence that we had from London, showing that they were on the point of not only sailing but landing, and it was only then that we managed to persuade them.

NOTT And interestingly enough they hadn't intercepted the signals themselves, which was very odd.

HENDERSON No, they were our signals.

TILL And you are sure they hadn't intercepted the signals?

NOTT I think we were sure they hadn't, we drew their attention to the signals on the Wednesday evening.

HENDERSON And Haig was extremely cross in my presence with the intelligence people in Washington for not having intercepted them, or, if they had, for not showing them to him.

TILL If I can move forward a few days to when it was quite clear that the Argentine fleet was indeed on its way to the Falklands. A lot has been made of Sir Henry Leach's intervention with the Prime Minister. What was her reaction? Was she so charmed by you in your uniform, or was it the power of your arguments?

LEACH I have to say that I never personally experienced an excess of charm from the Prime Minister of the day! What triggered me, quite simply, was that it was a Wednesday and Wednesday in normal circumstances was a day when the Chiefs of Staff would get out into the outfield and visit their parishes, and it was highly important that they should do so. I had been away in Portsmouth in fact and I got back to my office at about 18.00 in the evening and on my desk were two piles of briefs. One was from intelligence and the other was from the naval staff. The intelligence brief, for once they really put their head on the block and instead of saying on the one hand this and on the other hand that, yet maybe, they said: on this occasion we think the Argies do mean business and that they will invade, probably one of the lesser islands, during the first week in April. The naval staff brief, as I say to my shame, said: keep your cool, this is the mixture as before, we have had it all before, it has all blown over in the past and it will blow over again; we are grossly over committed, keep your cool, do nothing. The two briefs were incompatible and my reaction was – what the hell is the point in having a navy if you don't use it for this sort of thing in these sort of circumstances.

So I went straight down the corridor to my Defence Secretary's office, only to find, because even then he was being briefed, as I thought, that he was not being briefed there but in his room in the House. So I went to the House. And of course you can't defeat the system there. The only way in I knew, not having a friendly civil servant to lead me on this occasion, was the way the public gets in, and there that splendid policeman in the central lobby insisted that I sat in the wings until the Defence Secretary had been located. He was rung up in his room and he wasn't there, because by this time you, John [Nott], had gone to the Prime Minister's room. It took about 15 minutes, I suppose, to locate him and then I was asked to go up.

And I think you will agree John [Nott] that the atmosphere in the Prime Minister's room was pretty laden. There was an extremity of uncertainty, of doubt, and what the hell are we going to do and how do we do it and so forth. I was absolutely clear what I wanted to get done, and that was I wanted authority to assemble – not yet to sail, but to assemble – a taskforce, because it takes time. Quite early on, having introduced myself and said, 'Is there any way I can

help?' and so on, the Prime Minister turned to me and said, what did I think, and the question of deterrence came up. I said that, on the basis of the intelligence summary that I had just seen, it did look as if there was nothing we could do in time and certainly the garrison in the Falklands, with or without the backing of *Endurance* would not be sufficient to stave off an invasion. Therefore the Falklands would be invaded and they would be captured, and therefore if we were to do anything about it at all we would be faced with the prospect of recapturing them at, inevitably, some later date. And I recommended that that was what we should be considering.

There was a lot of to-ing and fro-ing, like messages to Washington, to our Ambassador, to the President, to Al Haig, and to the Governor of the Falklands.* The latter varied from 'fight to the last man' to a more restrained approach saying we leave it to your discretion in the interests of avoiding unnecessary bloodshed – as if there was anything the poor man could do anyway – and so on. Eventually nothing was sent to the Governor of the Falkland Islands, and quite right too. I had a slight hand in that, because I suppose I was caught shaking my head in disagreement with the proposition and Margaret Thatcher looked at me and said, 'You are shaking your head, you don't agree'. I said, 'No, I can only explain my reaction if I were the man at the receiving end of such a signal'. 'What?' she said, and I said, I would tear it in two, drop it in the waste bin and lose my remaining confidence in Whitehall! So it wasn't sent.

But the main thrust of this was that I left – and it was then after midnight – with full authority to assemble, but not yet sail, a taskforce. And I went back to the Ministry of Defence and rang up Michael Beetham, who was the Acting Chief of Defence because the Chief of Defence himself was away in New Zealand. Curiously, nobody had thought to invite the Acting Chief of Defence to such a meeting, but they hadn't, and it was entirely fortuitous that I was there with the intention of briefing, or disabusing from other briefs, the Defence Secretary on this subject.

Sir Rex Hunt. Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Falkland Islands, 1980-2; Governor, Oct. 1985. See his *My Falklands Days* (London: Politicos, 2002).

TILL

Had the Navy done any exploratory thinking before you made the offer of assembling a taskforce?

LEACH

I had made one or two discreet minor preparations. For example John Fieldhouse,* the Fleet Commander, had been out in the Gibraltar area, where there was the annual major national exercise occurring – Admiral Woodward was there playing a leading part, leading one of the flotillas there – and I had got John Fieldhouse back because I thought it was time he was back at his headquarters. There were various other discreet moves one could make to facilitate and expedite such a manoeuvre, were it to be sanctioned. It was interesting, because (to give a slight feel for the sense of timing and proportion) amongst a whole host of questions that the Prime Minister put to me, one was, 'How long would it take to assemble

Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Fieldhouse (Lord Fieldhouse, 1928-98), naval officer. Falklands Task Force Commander and Defence Chief of Staff, 1982-5.

the taskforce'. To which I replied that apart from merchant ships, which would need to be taken up in considerable numbers from trade and that would involve an Order in Council (which of course could be passed through very quickly, but it would take time), and the specific case of *Intrepid*, which was refitting at the time and whose precise state I couldn't quote, but for the rest I stuck my neck out and said, '48 hours'. She followed that up with a really remarkable question: she said, 'And how long will it take them to get down there?' And I said, 'Three weeks'. And she said, 'Three weeks? You mean three days'! I said, 'No, it is 8,000 miles' and I don't think she had any appreciation of how far off it was and hence how far away from any form of base, and this was a matter of some significance.

BEETHAM Admiral Woodward just wrote a little note here. I was immediately asked by the Chief of Naval Staff, obviously cautious in view of all the assessments we had done, about taking a battle fleet to the Falklands. I certainly went along with assembling a taskforce, because you are not committing anything, and you could not sit back with a threat like this and take no action. Assemble it and *then* you could decide whether, when you looked at what authority you had got, what good it was going to do. It was important to send a message to the Argentineans and there were several stages to go through before the task force would be at serious risk.

LEACH Could I just add to that – I go along with all of that – I cut it short just now, but at one stage the Prime Minister asked me, 'Supposing the Argentines do invade the Falklands, do you really think that we can recapture them?' I replied that yes I did think so, that it would be a high-risk venture. And there were all sorts of details that were discussed too, like the degree of air cover or the lack of it, and so forth. But to sum it up, my reaction was that yes, we could recapture, it would be a high-risk venture, but I then stuck my neck out (which was beyond my terms of reference really) and said, 'And we should'. She was on to that like a hawk and said, 'Why do you say that?' so I said, 'Because of we do not, if we muck around, if we pussyfoot, if we don't move very fast and are not entirely successful, in a very few months' time we shall be living in a different country whose word will count for little'. She gave me a very cold look and then cracked into a grin, because it was exactly I think what she wanted to hear.

BRAMALL I was in Northern Ireland at the time, which I suppose wasn't too bad a place for a Chief of the General Staff to be, and, rather like John Nott, I wasn't too clear where the Falkland Islands were! When I came back, it was clear enough what had happened. The Chiefs of Staffs had to grip the problem and produce detailed options as to what could be done to react positively. I was initially, of course, pretty sceptical about whether a repossession – a landing

on the Falkland Islands – was actually going to be possible: 8,000 miles away and only 150 miles away from the enemy air bases. We would have to fight for air, if not superiority then at least equality, from Harriers* bobbing around on some very inhospitable waters. I was highly sceptical whether in the event this would be possible. But I also realised that if we were going to do anything in the Falklands: if we were going to, even by negotiation, get the Argentines off the Island, it was no good sitting back in London cajoling them with high-sounding phrases from a distance. We had got to project some power down to that part of the world, otherwise the Argentines – who already didn't believe we would do anything – would be quite convinced that we were, in fact, going to do nothing. So I, rather like my colleagues here, thought it was absolutely right to sail the taskforce as a projection of power down into that part of the world. But the decision about whether we could land would depend on all sorts of conditions: the circumstances at the time, the operation of special forces, what had happened on South Georgia, the air situation. We had to take a decision, and how that came about will come up later.

Harrier is an offensive support and ground aircraft.

There was scepticism about all that, but absolute support from Michael Beetham and I that a taskforce had to be sent. I only asked my naval colleague one question. I said, 'Henry, when you get your taskforce down 8,000 miles away, can it defend itself?' and he answered quite unequivocally 'Yes'. So as far as I was concerned the next stage, and it only *was* the next stage, was to get the taskforce down to the South Atlantic.

BEETHAM

In order to support the taskforce I immediately, when I got back to my office, rang all the bells, rang for all the transport data, and put the transport fleet on standby, because we were likely to need them. The same applied to the tankers as air-to-air refuelling was going to be needed. We converted the Vulcans* to the conventional bombing role and made it public as part of the deterrent. So there was a lot going on and it wasn't just a matter of the taskforce, there was a lot going on throughout the Ministry of Defence as well.

Avro Vulcan was a medium range strategic (V) bomber that formed part of the force that provided Britain's strategic nuclear deterrent in the late 1950s and 1960s until superseded by the Royal Navy's Polaris missile submarines.

TILL

This wasn't just an international military event, it was also a domestic political one. Lord Parkinson, what was in Mrs Thatcher's mind about the reaction of the people, the party and the House of Commons to this event?

PARKINSON

I think I can say quite truthfully that Margaret Thatcher's overriding concern was to remove the Argentineans from the Falklands and to restore the freedom of the Falkland Islanders, and the domestic political considerations really weren't discussed. We all I think in the back of our minds knew that if the Argentineans stayed there, or if we sent the taskforce and it wasn't successful, that would be hugely damaging to the government, but that certainly wasn't a consideration at all in her mind, and I think in the minds of

the majority of the Cabinet.

In 1980 Constantino Davidoff, an Argentinean scrap metal dealer, purchased for dismantling three derelict whaling stations in South Georgia. In March 1982 Davidoff arrived on one of the islands, transported by Argentine Navy ship. Military personnel on this ship subsequently raised the Argentinean flag on the island, which began the Argentinean take-over of South Georgia.

One has to be clear that until that Friday, most members of the Cabinet, the overwhelming majority, really knew very little about what we have been talking about. We knew a man called Davidoff* had been negotiating with salvagers to remove a disused whaling station, I think, from South Georgia, and it all seemed rather improbable and unimportant. I think we realised there was a little bit more to it, but in the main, speaking as a non-Foreign Office, non-Ministry of Defence person, it really hadn't intruded into our thoughts very much. What was interesting about the Friday was the discussion in Cabinet. You had the Prime Minister, with authority to assemble a fleet, but she felt very strongly that no decisions could be taken about that, what to do with it, without the full support of the Cabinet. And one of the features of the whole campaign was that the Prime Minister at all times set out to make sure that the Cabinet was fully informed and totally behind the forces, and also Parliament and the opposition. We were very lucky that we had Michael Foot* leading the Labour Party. I have often wondered what would have happened (I am saying this frivolously) if it had been a left-wing regime that had moved in, but Michael Foot hated fascists and hated Galtieri as a result and was amazingly staunch. And the Prime Minister set out at all times to make sure that the Cabinet and Parliament and the opposition were united behind the forces.

Michael Foot, Labour politician. Leader of the Labour Party, 1980-3.

But that Cabinet meeting, there was one called on the Friday morning – I was away, but I understand it was all rather chaotic – and then because nobody knew quite what was going on, on the Friday evening another one was called. At that Cabinet Margaret Thatcher went right round the table and, as every individual member of the Cabinet having been briefed by John [Nott], the Cabinet was asked to take a decision. And the Cabinet, with one exception, said that they totally backed sending the taskforce to sea. Henry [Leech] had the authority to assemble it, but it was the Cabinet that gave the Prime Minister the authority to send it to sea, that it should set sail. That was a very extraordinary Cabinet meeting. I remember going off with Michael Heseltine* afterwards to dinner – and you asked about the political considerations, the decision had been taken, it was purely on the much larger issues of large countries invading small islands and British people losing their freedom – but he and I sat, as a couple of politicians, over dinner, speculating about what it would do to the government if this was a failure. And it would have been a disaster, but those considerations, as I think John [Nott] will agree, were very minor. The overwhelming concern was to get the Falklands back.

Michael Heseltine (Lord Heseltine), Conservative politician. Secretary of State for Defence, 1983-6.

BEETHAM

Could I just say that at that time, as I recall it, the intention was to set sail as soon possible for Ascension Island, where there was bound to be a pause. There were a lot of stores that had to be flown out there because the ships hadn't got the stores available or

exactly what they wanted if they were to go further south. So there was obviously going to be a pause. All this time of course the negotiations were going on and Haig running to and fro and one was hopeful that there might be some sort of a solution to the conflict.

PARKINSON

Yes, and that did weigh with the Cabinet: this was backing up diplomacy, it wasn't a substitute for diplomacy. One of the interesting features of this whole campaign was the dovetailing of the military operation and diplomacy, and the nearer we got to the Falklands the bigger the diplomatic pressure on Argentina. So diplomacy and military power really ran hand in hand, there wasn't a conflict between them at all until the very end, and there wasn't then: we had exhausted diplomacy when the decision was taken to land.

BRAMALL

Lord Parkinson made the point quite clearly that if this repossession had been a failure, it would have been very disastrous for the government. I think it would have been very disastrous to government as well if nothing had happened.

PARKINSON

Oh yes, it would. If we had just shrugged our shoulders and said well they are there, we will have to put up with it, I think we could have certainly written off the next election. But I think it would be true to say that after Margaret Thatcher's meeting with Henry Leach there was very little likelihood that we would do nothing and she was absolutely determined, once she had been given a hint that it was possible, that we should go ahead. And the Cabinet agreed, but people were asked individually to speak their minds and did, and as I say one brave member of the Cabinet did say that we should just accept that this had happened and do nothing. I don't think it advanced his career, by the way!

NOTT

The Suez Crisis unfolded after Egyptian President Nasser nationalised the Anglo-French Suez Canal Company in July 1956. The UK, France and Israel colluded to invade Egypt on 29 Oct. 1956. International diplomatic pressure (especially from the USA), condemnation in the UN and a sterling crisis forced an end to the invasion in Nov. 1956 and a UN peacekeeping force was installed in the Canal zone.

William Whitelaw (the Viscount Whitelaw of Penwrith, 1918-1999), Conservative politician. Home Secretary, 1979-83.

I think it is all rather more complicated than that. This is of course the story we all want to tell, but I think the truth of the matter is that although the Cabinet agreed, effectively unanimously, that we should sail the taskforce, I don't think for many, many weeks the majority of the Cabinet was really in favour of having a fight. I think that the Cabinet was saying, and I think half believed, that the diplomatic negotiations would succeed. I think there is a possibility the government would have survived if we hadn't reacted, a possibility. What is absolutely sure is that the government would have fallen if the operation had been a failure. I have to say, everybody is so certain about these things, that I am very much less certain.
On the Wednesday night, after Henry Leach had left us, I was alone with Margaret Thatcher and it is a great misfortune with history that one occasionally remembers something about it. I vividly remembered Suez,* and I know that Whitelaw* and I and Terry

Admiral of the Fleet Sir Terence Lewin (Lord Lewin of Greenwich, 1920-99), naval officer. Chief of the Defence Staff 1979-82.

Lewin,* the Chief of the Defence Staff, never stopped thinking about Suez and what a frightful cock-up that had been – mainly politically, not militarily. My initial reaction was that, although Henry Leach's performance on the Wednesday night had been admirable, and of course I was in favour of preparing the fleet, I was very sceptical, based on what advice I had had or rather hadn't had, whether we could get a taskforce 8,000 miles down to the South Pole and win an opposed landing. I was very sceptical about it and I expressed my scepticism to Margaret Thatcher on the Wednesday evening. She didn't want to take a decision, frankly, to sail the fleet until Peter Carrington* had come back from Israel, and she really wanted his view. He came back rather exhausted from Israel: he had had a bad time with the Israelis in Jerusalem.

The 6th Lord Carrington, Conservative politician. Foreign Secretary, 1979-82.

The decision to sail the fleet was actually taken on the Thursday night, subject to the Cabinet confirming it at their meetings the next day which Cecil [Parkinson] has discussed. Sir Henry [Leach] joined us I think late at night, didn't you Henry, about 1 o'clock in the morning on the Thursday night.

LEACH About 9 o'clock actually, because I had to leave my own dinner party.

NOTT On the Thursday night? I thought it was much later than that.

LEACH No. I didn't get out of it and I didn't get my authority to sail until well after midnight.

NOTT Right. So I have to say that, for my part, I only became more confident about the ability of a taskforce to repossess the islands about three or four days later, when the Chiefs of Staff generally had sat down and considered it. I had enormous confidence in the Chief of the Defence Staff, Admiral Lewin, who was in New Zealand. When he came back he was very determined that we could pull it off. So although I greatly admired Sir Henry [Leach]'s confidence, I didn't take it just like that. I was uncertain for the first few days about whether we could succeed. I think I always saw that if we sailed the fleet at all, it was more than likely that we were going to have to use it, whereas in fact I don't believe that the majority of Tory MPs and the majority of the Cabinet, in those early days, were really thinking about a war. They were thinking about a reaction, a power projection, which made diplomacy more possible.

WOODWARD I think I can help you and go along with that, in that Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse came down to talk to me (I had been on Spring Train* off Gibraltar), about four or five days into deployment. He reported to me that, 'the Secretary of State for Defence had inquired of me whether a Rear Admiral was important enough to sack'. That tells you that he was still having serious doubts.

Operation Spring Train was a series of naval exercises being conducted off Gibraltar in Mar./April 1982

NOTT You have made this remark several times.

WOODWARD I only report what John Fieldhouse told me.

NOTT I think Sir Henry or Admiral Lewin came into my room and I said, 'Who is going to be the Admiral in charge of the taskforce' and I think it was Sir Henry [Leach], or it may have been Terry Lewin, said, 'Well, we have decided to appoint Admiral Woodward'. And I said, 'Who is Admiral Woodward? This is rather a major and important appointment. Who is he'. So I was given a briefing about who you were, Sandy [Woodward], and what you had done and what your experience had been, and I said, 'Well, I don't know Admiral Woodward and even if I did, I don't think I am the person to make a judgment about whether he is the right person to command the taskforce and how *can* I know: I really have to listen to the advice of the First Sea Lord and the Chief of the Defence Staff on whether he is the right man'. So I was very happy to take the advice of those who knew. I then went over to Downing Street and Margaret Thatcher said, 'Who, John [Nott], are you putting in charge of the taskforce?' So I said, 'We have decided on Admiral Woodward'. 'Who is Admiral Woodward?' she said. So I said, 'Well, I don't really know him, Prime Minister'. 'Do you mean to say that you are appointing him in charge of this thing and you don't know him?' So I said, 'You don't know him, I don't know him, what else can we do but take the advice of the First Sea Lord'. 'That's not good enough', she said, 'We must know more about him. How can we possibly give this man this responsibility.' So I had a 15-minute argument with Margaret Thatcher about whether Sandy Woodward was appropriate! I subsequently learned quite a lot about him. In the end it was agreed that she had to take the advice of those who knew him best.

WOODWARD Perhaps you and I can agree that John Fieldhouse had brought down his synthesis of a long conversation to one sentence.

LEACH This came up, in fact it was I think the day of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, and I had been in touch with Admiral Lewin when he got back with the Chief of Defence Staff. The position was that the nub of the taskforce sailing south was of course the two carriers, and another flag officer was in charge of the two carriers. But he had only recently taken up his post, he had been there a couple of months or so, whereas Sandy Woodward had been in office for I think a year plus and therefore was absolutely tuned in to what was going on at sea and the targets of the day and so forth. As the general future composition of the taskforce developed, it raised the sordid question of whether a two-star admiral, whether or not matched by a two-star general, was adequate for the job and

shouldn't he be three stars or even four stars. I resisted this and said, 'No, you stick with the men you know, who are trained in the job that they have to do and the question of their precise rank is largely academic'. Terry Lewin backed me and the other Chiefs did not demur. That is how it came about and I still think in retrospect that it was entirely the right decision.

TILL

What we are talking about really is a kind of incremental decision, a decision to prepare the taskforce, to sail it to Ascension Island, and then on from Ascension Island. Under what circumstances do you think now, in retrospect, would it have been possible in the conditions of the time for the British government to have stopped that sailing and not to have gone on in this step-by-step way? What concessions were ultimately acceptable and what was ultimately unacceptable?

PARKINSON

I think with the benefit of hindsight, of which we do have the benefit now, it is quite clear that there were no concessions that you could make to the Argentineans other than recognising that sovereignty was theirs. From the very beginning their attitude was: you have to acknowledge our sovereignty and we will give you a little time to get used to the idea. But they never accepted that the islanders should have the last word and that it had to be acceptable to the islanders. The diplomatic effort was hard and it was vitally necessary in retaining world opinion – because it was clear that the British were prepared to go that extra mile. We had some superb diplomats who helped, and when you think, we had virtually the entire world supporting us other than the Eastern *bloc* and South America, and most of *them* deplored the Argentinean invasion. And that was the result of the diplomatic effort, to keep so many people on side and behind us, it was terrific, but what we were doing was just proving to the world that there wasn't a diplomatic answer. There wasn't, because the Argentineans would never ever accept anything other than our recognition of their sovereignty over the islands. So I don't think there were any concessions that we could have made which would have been acceptable here, which would have put an end to the thing. Someone said it earlier, it was a rock and a hard place: they wanted sovereignty and we could not surrender it. It was clear the Falklanders wouldn't and we couldn't without their support. And therefore we exhausted every diplomatic channel, but in my view there were no concessions we could have made which would have stopped the conflict.

NOTT

Sir Anthony Parsons (1922-96), diplomat. Permanent UK Representative to United Nations, 1979-82.

There were two absolutely key men, just as important as the vital military commanders. One was Anthony Parsons,* who was at the United Nations, and the other was Nico Henderson. Parsons did the most wonderful job in getting the necessary resolution through the United Nations, 502, which was touch and go and the Russians

abstained.* If the Russians had vetoed it we would have had great difficulty internationally, and I think Jordan came down on our side at the last moment. That was very much due to Parsons, he did a wonderful job.

Weinberger* and the Pentagon of course provided us with enormous help from the very outset, the Pentagon were absolutely wonderful and Weinberger personally was wonderful in providing us with so much help. But it was Nico [Henderson]'s work as Ambassador in the United States that swung American public opinion behind us. I believe (and I would like him to comment) that unless Nico [Henderson] had brought American public opinion really round behind the Brits and unless Congress had come round on our side – which was in some ways contrary to Reagan and the State Department's policy in favour of South American dictators and Central America – we would have been in very great difficulty. So I do think our two diplomats in the field were absolutely crucial.

On 3 April 1982 the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 502, which called for a cessation of hostilities and immediate Argentinean withdrawal from the islands. It passed with the abstentions from the Soviet Union, Poland, China and Spain, and with Panama voting against it. Argentina responded by agreeing to cease hostilities but refused to withdraw from the islands.

Caspar Weinberger, American politician. Secretary of Defense, 1981-7.

HENDERSON

Perhaps I can just say what the point of the negotiation was, to which John Nott has kindly referred. Haig did this shuttle between London and Argentina and Washington and he really was always on our side. He kept saying to me, he said this so many times that I have to repeat it to you, 'We will never do another Suez on you,' by which he meant the way Americans quarrelled with us publicly over the Suez catastrophe, 'but we have to show the American people and the Congress that the Argentineans are not prepared to have any negotiated settlement that is reasonable. You, the British, have to show that you are ready to have a settlement. If there is a settlement that is possible then we shall go for it, but I don't think there is – but my negotiation must show that it is the Argentineans who are making it impossible.' That was the point of this weeklong, month-long, negotiation that the Americans went to. But it was an essential element in securing American backing for us, politically and in materiel. And I don't think it did us any harm because, as has been said several times, it was going to take three weeks for the Task Force to get there, we had to go via Ascension Island, and in the meantime, thanks to the person whom John [Nott] has referred to, Cap Weinberger, they provided us in Ascension Island with fuel and all sorts of materiel of war before they ever had come down politically on the British side. This was the invaluable thing, but then that was all slightly clandestine, they couldn't say too publicly. Publicly they were negotiating.

The trouble was, seen from Washington, to persuade London that there was some reason in having this negotiation. Mrs Thatcher, frankly, was terrifically intolerant of it, she thought it was monstrous that anybody should be negotiating about something so outrageous as the occupation of the Falkland Islands, but it was essential to have America on our side. And I think we have to thank not just Weinberger, but also Haig and those who helped us in the White House – who were not very numerous.

TILL

One last question before we break for tea. Did the British taking of South Georgia make Haig's task impossible, in the sense of effectively demonstrating that there was no real possibility of a negotiated settlement?

HENDERSON

No, I don't think honestly it had much bearing on it. I think Haig realised very early on that Galtieri, who someone has mentioned quite rightly was drunk most of the time, meant it was not going to be possible. But Haig also saw that this had to be brought out into the open in Washington. And that was his goal. I don't think he was terribly influenced by South Georgia, except to be cross with his own people for not having warned him about it.

WOODWARD

Harry DePue Train II, American naval officer. US Navy Admiral and Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT).

The depth of the sentiment, if you like, in the United States was brought home to me when I went over in September 1982 to meet the then Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic, Admiral Harry Train* in Norfolk, Virginia. I was introduced into the presence and greeted moderately perfunctorily, but the first sentence was 'Well, there are no lessons to be learnt from your little war. Well, no new ones, anyway'. The other half of the briefing was 'And I want you to know that my son's godfather is Admiral Jorge Anaya'. That was the most succinct briefing I had from an American, ever! Down to three sentences and it told you exactly about the split. Here was the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic, who was pro-Argentinean and not pro-British.

HENDERSON

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is an alliance formed in 1949 on the basis of the Treaty of Brussels (1948) by Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Greece and Turkey joined in 1952, the Federal Republic of Germany in 1955, Spain in 1982, and the united Germany in 1990.

If I could just add one word on that side. It was really quite difficult to persuade many high-up Americans on the service side that we could bring this off, that was one of the great problems. You admit yourselves, it wasn't self-evident that we could, and there was certainly great hesitation in Washington that the Americans would get involved in something in a very disadvantageous situation down in the South Atlantic, which would be firstly militarily difficult, and, secondly, politically which would get them in terrific trouble with the whole of South America.

May I add one other point, which we mustn't leave out, and that was Russia. One of the things, once we were helped, was the fear that the Americans had that somehow if Britain lost out in this relatively minor conflict, it would jeopardise Britain's reputation and that Russia would somehow benefit in the South Atlantic and all over the world and that in a sense NATO* would be undermined by this failure of a key member.

TILL

If I can move us forward. We have got up to the end of April, more or less. South Georgia has been retaken, the maritime exclusion zone has become a total exclusion zone, the United States has declared for the UK on 30 April, it is getting very close to real conflict breaking out. There is one question with which I would like to ask to start this second session off and that is the really quite funda-

mental one of: to what extent were we really able to communicate as clearly as needed to Buenos Aires about how serious the British by this stage were. We are all familiar with Al Haig's shuttling backwards and forwards. Was he the main channel of communication that the British government had, through the United States to Argentina? How did it work? Sir Nicholas [Henderson], could I ask for a view from you, from Washington, as to the extent to which you think the United States was really putting the pressure on Argentina to convince them of how serious this situation actually was?

HENDERSON All I can tell you is what Haig said to me that he had said to the Argentineans – and he told me this several times. He said, 'I told them that they are a second- or third-rate military power and they were contemplating a power which may be 8,000 miles away, but which is of the highest technological and fighting ability. You are committing suicide by doing it.' But don't forget, as we now know, people are prepared to commit suicide for extraordinary reasons.
Could I say one thing before you go on to the American decision, it is rather important. Haig then produced what he regarded as reasonable terms for a settlement – this is the end of April, before the Americans had come down on our side. He put it to London and he put it to Buenos Aires. It was from the British point of view, in my view, a very reasonable proposal, which safeguarded our immediate sovereignty but left open the possibility of negotiating at some stage. This came to the British Cabinet and it produced a terrific problem for them. Were they to say no to this? The Secretary of Defence said 'I have got an idea. Let's keep quiet and wait and see what the Argentineans do' and the Argentineans, due to their inability to ever compete with us diplomatically, rejected it. We never then had to reply to this proposal, but Haig took it as a rejection by the Argentineans and that led immediately to them coming down on our side. Is that right John?

NOTT Yes.

TILL And if they had accepted it?

HENDERSON If they had accepted it we would have been in a jam.

NOTT We would have been in a terrible jam, because Margaret Thatcher would have been at odds with the Cabinet. The Cabinet would have, in my view, accepted it. We needn't go into the terms, but as Nico Henderson says they didn't actually give away sovereignty. I think the majority of the Cabinet would have felt like accepting and Margaret Thatcher would have been determined that it shouldn't be accepted. But in my view the House of Commons would have accepted it. So it was a problem, but in the end we decided not to

have a view and fortunately the Argentineans then said they didn't like it, so that solved it.

PARKINSON I think it was a relief that we didn't have to take a decision, because I think it would have split the Cabinet, actually. I don't think Margaret would have been alone in finding it difficult to accept those terms.

TILL The following day conflict started, there was the Vulcan raid. Can I ask everybody here, what was the thinking behind the Vulcan raid? Was it simply a question of closing down the airfield, or was a strategic message being sent to Argentina about what might happen?

BEETHAM We were looking to give all the support we could to the taskforce, and Port Stanley airfield was key to Argentinean operations. We examined in the Air Staff what we could do, having converted the Vulcans we had back to the conventional role and equipped them for air-to-air refuelling. When we examined it and the resources we had available, we determined that it was only practical to send one aircraft down. Now if we were going to bomb the airfield with one-thousand-pounders and put it out of action, I would have liked to have sent an absolute minimum of 25 and preferably 50, but it just wasn't a practical proposition. So then we examined what you could do with one Vulcan load of 21 one-thousand-pounders. The ideal thing one would have done would be to send it straight down the runway and drop them and straddle the whole runway. The problem is that you would only have to be a few yards off and all the bombs would go down the side of the runway. Scientific analysis showed that, if you did a crosscut on the runway, you had a 90 per cent chance of one bomb on the runway and a 60 per cent chance of two.

In the event the Vulcan went down and got one on the runway and the second one went just to the side. What we wanted then and wanted the taskforce to do was to follow up the Vulcan straight behind by putting in the Harriers and blasting the runway under the cover of the surprise that the Vulcan obviously had caused. They did that, but I know that Sandy Woodward was a bit short of Harriers. So it was primarily a military purpose to do what we could with the resources that we had. But it did have a secondary deterrent effect, in the sense that the Argentineans must have raised their eyebrows and the thought would go through their mind (which we certainly didn't try to stop them having) that if we could do *that*, we could bomb the mainland. We had looked at this, but discarded it because it would have been a major escalation. But the Argentineans wouldn't have known that and therefore their Mirages and their other forces were being aware and taking defensive measures in case we bombed the mainland, which took a little bit of the pressure off the forces which were deploying against the Falklands.

So that was the major purpose. It was primarily a military objective to do what we could, but it did have this secondary effect.

TILL Was there also a diplomatic objective in the sense of finally trying to persuade Buenos Aires of how serious this situation was?

BEETHAM This was done only just before the actual invasion, wasn't it? It wasn't much before.

WOODWARD Nearly three weeks before out landing (20 May), the Vulcan raid was May 1, early a.m.

BEETHAM May 1. I can't remember the date of the Vulcan raid, but it was close.

WOODWARD I very much agree with what you had to say about it. My dark blue aviators said, 'Oh, it's the Air Force just trying to get in on the act', but I said, hang on a minute, there will be two things. If they do hit the runway, that can't be bad, they can disrupt it and we haven't got the weapons to do that with the Harriers, because you have to drop them from a reasonably high level to penetrate the ground. So it can't be bad if they do that, but also it will have exactly that effect of causing them to think they could come at us on the mainland. It is showing reach and therefore it is deterrent. And I suspect it made them hold back some of their Mirages, which could have acted as top cover for their A4 raids. So I signed up for it and told my aviators to shut up. We put in twelve Sea Harriers.

BEETHAM Yes.

TILL Fairly shortly after this was the sinking of the *Belgrano*.* Could you explain your thinking and your role in this, Admiral Woodward?

WOODWARD It turned out, contrary to what I wrote in my book in 1991, because I didn't know then but I know now, that actually I and Northwood and reaching upwards into the Ministry were all of the same view: the *Belgrano* was an immediate threat to the battle group, the two carriers, she could be amongst us within ten hours steaming and she could come in behind a front. I had just shown the previous year in a destroyer with nothing like the support that the *Belgrano* had that I could get into an American carrier with AEW aircraft over the top looking out. I got in from 200 miles in clear air and delivered four Exocet* from 11,000 yards before they even opened fire on us. So I was very conscious of the dangers from this ship and its two destroyers to the battle group. I made a signal to this effect, which was quite unnecessary because they had already set in motion the negotiations to change the rules of engagement, even as

HMS Conquer sank the *General Belgrano*, one of the largest ships in the Argentinean navy, on 2 May 1982. This decision, to which the Prime Minister and the Cabinet were privy, was politically one of the more controversial actions taken during the hostilities.

The French-built Exocet missile was a low flying and lethal missile.

I was thinking these things down south. So we all thought alike, she was seen as a direct threat to the battle group and could cause possible damage or serious damage to one of our two carriers, which would have effectively put paid to the operation if it had happened that early, before we had any forward operating base ashore or even a proper runway at Port Stanley. Any right-minded naval aviator knows that he likes to have two decks to land on, in case one of them has been put out of action when he gets back and there is no deck to land on. Which is reasonable.
So that is the *Belgrano*, always placed in my mind and in those of the advisers to the Ministry as a necessary military business. Whatever was going on on the political level, that's another matter and not my business. But that was needed militarily and I don't think there was any argument about it, not least because Admiral Lombardo, the Argentinean C-in-C South, appeared on Argentinean television later that year (I remember seeing it) saying it was eminently reasonable as far as he was concerned to have sunk the *Belgrano*. Well if the opposition are saying that, who is going to argue any more?

ARMITAGE On the intelligence side, we had some very high-level intercepts, explaining exactly what the *Belgrano* was up to and what she was trying to do. Unfortunately these things were so very highly classified that it was not possible to make them public, and therefore we had this great fuss about which direction the *Belgrano* was heading when she was struck. But there was absolutely no doubt at all in our minds that she was a clear and immediate threat to the taskforce.

WOODWARD We got an intercept about three weeks later from your lot, saying that they had identified her orders down there as being to remain on patrol. She hadn't been told to return to harbour at all.

ARMITAGE No, no.

TILL What was the reaction to the request for a change in rules of engagement?

NOTT I think we were due to meet at Chequers and I went down to Chequers with Terry Lewin, who said that he wanted to change the rules of engagement. We had given full rules of engagement to the carrier, but we hadn't given authority to our submarines to sink the *Belgrano*. I said that it was essential to extend authority to the submarines: I think the conversation took about thirty seconds. When we got to Chequers we went to tell Margaret Thatcher what we wanted to do. We told her what we wanted to do – that took about five minutes – and then we agreed that it needed to go to the War Cabinet, which happened to be meeting about an hour or two later. So it was the easiest decision on the rules of engagement throughout the whole of the Falklands war. Nearly every decision we had

to take on the rules of engagement was difficult. The difficult issues were what we did about the Russians, who were a continual concern to us, what we did about civilian aircraft flying over the fleet and reporting their position back, particularly the 707 flights, these were all the difficult decisions. The military decisions on the rules of engagement were easy and the *Belgrano* was the easiest of the lot.

PARKINSON I agree with everything John [Nott] said. The case was overwhelming, it seemed to us. The argument that I found compelling was: what would we say if it transpired that we had had the opportunity to sink her, hadn't sunk her and she got one of our carriers and hundreds of British sailors were killed. We would have been in a very difficult position, so as John said, it didn't take very long to arrive at the right decision.

NOTT It made our position with many, many countries extremely difficult, particularly Spain and Italy, the cousin-countries of Argentina. After the sinking of the *Belgrano* we undoubtedly had a very much more difficult time internationally. It had difficult diplomatic consequences. But there was no military hesitation in the War Cabinet at all.

WOODWARD I have a feeling that that attitude from Spain and elsewhere may have been engendered by the fact that they hadn't realised that the decision had already been taken and executed to restart the war, 24 hours before the *Belgrano* was sunk, with the Vulcan raid, the Sea Harriers, and we shot down a Mirage and they shot down one of their own Mirages.

NOTT The Germans were very difficult throughout; the Germans were deeply upset about the *Belgrano.*

HENDERSON But it is quite relevant that negotiations continued, through Peru really, for a settlement despite the *Belgrano.* It didn't prevent the attempt by several people from Latin America to have a negotiated settlement.

TILL What was the reaction in Washington to the sinking of the *Belgrano*?

HENDERSON I won't give you, as it is not purely male company here, the description Haig gave me of what we had done to the *Belgrano*, but it was far better than I think you are suggesting. They understood. It was a military decision taken for military reasons. It didn't disturb Haig at all.

PARKINSON But if anybody meets Tam Dalyell,* please don't raise the subject!

Tam Dalyell, Labour politician. One of the Conservative government's most persistent anti-war critics in the House of Commons. He subsequently wrote *One Man's Falklands* (London: Prometheus, 1982).

WOODWARD I have seen him, and he is no longer jumping up and down about it.

PARKINSON Oh good!

TILL Yes, it certainly caused quite a controversy at the time, didn't it.

WOODWARD It was a different matter that he was complaining about, less the *Belgrano*, but he felt Mrs Thatcher had misled Parliament on the *Belgrano* sinking. And arguably she had.

NOTT I 'misled' Parliament actually, because I knocked together my statement to the House of Commons going down in the car to the House. I only had about two sentences from the Royal Navy and I was scheduled to make a statement in the House of Commons, so I didn't really get my statement checked out by the civil servants. Of course, I then retired from politics, which was fortunate, and my successors then had about three years of trouble with the statement that I had made, which was in fact marginally inaccurate actually, because I said that the *Belgrano* was heading for the Task Force, when it had, in fact, momentarily turned in a different direction, for what that is worth. But I made a statement based upon the knowledge that I had at the time.

ARMITAGE But Sandy is quite right. Dalyell was shown my file, which later became known as the crown jewels, with all the intercepts in it and he quietened down somewhat after reading that.

TILL Sir Nicholas, you mentioned that despite the *Belgrano* peace negotiations carried on, they did not come to a grinding halt. Did the fact that Argentina had now lost substantial numbers of people seem to have any discernible political effect on their willingness to carry on, as far as you were aware?

HENDERSON I don't think so.

WOODWARD I think it caused them to take their navy home, they never came out to sea again.

TILL

The sinking of the warship *HMS Sheffield* was the first major British loss during the hostilities.

Very shortly afterwards the *Sheffield** was sunk of course and I was going to ask exactly the same question about the War Cabinet. Did that terrible shocking event have any significant impact? Did it kind of confirm the initial fears that were expressed by the MoD, that casualties could be quite high? What were we getting into, was it actually winnable?

NOTT

Frankly, it was obviously a tragedy and there were many people killed, but I was anticipating much worse than that. All the laymen who speak to me say wasn't the *Sheffield* a terrible shock, and I have to say I am afraid it wasn't because I was expecting a whole series of terrible shocks. It was obviously tragic for the families and everything else, but I expected tragedies.

PARKINSON

I think the most important thing about it was that the military and a lot of us had been waiting to see what Margaret Thatcher's reaction would be to really major British casualties, because there was a feeling she might find this unbearable, the idea of all those lives lost. And she was very shaken and very concerned, but it didn't affect her confidence or her determination at all. I think that was the political question mark that there was over this. Those of us who knew her didn't expect her to waver, but the public was quite intrigued about how a woman Prime Minister would react to the loss of a lot of British lives and those appalling pictures that appeared of that incident. But she didn't waver at all.

BRAMALL

I think that Terry Lewin was terribly important in reassuring the Prime Minister at times like this. One of the great advantages of the Falklands is that all the Chiefs of Staff had been in World War II and Terry Lewin of course had been in the thick of the convoys to Russia, the Atlantic and Malta convoys, and he was extremely good at saying to the Prime Minister, 'Look, we are on course, these are the sort of things happen in war and you will just have to steel yourself to it if you want to go through with it'. I think he was particularly good at doing this.

LEACH

It was a very important incident I think because, for the first time, it was brought home to the Brits that we were at war and that meant death and destruction. And whatever might have been said before, in terms of risk and so forth, this was now a reality. It struck them like a blow and a wave of emotion travelled right through, not least starting with a very emotional letter of sympathy from Her Majesty, who had originally launched the *Sheffield*. It sort of set the tone and thereafter everybody knew we were fighting a war, even though it was 8,000 miles away.

WOODWARD

I think it is interesting that that was exactly the same for the Battle Group. Up until then we had great difficulty getting our people in

the ships fully emotionally prepared for the realities of war. After that, there was never any kind of problem. It was actually the thing that brought people's minds into the reality of this is war: a ship of *ours* had been sunk and more would probably follow.

MOORE The same thing at Fleet Headquarters.

CURTISS On the question of casualties, I well remember the famous day when the command team went down to the Cabinet Office to brief the Cabinet on plans for landing. I remember one of the more pertinent questions, well they were all pertinent from Margaret Thatcher, was how many casualties do you expect. John Fieldhouse said, 'Well, anything up to 3,000 people' and that was a fairly defining moment I think, when people realised that we were going to suffer casualties. Remarkably, we suffered 253. But it was on the cards, if you were actually going to land and you were landing troops against a far superior enemy in terms of numbers, which goes against all military precepts, that we could suffer fairly heavy casualties.

TILL Can I ask if that 3,000 figure, and similar figures as far as ships are concerned and so on, was a kind of nightmare scenario, or was it an expectation?

CURTISS To be quite honest with you, I think John Fieldhouse took it out of the top of his head! I think he wanted to make Margaret Thatcher realise that it wasn't going to be risk-free.

JACKLING I do remember a letter from John Nott's office to Number 10 that issued on the Friday evening, that answered four or five pertinent questions from the Prime Minister about what might be done, what the chances of success were, what the casualties and cost might be. And that letter made clear that an operation of the kind contemplated could lose from four to six escorts and an aircraft carrier – they were the likely losses. Now that piece of paper was with the Prime Minister on the evening of 2 April. So those estimates, and what actually happened was very consistent with those estimates, were extant from the very beginning of the campaign.

LEACH That is very interesting, because I was never consulted on this!

JACKLING No. I got into trouble with Sir Michael the next morning, because he was the acting CDS [Chief of Defence Staff] and we hadn't had time to show him the letter either. But your staff were there, Sir Henry.

LEACH

Well, I had agonised over this in some depth, as you might suppose. At the third major decision-taking point, which was to authorise Sandy Woodward to carry out the landing, although that was the easiest of all three, the decision was taken by the full Cabinet and all the Chiefs were present at it. At that meeting I fully expected to be probed on how many naval losses I expected and how many would I tolerate. And I was never asked. Had I have been asked, I would have expected six destroyers/frigates, I would have been perfectly prepared to tolerate at least double that number. The question of the carriers was surrounded by too many variables to give a direct answer. It depended so much on the timing, did the loss or the damage occur to one or to both, permanent or temporary, before, during or after the initial assault landing, and so on. There were so many ifs and buts that to answer that one would have been just confusing. If both carriers had gone before the landing, then I think that serious consideration to cancelling the operation would have been given. If it had been after the landing, which in the event was not opposed, or hardly so, then I think we would have pressed on and taken the risk.

WOODWARD

I am interested in that, because the message I got – your message having been 'interpreted' by the Commander-in-Chief – was: if we lose one carrier the operation is off. That is, 'lose one carrier' before the landing, before we got a strip ashore, which was 6 June, so quite late on. So the message got refined.

BRAMALL

Undoubtedly, as has been made perfectly clear, the danger was to the ships in the run-up to the landing and of course in San Carlos Bay at the landing itself. But on the Army side we were absolutely confident that once the troops were ashore the risks to them would be far less great and that they would have the quality and the stamina to be able to overcome what was then much more a conscript army. The Argentines had taken the Falkland Islands, as you probably know, with quite highly trained special forces, but they didn't think the Brits would do anything about it. They were worried about Chile, and they therefore had moved some of their best forces onto the Chilean border and had put in their place a lot of conscripts, who really didn't want to know. So we were pretty confident on the Army side that although of course there would be casualties, you can't have a battle like Goose Green or Tumbledown or Mount Longdon or any of the others without any casualties, the casualties compared with the losses in the ships would be far less. And indeed, if it hadn't been for the *Galahad** – and that is a different story – the Army losses would have been very small indeed.

On 8 June 1982 the Argentinean air force destroyed two British supply ships, *Sir Galahad* and *Sir Tristam*, around the British held position Fitzroy. Around 200 lives were lost on *Sir Galahad*.

BEETHAM

It was very, very difficult. One of the important things was to keep the carriers back, out of range of the Argentinean air force. The Falklands was 300 miles from the mainland; if the Falklands had

been 200 miles from the mainland I frankly don't think the Falklands operation would have been a feasible operation of war. But when we assessed it, the Argentinean air force, the A4s in particular and the Mirages, when they made an attack didn't have enough fuel to do more than one run at the target and then they had to turn round. On that basis it became a reasonable risk to take. But by keeping the carriers back, which gave a slightly more difficult task for the Harriers, at least we were keeping the carriers out of range, so they could stand back just a little.

WOODWARD We weren't out of range, we couldn't be, in order to keep the Sea Harrier force in sufficient numbers over the land. Witness one Exocet came within four miles of *Hermes*, and hit *Atlantic Conveyor* instead. We weren't properly out of range.

BEETHAM But you were cutting down the odds, you were reducing the odds by keeping them as far back as you possibly could.

BRAMALL Can I just apologise: I shouldn't have said Army casualties, because of course a large part of the force was Royal Marines, who I believe are not exactly part of the Army!

NOTT I don't know whether Sir Henry [Leach] remembers, but I remember standing in the Cabinet Room at Number 10 (and I can't remember why you were there), talking together and looking out of the window. And you put the frights on me - I remember it very well - by saying that you wondered, as a result of attrition with the Harriers, how many Harriers we would have on the carriers by the time they got to the area of the Falkland Islands. You were either teasing me, or seriously saying that you were deeply worried about attrition to the Harriers on the voyage down. Do you remember that?

LEACH No, I can't say I do. But I do remember very clearly that my early (as I recall and Sandy Woodward will confirm or deny) reasonable confidence in our ability to deal with the air opposition likely to be expected, started from the fact that as soon as the carrier force got within range, by the time of the initial assault landing we would have achieved at least local air superiority. Never supremacy, but local superiority. For that to occur, the enemy had to fly – and they didn't. It wasn't until the day of the landing that they started to come out and therefore it was not until then that we were able to start to attack them. Meantime there were an unfortunate number of incidents and accidents, which involved the loss of certain aircraft. That was not encouraging, but this is a fact of life.

WOODWARD We lost six Sea Harriers not due to enemy action before 25 May, which is a critical date in the air war, and two to enemy action, both

Harrier GR3 fighter aircraft.

to ground fire. And I think we lost two GR3s.* But they were having to go in really low, so that was far more likely to happen. What the expectation was I don't know, but we only had a force of 24 Sea Harriers, so six lost to accidents before you have really started, so to speak, is a serious number. But it is not unexpected.

TILL

How serious was the hope that air superiority could have been achieved before the landings took place? On the face of it one would think that Argentina would have every incentive to keep its forces back.

WOODWARD

Yes, but they could have come out and given you a hard time. We deliberately ran a deception plan on our way down there from Ascension, to suggest that we were actually going to come in and land straightaway, which involved a certain amount of detailed stuff I won't bore you with. And this worked. They deployed their fleet and their defence plan was revealed, and they brought their air force out but we were just too far away, they hadn't expected us to remain about eighty miles east of Port Stanley. We managed to shoot down a Canberra and a Mirage, and another Mirage went down finally to their own fire, and that seemed to convince them. By the time that was done, in 48 hours they had decided we weren't going to land – which was quite correct – and meanwhile their fleet got wrecked with *Belgrano.* But you couldn't kill the air force.

The air battle was decided by about 25 May, although we didn't know it, which was the time I was seriously considering ringing up the management back home and saying that we were losing the air war if this goes on another twenty-four hours. I had virtually made my mind up to pick up the phone the following evening, on 26 May – this was just after *Coventry* and *Atlantic Conveyor* had been hit, not a good day, the 25th – when I realised that in fact they weren't coming in such numbers into Carlos and the graphs, which I was quietly assembling to myself to see how it might turn out in the longer run, took a turn for the better and just as well. So I didn't have to ring up, because I probably would have been told to stay there anyway, and by the 27th it was pretty clear which way it was going. So other things happened, you can't have a leak-proof air situation anyway, however powerful you are. But it was sufficiently watertight to do the job, and we had enough aircraft left.

TILL

To shift to the land campaign, was it always crystal clear that having landed the troops the object necessarily was to advance on Port Stanley? There are some references to what is sometimes called an enclave policy; in other words, to seek to establish a position ashore which would be sustainable for a period, possibly to negotiate or whatever, rather than immediately move into a campaign. Was there this thought?

MOORE

I heard of the thought and was horrified at it. Once we had landed, quite frankly, the only thing to do was close with the main enemy, who were around Stanley, and to defeat them. Any sort of delay or hanging about was going to make it more difficult. It was always going to be difficult, because everything suffers from wear and tear (for many reasons) and we had this very long line of communication. The ships that were providing gunfire support gave excellent gunfire support but inevitably would run out of ability to keep it up, and at the end, when I was quoted by the press as saying 'a close-run thing', I was referring to the fact that our ships were getting to the end of their ability to go on with giving fire support. The problem was increased enormously of course by the loss of *Atlantic Conveyor*, which from my point of view (but I think for many others as well) was quite the most serious loss of the war. Therefore I personally did not have in my mind any solution to it other than going to Stanley and beating the enemy on the ground. My orders were to repossess the Falkland Islands, with certain restrictions, and I didn't see any other way to do that but to fight and defeat the enemy.

WOODWARD

Admiral Sir David Hallifax (1927-92) naval officer. Chief of Staff to Command-in-Chief Fleet, 1980-2; Deputy Supreme Allied Comander, Atlantic, 1982-4.

Can I sort that out for you. The whole thing changed, the directive changed, on 12 May, from, if I remember rightly, 'prepare to land with a view to repossessing the Falkland Islands', which is actually something you could probably do from your armchair at the weekend. Then on 12 May finally it got changed to 'repossess'. Up until that date I had been receiving briefings from Northwood – from the Chief of Staff David Hallifax,* sadly now dead – saying: 'Now look, have a look at the problem of a freeze on operations after you have landed, what about some kind of enclave.' I didn't use the word enclave, I used it later because that was the only way I could describe it apart from as a horrid muddle. So I had to think about that. That caused a lot of dissension between me and Commodore Amphibious Warfare as to where we should land, because I was saying 'Hang on a minute, I have got to answer this enclave question, which I don't like any more than you, but I have still got to answer it, it has come from on high and they want to know'. That meant really landing in southeast Lafonia, which was the last thing they wanted to do because it is miles from Port Stanley and the main aim, which was to get the airfield back at Port Stanley. So there was a lot of difficulty until 12 May. After that we were all pointing in the same direction, we were all agreed where we were going. But we had had different briefings and directives from Northwood.

MOORE

The Chiefs of Staff will probably remember better than me, but I went with Admiral Fieldhouse to plead for a second brigade. The first time we pleaded for it the answer was 'What do you want a second brigade for'. 'Because I don't want to fight an enemy of two brigades with one brigade'; 'But nobody has told you to fight two brigades, merely prepare for a landing.' Later, obviously, the thing

changed and a second brigade was allocated and we went on from there.

BRAMALL

It soon became obvious that the Commander-in-Chief had to have a reserve – you must always have a reserve – in ground troops. He had three Commandos and two parachute battalions and that would have been enough for the landing, but you had to have a reserve and it was no good him having a reserve back in the United Kingdom. So somehow the reserve had got to be got down to the Falklands. And literally the only way it could be got down in any sort of timescale was commandeering the *Queen Elizabeth II** and sending the whole brigade down on that, which all took a bit of time.

The Cunard luxury passenger liner, *Queen Elizabeth II*, was requisitioned by the UK government at the start of hostilities and was used to carry troops to the South Atlantic.

But Jeremy Moore is so right, of course speed was the essence. Bearing in mind history – Gallipoli, Anzio* – times when people have got ashore and have not exploited it in time, and before they are able to do so the enemy has built up. We were stressing in London very much that if there was no enemy in front of the bridgehead, the thing was to get out of the bridgehead as soon as possible, otherwise people would sit around and get trench feet. Now all that is easier said than done, and the thing was bedevilled by first of all General Moore being at sea and not down in the bridgehead. There was a very good reason for this, because he was helping Admiral Fieldhouse make the land plan and there is an enormous advantage in having the chap who actually has to carry it out making the plan. So he had a vital role to play, but there was no way, once he had extracted himself from Admiral Fieldhouse and his headquarters, to get him down except on the *Queen Elizabeth II*. So he was absent at some quite critical point early in the bridgehead. He may want to say something more about that.

Gallipoli, in Turkey, was the site of attempted landings in April and August 1915 by British and Australian forces fighting in the First World War. Heavy Turkish resistance resulted in great loss of life which reflected discredit on Winston Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and the military chiefs.

Anzio was the site of landings in January 1944 of 50,000 troops of Anglo-American Fifth Brigade in an attempt by General Alexander to capture Rome and enforce a speedy victory in Italy.

The commander of the brigade was having all sorts of problems of his own. The enemy air had started off, we'd lost *Atlantic Conveyor*, which had all the helicopters to take the people forward. But I think London, who had a better idea of intelligence than the people down on the ground, because they had all the satellites and knew that there was nothing in front of him, was absolutely right in saying you must get out. Get out where, that was the point. That I think was a Command decision. Did he go for Goose Green, did he screen Goose Green and go straight for Stanley, which was the crux of the battle, or did he do all things together, which of course risked doing none of them properly. That was a Command decision and you will want to hear the brigadier on that. But speed was the essence. But there were these two factors, and I am sure Jeremy Moore would be the first to admit this, that for a few vital days he wasn't there, although he knew the plan and knew the importance of speed, and the man on the spot was getting all sorts of problems with losing all his helicopters from the *Atlantic Conveyor* and so on. So that was a very critical stage in the battle.

MOORE Yes, well, I thought about this business of going down there and *did* consider going more quickly, because it was perfectly feasible to have flown on from Ascension and parachuted to the taskforce and just landed in the sea probably alongside Sandy in the hope that he would have a helicopter ready to get me out.

WOODWARD I would have agreed to that!

MOORE I did consider that. In the event I didn't take it on for a variety of reasons. One was inclined to think that with me going down and not taking any extra troops, there would have been a one-over-one situation, with me trying to command Julian Thompson, who was getting on with the battle, which is not very helpful. I admit wrongly I allowed myself to be influenced by thinking of the media, who might get hold of it and think it was a marvellously dramatic way for a general to go to war. And in the end I rejected it.
I think I was wrong, I think I should have gone on, in order to interpret for London what was going on, in discussion with Julian Thompson. It is an interesting point, I think, that William Whitelaw, come the autumn, did say to me that it made a lot of difference. He said that, in the Cabinet, for him at least, that, according to him, to others I don't know, there came a point when I got down there and they were now getting messages from a chap whom they knew, with whom they had discussed the problems, and whose face they had before them, because of course none of them had ever met Julian [Thompson] before. This, he said, was very helpful. I also in fact deliberately instituted in my daily signal a paragraph in ordinary prose, designed to be read as ordinary prose not by my Commander-in-Chief, who would perfectly well understand the military style in the bulk of the signal, but other people outside the military chain who might not so readily be able to. And I believe it was probably helpful. So if I had started doing that earlier, it might have been helpful earlier, and I have always thought that I made a mistake not moving more quickly. On the other hand I learned a lot on those eight days in *QEII* about things, and perhaps it helped me to make up my mind about how I would do things when I got there. But I did put, I think, extra and unnecessary stress on my immediate subordinate Julian Thompson.

THOMPSON I knew exactly what was in front of me, because on day one I put patrols out as far as the Bull Hill and Evelyn Hill, some 25 and 40 kilometres east of the beachhead [East Falkland Island], and they were sitting on the high ground from D-day. So I knew there wasn't anything between me and the high ground west of Stanley, that wasn't the point. The point was that we had to have proper logistic support and especially we had to move guns forward if we were going to start fighting in the area of Mount Kent. It takes about 60 to 70 Sea Kings to move one battery of artillery plus all its ammunition, so there was absolutely no point in rushing out of the

beachhead with a packet of sandwiches in one pocket and five rounds of ammunition in the other to engage the enemy, who were some 50 miles away, until we had our logistics ashore.

I was totally reliant on helicopters for my lines of communication (L of C). Until Sandy [Woodward] had won the air battle, my helicopter line of communication was highly vulnerable, so rushing out of the beachhead, as far as I could see, was not an option. I wasn't worried about the enemy ground forces, I was much more concerned about the enemy air force and their effect on my helicopter L of C. In fact, I was making plans to move the whole brigade forward, using the Chinooks* in *Atlantic Conveyor*, when a guy stuck his head into my CP and said '*Atlantic Conveyor* has gone to the bottom, with all the Chinooks'. So it was tear it up and start again day – in fact actually there was one Chinook left, as you probably know.

The Boeing Chinook is a support Helicopter.

Of course, once we had lost those Chinooks, it was walking for most people and a very, very slow build-up forward on the Mount Kent positions. So that really was the reason for the delays. We were helped by the fact that the reserve that the Argentines had in the Mount Kent area had gone into the bag at Goose Green, because they had gone to reinforce that battle. So when we got forward we did not have a battle for Mount Kent. To pick up a point that Jeremy Moore made, I made a great error in not realising that those above you are under as much strain as you are and probably more, and what you have got to do is jolly them on a bit by being positive. I tended, I am afraid, to argue the toss over the SATCOM [Satellite Communications] about things I was told to do, because I didn't believe that some of them were right. That was an error on my part and Jeremy [Moore] did it much better than I did.

TILL Before exploring the moves of the land war a bit more, can I just confirm with the two members of the War Cabinet that there was no intention of simply establishing a presence, that, having landed, the objective was to take Port Stanley.

NOTT Very briefly, I was very interested in Jeremy Moore and Sandy Woodward's mention of those two slight changes in plan in May, because the only unsatisfactory briefing I ever had from the military was a briefing that I had at Northwood, about five days before the Chiefs of Staff met the War Cabinet to discuss the landing. I was given a briefing at Northwood about five days before and I was astonished, because the whole of the briefing was concerned with getting ashore. Never once in that briefing, this was in advance of the briefing for the War Cabinet, was it ever discussed how we were going to go forward out of the landing and repossess the islands. I came back and said to Terry Lewin that I was awfully puzzled by this briefing, because it all seemed to be about how we were going to get ashore and not how we were going to retake the islands. That was the only unsatisfactory briefing I ever had, all the rest were wonderful. But I was puzzled at the time.

ARMITAGE The original aim of the landing, as I recall, was 'to gain a lodgement from which, etc. etc'. And I was never quite clear whether that sort of attitude came from the political side or whether it was generated by the military itself. But it seemed a strange thing.

NOTT I don't know where it came from, but it was certainly around in Northwood and it surprised me.

PARKINSON Actually one of the things that did surprise me a little when Jeremy Moore and Sandy Woodward wrote their books was this idea that it was the politicians who were pressing the military to get a move on. One of the features of the way the War Cabinet worked was that the military did make the pace, and we never denied them when they wanted to change the rules of engagement, wanted to enlarge them; it was a very cohesive group. Obviously, one of the reasons we wanted to get a move on, which was exactly the same as the military's, was that we were scared stiff that the Americans might buy the notion that there should be a ceasefire and people should stay exactly where they were and we should then have a negotiation. We felt that that would be an absolutely impossible position, to have our forces established in a bridgehead and stuck there 8,000 miles away from home. But it was the military members of the War Cabinet who set the pace and told us what was possible. I think they became very aware of the political pressure and they were perhaps the people who were saying to the commanders in the field you must get a move on. But the politicians at no stage took the lead in that, we just took advice. That's true, isn't it John?

NOTT Yes, I agree. It was Lewin's presence in the War Cabinet which was the most important thing about the whole affair. He understood the political pressures we were under and Lewin was the man who discussed it with Fieldhouse. We never really ever wanted to put pressure on the military to move forward faster than they wanted to, so I agree with that.

MOORE I never felt any pressure from the political end at all, neither indeed did I feel any pressure from Admiral Fieldhouse. From actual arrival in the islands until the surrender I only spoke with Admiral Fieldhouse twice. My Deputy Commander and my Chief of Staff spoke frequently to the headquarters, but I only did it twice. The first time was when Admiral Fieldhouse rang me as it were, to ask me to rethink a proposal I had made, because of the pressures which *he* saw as coming upon everybody back at home if things went wrong with the plan I had put up. And I did rethink and did it differently. The other time was after we lost *Galahad*, when I rang him, because I felt, first, that it was rightly my place to break the bad news and secondly to discuss with him what the effects would be. But there was no question of my thinking that we had any pressure put on us by the politicians. Indeed, from attending Cabinet

briefings and things I had great confidence that the Prime Minister was never going to put pressure on us.

WOODWARD It is worth recording that it was on 17 and 18 April at Ascension that the broad programme, timed to about a week one way or another at any stage, was developed and agreed by us all. You were there Jeremy?

MOORE I was.

WOODWARD And it said that on the whole we should be finishing this war by mid-June, for all sorts of reasons, to do with logistics and maintenance and everything else, and the fact that winter is coming on, and all those sort of things. My C-in-C went home with that to the CDS and said, 'This is the pressure of time on you to make the decisions. You have got, by working it all out, to restart this war by 1 May. You have got to land between 16 and 25 May, and you have got to complete the ground war by mid-June.' That is the brief he went back and gave the CDS, no doubt. Of course it was a self-imposed pressure, but self-imposed in realistic appreciation of the situation down there. And it must be about the only occasion that a war has been predicted to end on the day it actually did end.

BEETHAM We discussed beforehand that the decision was made with the Cabinet on the landing, but I don't recall any discussion in the Chiefs of Staff, and the Chiefs were meeting pretty well daily, that didn't have the aim from the landing of going ahead – because of the logistic problem of keeping a fleet down there – and getting it over with and going through to Port Stanley. I do not recall anything else but to get on and do that.

BRAMALL I think it would be very wrong to put the blame for this on the politicians.

BEETHAM Absolutely.

BRAMALL There was pressure at Chiefs of Staff level and War Cabinet, and communicated to Northwood, that there were these two terrible spectres. One was the Antarctic winter, which wasn't that far away, and the other was, as has already been said, that somehow what would happen would be a United Nations ceasefire and the British forces would get stuck halfway across East Falkland in appalling conditions while the Argentines were in winter quarters in Stanley. It was these two things. But at Chiefs of Staff level I think everyone was quite prepared to leave this to Command decision of how the battle moved forward, bearing in mind all the problems that the Commando Brigade had.
But at some stage the Commander-in-Chief felt that he actually

needed to give the brigade commander some direction of what to do. We had land force advice from UKLF [United Kingdom Land Force] and he called them in to ask what direction on the land forces side should I be giving, and there was some dissension. One of them said, 'I think you should mask Goose Green and go on to Stanley', and the other one said, 'Well I think you should get Goose Green under your belt'. Eventually they clarified their views to the Commander-in-Chief and I think (Julian Thompson will contradict me if I am wrong) then an order came down from the Commander-in-Chief that he *was* to take on Goose Green. Whether he would have done that of his own accord or whether he would have masked it I don't know. He did take it on, it worked. At the same time, by incredible physical effort, he moved his forces forward towards Stanley. There were risks in it, but it paid off and there is no doubt, no doubt at all, that the victory at Goose Green, accompanied by the seizure of Mount Kent, was actually what put the nail in the coffin of the Argentines, because they had such a defeat that their morale went absolutely to pieces as a result. One would like to say more about this, because there were risks in it. But it worked. Isn't that right?

THOMPSON Absolutely right Field Marshal. I *was* given a direct order and I took the risk, because I reckoned that Stanley was still the main point of effort, to push people in that direction. The mistake I made, which I could have rectified, was not sending sufficient troops down to Goose Green and sending the light armour down there, which in hindsight is what I should have done. The Field Marshal is also correct in saying that Goose Green was a turning point, in a number of ways. It indicated to the opposition that we meant business, we learned – or rather re-learned – a huge number of lessons (you never learn new lessons I think, you just re-learn old ones) about the need for decent fire support etc., I won't go into them in any detail. And it *was* a watershed, as the Field Marshal has said, in the land campaign. I, if I had been left to my own volition, would have masked it and continued pressing with everything towards Port Stanley. But as it happens, what I was ordered to do was the right thing and the reason that that the Goose Green battle was won was nothing to do with my cleverness, it was won entirely by the 2nd Battalion of the Parachute Regiment, almost unaided except for three Harriers, who turned the thing in the last few minutes just before night fell on that day.

TILL So effectively the conclusion is that the inspiration behind that particular battle was military and not diplomatic. It wasn't trying to demonstrate that the war was going on, it wasn't trying to demonstrate to the Americans or whoever that the time was past for a negotiated settlement which would leave both in possession of the Falklands. It was military, not diplomatic?

THOMPSON I wasn't sure what the decision was based on; I wasn't told why the order was given. I didn't need to know, I was just told 'do it'. So I did it. And I don't have any hang-ups about it. The only thing I have hang-ups about is that I didn't do it as well as I might have done, in retrospect.

JACKLING Can I just confirm the Task Group Commander's recollection. There were thoughts in the Foreign Office, in the Cabinet Office and in parts of the Ministry of Defence that actually once a substantial force was ashore, the fact that it was successfully ashore and capable of breaking out and repossessing the islands might be enough to catalyse some sort of reaction from the Argentine. There was a very brief discussion of this proposition in the Chiefs of Staff, which I remember very well, and it was absolutely clear the military wisdom was – for all the reasons that Sandy Woodward recollects – that this was a cracker's strategy. But the idea was in fact around and explored and questions were asked of the military chain of command about the possibility.

WOODWARD Quite extensively, until 12 May.

TILL Did that extend to the inspiration behind the move to Goose Green as well?

JACKLING No. That is a separate issue.

BRAMALL I think it was just common sense, really.

CLAPP I can confirm that the messages I was getting from Northwood were very much along these lines: that you may have to provide a beachhead, which you can sit in. There was very little talk that I was getting from Northwood about any end fighting going on to Stanley, it was all with a view to a political outcome. Initially the discussion was whether we should go to West Falkland, because West Falkland had traditionally been accepted as British, or whether we should go to East Falkland. We decided on East Falkland and I opted and recommended that we stayed in East Falkland, so that at least we were on the right side and so on. Landings are normally planned with a clear land campaign in mind but no such plan was coming down to me, and I don't think there was to Julian Thompson, at that stage. It was very much the political arguments as to what we should do and where we should go. So we were definitely not clear as to how we should operate. I remember sending a signal back asking for clarification on whether this would mean raiding, which normally meant short, sharp attacks while keeping reserves at sea, or whether they wanted me to land all the war maintenance reserves. If the latter was the preferred option then it suggested the Commandos would be landed and would be

expected to survive on their own. We discussed a third option, which was to land all the Commandos but support them from the sea. This sounds easy but would be very risky. I never got clear answers to these questions.

BRAMALL That is very interesting, because I think it only indicates that somewhere down the line there was a failure of communication. If I remember nothing else, it is saying to Mrs Thatcher, in one of the many meetings that we all had, the important thing is that we don't hang around the bridgehead and get out of the bridgehead and get on to do the battle. The second thing I remember is going down and talking to the commanders of the reserve brigade, just before they got on to the *Queen Elizabeth II*, and saying you are going as a reserve, we don't actually know how the land force commander is going to use you. It may be that the brigade that is landed can do the job, in which case you are there to take over ground. It may be that you will have to come up on their right or left and make a joint attack. But you are going there as a reserve and you must be prepared for anything. So somewhere down the line there must have been this feeling.

I am very puzzled about what Roger Jackling says about somebody saying that just landing would be enough. I can't understand that. As Jeremy Moore said, the battle had got to be outside Stanley and the General Staff would have much preferred to have gone nearer to Stanley in the opening plan, but the reason that they came in one hundred per cent behind the Commander-in-Chief was because that would have been so much more dangerous to the sea-skimming missiles, whereas San Carlos was the place they could get in more safely. I agree absolutely with what Jeremy Moore has said. The battle was to be outside Stanley at some stage. So the idea that just getting on the beach and the Argentines would panic and leave, I can't remember anybody ever saying that.

LEACH Nor me.

CURTISS As the only member of the Command team here, I can categorically say there was never any discussion of any other action than taking Port Stanley, never.

TILL This is very interesting. Were all these people in the same war?

JACKLING Michael Armitage and I both recollect this proposition.

ARMITAGE We were both there at the meeting and the talk was, I have said it before, of securing a lodgement, from which the forces would do whatever. But it was initially about securing a lodgement.

LEACH Ah, that's a slightly different thing.

BRAMALL You can't have two aims at the same time, we all know that.

LEACH Absolutely. And that contained an element of pussyfooting back home in the UK, I think – but I don't know – influenced by a sort of last-ditch hope that maybe some form of negotiation would even then be possible.

JACKLING Yes, that's right.

LEACH Hence the rider: obtain a lodgement, or achieve your landing, 'with a view to'. And that very quickly changed, I think Sandy produced the date of the change, when the 'with a view to' part became the aim.

ARMITAGE It was a double aim, and that made quite a number of people uncomfortable.

FREEDMAN There are a lot of documents in which a whole series of alternatives are discussed. It is not the case that no alternative was ever discussed – lots of alternatives were discussed.

WOODWARD Oh absolutely, blockade for instance.

FREEDMAN Blockade, using special forces, and a lot of this was up to the decision to send the second brigade, which was the critical decision in creating options. And that decision itself was not actually taken until the start of May, although it was set up before the start of May. But during April all sorts of possibilities were there, including the main possibility: there just would not have been the troops to take Stanley, you just wouldn't have had enough. As I recall, the second brigade was encouraged in part on the argument you needed that to be sure of the landing, never mind what you might want to do afterwards, and then you created many more options for yourself. All sorts of possibilities, and what drove things along was the fact that you could not keep everybody bobbing around on the ocean. You actually *had* to land them, because there wasn't much else you could do with them once you had got them to the South Atlantic.

THOMPSON Jeremy Moore and I discussed the second brigade on 17 April at Ascension Island, when he said to me in a private session I had with him (he had come down with the Commander-in-Chief): how many troops do we need to attack Port Stanley. And we always thought we were going to attack Port Stanley. I said, 'Well, it wouldn't be a bad idea to have about the same number', I was talking of a garrison about 5,000 strong, and he agreed, so he wanted about double that.* So he then said to me 'How many units can you

There were around 11,000 Argentine troops in the Falkland Islands, including a reinforced brigade defending Stanley.

command?' so I said five – manoeuvre units, as many as I reckon a brigade commander should have. So he then said, 'We need another brigade then, don't we'. I always assumed that there was going to be another brigade and I always assumed they would be there to fight.

The second point I would like to make is that on the question of what we should be doing. At my Orders (O) Group in *Fearless* on 13 May, when I briefed my COs, one of the first things I said to them was, 'This landing that we are about to do is not an end in itself, it is just the beginning'.* I can produce my notes if anyone wants to see them. I was never under any illusion that, once we had been told to land, we would hang around. But we did have to spend longer there than one would have wished, in order to offload all our kit and win the air battle. So those are two points which may or may not help this discussion along.

An Orders Group, or O Group for short, is the group of commanders to which the commander at any level gives his orders.

MOORE I came across this little book a couple of days ago at home, clearing out, and it is my notebook of the time. It has in it what I said on board *QEII* the night I arrived, which starts, '3 Commando Brigade is now landing to secure a bridgehead on East Falkland' and it goes on: 'I therefore ordered 3 Commando Brigade to push forward from the beachhead, so far as the maintenance of its security allows, to gain information, to establish moral and physical domination over the enemy, and to forward the ultimate objective of repossession. It is my intention to land 5 Brigade into the beachhead and then to develop operations using both brigades, to further dominate the enemy to such an extent that he cracks and gives up.' There is a lot more, but I think that is enough.

WOODWARD What date is that?

MOORE That was 20 May, the landing was actually going on at the time.

THOMPSON And you signalled that to me some days before.

MOORE Yes, those exact words.

WOODWARD I think we are all of the same view about it.

THOMPSON Absolutely!

TILL Interesting.

WOODWARD Unusual. It won't last!

TILL Can we move on to another incident that has attracted a great deal of attention since the war, and that is the tragedy at Bluff Cove. Can I ask for the thinking behind that particular operation?

MOORE It goes back of course to *Atlantic Conveyor* and her loss and therefore the loss of a major part of the helicopter lift to get the troops forward. Three Commando Brigade, as we know, had moved on ahead and was in the mountains. We were short of time and we wanted to get Five Brigade forward alongside them. I also wanted 5 Brigade to be apparent to the enemy on the southern axis, because the enemy, I was convinced, was expecting us to come close to Stanley and to do a landing near Stanley. There were a variety of reasons for this. The Argentineans had had their amphibious training from the Americans, and an American approach is not like a British approach. They have, traditionally and factually, much more combat power than is ever available to us and there is a tendency for the US to land their amphibious forces, supported by huge combat power, virtually right on their objectives. It is not the way we do it, because we don't have that combat power and we tend to try and take a more guileful approach and land our people where the enemy aren't and get there round the back. That is what we were doing of course via San Carlos. But the enemy were, as far as I could see from their deployments, still tending to look south-southwest and I wished to keep them looking that way. That is why I wanted Five Brigade pressing them from there, before Three Commando Brigade was going to be launched on its main attack into the hills round Stanley from the west and northwest.
That was the first night attack carried out by Three Commando Brigade, with three Para, 45 Commando and 42 Commando, in a wonderful operation carried out by people 100 per cent of whom had never fought a major battle of any sort, let alone a night attack, before. But I wanted to keep the Argentineans from reinforcing in that area and I therefore was keeping Five Brigade pressing forward. There was much discussion as to how we were going to do this and we went through a variety of possible ways of doing it, but in the end it came to moving them by sea, using landing craft and using LSLs, to get them round there to catch up with Three Commando Brigade ready for the attacks. That is why.

TILL And what went wrong?

CLAPP What went wrong was that the Argentinean aircraft turned up and attacked. It is as simple as that. There was nothing else wrong in my view about the operation in the way it was set up at our level. I was reacting to a very strong request from Divisional Headquarters for help to get 5 Brigade forward as quickly as possible, bearing in mind the shortage of helicopters. Only I had command of the necessary assets. We were only able to talk seriously with the Divisional Staff and had no contact with 5 Brigade or the Battalions. There

appears to be some misunderstanding from the point of view 2IC [second in command] of the Welsh Guards, who was led to believe he was going on to Bluff Cove, but I don't know where he got that from. I hadn't been part of General Moore's divisional discussions with his brigadiers, and in retrospect I think it might have been quite helpful if I had. But I met them for lunch, usually after their meetings, and I remember sitting talking to Brigadier Wilson, the 5 Brigade brigadier, who was desperate for help. He was demanding that I gave him all helicopters, but I wasn't prepared to do that, although they were still under my operational control. Then he said, well, we will have to go round by sea. I don't actually remember talking to General Moore about the problem, so I then went off and talked to Colonel Ian Baxter who was General Moore's Colonel AQ and the an on the Divisional Staff with whom I had most contact. He begged me to take them around.

Well, we were running out of time, and we had had, ever since 5 Brigade had landed, low cloud, which had prevented helicopters from flying across that east-west ridge just above Bluff Cove. So although we had Teal Inlet well set up as a brigade maintenance area, our idea, which Julian Thompson and I had discussed originally, to use Teal Inlet as the main Forward Maintenance Area, was looking hopeless. 5 Brigade wanted their own brigade maintenance area and I could quite understand that. I am not a soldier, but he said he wanted his own medical people forward, he wanted his own ammunition, he wanted his aircraft fuel getting forward. That meant setting up a second Teal Inlet. They are both about as far back from Stanley as each other, Teal being a bit further back, so in terms of being threatened by the howitzers from Stanley they were both out of range. Bluff Cove was just in range I believe, but Fitzroy was certainly not, so it didn't seem too difficult.

The problem was that there were no decent beaches. The second problem was that it was fairly shallow water and I wasn't at all convinced I could get an escort into Fitzroy with the landing craft. An escort in those days had two Bofors and so did an LSL, so we were just providing a second or third target. We were running out of escorts, we were running out of ammunition, so there was not much sense in putting an escort there to draw attention to the other two ships. A further problem was the enormous distance around from San Carlos, which meant that an LSL had to set off early at night in order to arrive there just about at dawn. A decision to sail had to be made, probably about twelve hours before, and having committed the LSL there was no way I was going to stop the exercise and bring it back. It was probably better to risk sending her there and to get the kit ashore as early as possible which was the object of the exercise, than it was to bring it back and have it caught somewhere else. And so on – there were a whole lot of thoroughly unpleasant options. A further factor was the unsatisfactory state of communications between the LSLs and my Flagship. We looked at shipping through Darwin and Goose Green and going overland and then through Choiseul Sound, and that was high-risk because

of the shallow water and the islands. So it was the only hope of helping divisional headquarters and the brigade. I was also told that at Fitzroy there was a cliff and an LSL could probably tuck itself under the cliff, without actually beaching, with its ramp close to the only beach worth having. So that sounded sensible. And then of course we discovered that when *Sir Galahad* arrived the following day, having had to pick up the Rapiers and field ambulance, which had been delayed a day because of low cloud and thick weather, plus the remainders of the Welsh Guards, she couldn't get under the cliff as well as *Sir Galahad* whose off-loading had been delayed. So she had to sit outside and was very obvious.

And then they flew. That morning they caught *HMS Plymouth* off San Carlos and later attacked the ships at Fitzroy. They had been flying on and off for several days. I am not convinced we beat them in the air war by the 26th, as the lesson learnt says. They had not attacked any ship at Teal nor had they recently penetrated San Carlos Water. What had kept them at bay up until then was, I think, the bad weather and it was certainly windy, because they were dropping their bombs like mad over West Falkland and they dropped them over a submarine sitting off one of the airfields. So they were ditching bombs without actually coming into the target area. That is the end of the story. The Press all happened to be at Fitzroy and had a field day as they had never had an opportunity before to photograph burnt and wounded men although there had been many from the *Sheffield, Atlantic Conveyor, Coventry*, etc. who had luckily been flown out to the hospital ship before the Press could get at them.

WOODWARD I think there was one other small factor in what was going on. The forecast had said fairly low cloud, and then suddenly on the morning of the dreaded day the forecast said, 'it is going to clear up at lunchtime'. Which it what it did, we got clear visibility and that is how we were seen by an Argentine OP on Mount Kent and the aircraft targeted on the LSLs. So the change in the weather was probably the critical factor.

BRAMALL This obviously is a very important part of the battle, because it is where the heaviest casualties really were received. But the campaign had had a certain amount of good luck, particularly the day of the approach to the landing in San Carlos Bay (i.e., 18 May) and the low cloud which helped us get there without the enemy seeing us, and I think everybody, who realised what a nicely balanced operation it was, was praying for good luck all the time. Well, in this instance we had bad luck. Commodore, correct me if I am wrong, but the assault ship had I think already taken the Scots Guards round.

CLAPP That's right.

BRAMALL They transferred into the small landing craft inside the assault ship and they had a hell of a rough ride, but they got in alright. In rough weather, they got in and they didn't have any casualties. But the assault ship was too precious to risk a second time and anyhow the LSL had already been ordered forward. The LSL got in, with the low cloud as the Commodore said. There was undue delay for one reason or another – and I won't speculate exactly why – in getting people off the ship. Indeed one marine officer, well known in that particular campaign, had come on board earlier and said, 'For God's sake, get your men off this ship'. But the low cloud was down and suddenly the mist lifted. There must have been an OP on one of those high bits of ground and he brought in the aircraft; and everybody now knows the terrible scenes when they hit the *Galahad* and she went up into one great mass of smoke and flame. It was very bad luck. But if they had got off the ship a bit quicker it might not have happened. I think the decision not to risk the assault ship a second time, though, was probably absolutely the right one; and if they had got off earlier we might not have had those casualties. This was the Welsh Guards; some of them had got ashore: the commanding officer had got ashore and the advance party had got ashore, but there were still 200, 300, 400 men waiting to go ashore. There was some uncertainty as to whether they were in the right bay, probably quite wrongly, and some uncertainty whether the kit would get offloaded in one boat and the men would get offloaded somewhere else, and you all know the old army adage 'never get separated from your kit', so I suppose there was some worry in the officer in charge's mind. But it was very sad, and unlucky.

TILL I am very conscious of the fact that we have a large audience who haven't yet been able to ask any questions. I want to give them the opportunity to do that, and I also want to give an opportunity to my colleagues on the panel to ask each other questions if they want to. I am going to ask one last question and it is basically to Sir Nicholas Henderson. How seriously do you think the Americans took the idea of a negotiated settlement before Port Stanley was finally repossessed? Was it ever a serious possibility as far as the Americans were concerned?

HENDERSON Whether they really believed it or not, I don't know. They had to continue, for political reasons, to give the impression that they were prepared, or hoped, to have a negotiated settlement. They kept saying there must be no brutal end; you must be magnanimous; terrific loss of life would be damaging for the whole of the American interest in the Latin hemisphere. So they wanted to show that they were ready to negotiate. Whether they really thought there was a chance of it, I very much doubt, but they certainly wanted to give that impression. I don't think it did us any harm, by the way.

TILL I will now open it to the audience.

STEWART BOURNE My question is for Sir Nicholas Henderson. I saw an interview with Caspar Weinberger shortly after the war, where he intimated that possibly an American carrier could have joined in on the Royal Navy's side. Was material support of that size ever offered to the British?

HENDERSON I never heard an offer like this made to us before. The circumstances were extraordinary, because at a garden party at the British Embassy he took me aside and more or less said, 'Would you like a carrier'. Not the sort of thing that had been offered to the British before, and I hesitated and said, 'I must consult London straightaway'. I would love to know how London did react. I mean, it was impossible to imagine, but it was a wonderful sign. What the effect on London was I never knew, but the effect on me was profound. But we can't exaggerate the help we got from Caspar Weinberger throughout, from 1 April on, frankly. All the supplies and oil and everything that went to Ascension made all the difference to us. I think all the service people would agree with that.

LEACH Could I deal with the question of the carrier first. We were aware of that most generous offer. It would have been a United States fleet carrier and she would have been handed over. It would have been for us to man her, run her and operate her. Now without going into too much technical detail, suffice it to say that the Americans for their main propulsion machinery use high-pressure steam. We do not, and the difference in the operation of such machinery would have taken – I wouldn't care to put a precise time on it – finite time to have made our people safe and effective operators of that ship, quite apart from the significantly differing characteristics in terms of aircraft handling and so forth. Quite apart also from the fact that we in the Navy then no longer had any fixed wing aircraft and a certain amount of adaptation, cross training or whatever with our Royal Air Force colleagues would have been necessary. Rightly or wrongly, and I believe correctly, although it was a highly generous offer, it was not taken up.

Another one, which was not directly taken up, was over the question of fleet tankers. Although we did receive help over the supply of fuel and certain other things, notably the air-to-air missiles A9L, which at that time were only beginning to trickle off our UK production lines and the United States made their production lines readily available. That was crucial to the air war. So far as what amounted almost to the diversionary loan of a tanker or two was concerned, in the event that was not proved necessary. I hope that answers your question.

JOCK GARDNER It is perhaps appropriate to continue on this business of assistance from other nations. It may have been misquoted, but I believe that a recent extract from Sir John Nott's book suggested that the greatest help was given by the French. I would be grateful if first of all

that point could be addressed, as we have heard so much about what the Americans promised and gave, and secondly assistance from other nations as perceived by the panel.

NOTT

I rather regret the way in which I put that. I think there is one sentence, which says, 'In many ways our greatest allies were the French'. I put it badly, because of course our greatest allies in material and other senses were the Americans. Without Weinberger's assistance we would have had a much more difficult time. The Americans, in the form of Weinberger and the Pentagon, were our greatest ally. But the French also were enormously supportive, and one can't really say that of any other European country. The French lent us the Super Etendard and the Mirage,* did they not, to practice against and they helped us with technical details of the Exocet, which I think we probably had already, but throughout Mitterrand* was extremely helpful and valuable to us. And I don't think any other European country was, frankly. I didn't mean to suggest that the Americans were not of enormous help, of far greater help than the French, and that sentence has been taken up and commented upon everywhere. I think that I expressed it rather poorly.

Etendard and Mirage are French-built fighter aircraft.

Francois Mitterand (1916-96), French politician. President, 1981-95.

LEACH

Could I just add to that, not in opposition to what John Nott has just said, but really in amplification. I got word from a friend, all very scuttlebutt stuff, who was half French, who knew a close friend in France who was in on technology and particularly aerial technology at the time, and he passed back to me the (as I found it) rather startling information that in addition to the French continuing to provide technicians to service the Argentine Mirage, there was a school of thought that had it that they had provided one or two pilots, initially for training, but that they might have taken it a bit further. I remember, as do my colleagues probably, that I raised this in Chiefs of Staff Committee, but because this was sort of double or triple hearsay and it had no fundamental grounding at all, as intelligence, it was judged – I believe rightly – that there was nothing we could do about it and it wasn't taken any further.

NOTT

I am told the Americans were aware that the fuses on the bombs were not being set correctly, but the Americans never ever got in touch with the Argentineans to tell them that they were fusing the bombs wrong. I don't know whether that is accurate.

LEACH

I think that damage was done by the media.

WOODWARD

As informed by the MoD, apparently.

LEACH

Well maybe, but the fact remained that because of the shrewd professional positioning of our ships, the incoming aircraft had to

make a fairly snap release and there wasn't time for the fuses to arm themselves fully before the moment of impact, hence there were a number of unexploded weapons. Now this was a vital piece of information and the media got on to it and they exposed it bang, just like that, which alerted the enemy. It was rather like the case, as I well recall, when on the 7 o'clock ordinary British Channel 4 news or whatever it was then one morning I heard I think it was Brian Hanrahan* saying: 'I am standing on the upper deck of the *QEII*, looking out over the vast impressive glacial waste of South Georgia, watching 5 Infantry Brigade transfer to the *Norland* and the *Canberra*.' This was at a time when the Argentineans desperately wanted a success that would be internationally recognised, like taking out the *QE II*, sinking one of the carriers, or knocking off Prince Andrew.* And there it was on a plate!

Brian Hanrahan, journalist. BBC journalist based principally on *HMS Hermes* during the Falklands War.

HRH the Duke of York. The second son of HM Queen Elizabeth II.

BRAMALL In all fairness to Brian Hanrahan, it couldn't have been him, because he was with Sandy Woodward and he was counting them out and counting them back, wasn't he?

WOODWARD Yes, and I gave him the words!

NOTT I am told that nowadays in these great establishments you are all taught that you have to love the press and co-operate with the press. I hope you are also taught, outside the meetings, that the press are nothing but a pain in the arse! Whatever the circumstances, they will do their very utmost to make a military operation almost impossible.

ERIC GROVE Rubbish!

WOODWARD I don't think that's terribly fair! My experience was that they came to us in total ignorance of things military, because we don't do anything that is of interest to them in peacetime so called, and we had a very steep learning curve, but by 1 May Brian Hanrahan at least had realised that he shouldn't mention how many Sea Harriers went in. He said to me, 'I don't suppose you would like me to mention that twelve Harriers went in' and I said, 'Indeed not; you can say that as many came back as went out, you can't mention the number'. But *he* suggested that he shouldn't do it. So they were learning damn fast and by the end I think they were very much in tune. Our fault lies in that we do not take them with us on operations anything like enough, as often as we should, nor do we offer them any indoctrination or training. That is a long-term Ministry of Defence failure.

MOORE I think the problem was not with the reporters who were down south with us, they soon latched on, after all their own lives were put at risk just as the rest of us. The problem tended to arise I think with editors back at home and not with the people on the ground.

PETER FREEMAN We now know that the Argentineans had rather few Exocets, despite their best efforts. I just wonder, and this is really a question for the naval members, do you think that the measures taken to combat these during the campaign itself were sufficient, or were we very fortunate in fact that the supply was rather limited?

WOODWARD It is a combination of that and a couple of other things I guess. We were well able to deal with Exocet. *Sheffield* got hit for all sorts of reasons which I am not going to go into here, but it was no fault of the systems she had, it was of the people inside her. *Atlantic Conveyor* was hit because she had no defence against it, she was a merchant ship taken out of trade and she got in the way on the dreaded day. And *Glamorgan** was hit by one which was fired from an old truck in a bay which we didn't quite know was there, and he was cutting the corner that morning back to his gun line and got it in the middle for his pains. So all the Exocet hits were as a result of carelessness on my part, or carelessness on other people's part, or, basically, failures of our systems by the people involved – including me. So one shouldn't draw the wrong lessons. The fact that the French then received a free ride on the whole business of Exocet – the wonder weapon, and all that other rubbish – is their business, our so-called allies. I don't blame them, they sold a lot of Exocets. Don't get impressed by Exocet. They've give us a hard problem, there is no doubt about that, but we have it reasonably well in hand. Some will always get through, but they got three out of ten through – bad for us, good for them.

HMS Glamorgan, a destroyer, was hit on 12 June 1982, with the loss of 13 lives.

HENDERSON They fired ten, did they?

WOODWARD I think they had five for the Etendard and I think they had about five more ashore in Port Stanley, one of which they fired from the back of a truck. A brilliant bit of work.

SULLE ALHAJI I was a private in 3 Para during the conflict and I now understand why we had that delay at San Carlos, it makes sense. But there was another delay, and that was when we were on Mount Estancia for seven days and we saw that the Royal Marines did actually take their objective when they were planned to do. My question to you is why was that delay?

THOMPSON If you remember, you got to Mount Estancia on about 2 June, and I arrived on there to find the battalion in assault formation going towards Mount Longdon in daylight. The guns had not arrived, and I deemed that you were walking straight into a trap, as indeed you were. So I stopped you. I had problems, because I couldn't radio to your CO, my radio wouldn't work. But luckily the guns were flying in, so I grabbed the Gun Position Officer (GPO) and said, 'Are you in touch with your Battery Command (BC)?' He said, 'Yes', so I

said, 'Give me the set'. I spoke to the BC, who spoke to the CO and turned you round. It then took something like six or seven days to fly in artillery, either three or four batteries, plus all the ammunition. Remember I said it took about 60 to 70 Sea King sorties to fly in a battery. So it took all that time to fly in enough guns to make certain that you had enough support for the attack on Longdon, which you eventually put in on the 11th. I think you will agree that you needed that artillery support, without it I think you would have been in 'the poo'. So that was the reason for the delay.
The time was used for very good patrolling by for example your patrols company and by the recce troops and other people with the two other commandos and your battalion, to find out where the enemy were exactly, to try and pinpoint where they were and find routes through the minefields. Even that wasn't enough, because if you remember you had a chap who lost a foot on a mine in a minefield that they hadn't discovered. So that was the reason for the delay. Does that answer your query?

ALHAJI Yes, thank you.

MIKE BEARDALL Do the amphibious commanders consider that on their D-day the Argentinean air force policy of attacking the escorts, as opposed to going for the troop ships, was good luck or just poor tactics on their part?

CLAPP As far as I was concerned it was the most amazing good luck, yes. I couldn't believe my fortune. We had, however, spent a huge amount of time trying to think of ways of making their approach to attack as difficult as possible and to give them the impression we were well armed with close range anti-aircraft weapons, which we were definitely not. This was one of the main reasons I chose San Carlos Waters, which offered some funnelling of their flight path. I understand from talking to other people, I have not actually read any of their reports, that they were briefed to take the first ship they saw, rather than actually targeted to the amphibious ships. We were in a pretty parlous state, frankly, for the landing. I don't know what they did in World War II. Out of interest, Julian Thompson told me there was only one LSL that had a duplicate cargo, so if we lost any of the LSLs or the transports we would be severely handicapped and we might have to pull the plug. We had no redundancy, so I was particularly glad they went for the escorts, of which we had a few spare, although not many.

WOODWARD I think it was the first ship they saw. I am no aviator, obviously, but if you ask any aviator who is a low flier who is trying to attack say tanks or ships, they do tend to shoot at the first thing they see, because they haven't got time to do anything else.

BEETHAM

The Argentinean air force didn't, certainly, have time to do anything else, because they were flying right at the limit of their range. So if you can only make one attack and you are moving in and there is a target in front of you, you are going to go for it in fact. If they had had more time they might have gone for the troop ships, but the natural instinct is to get the target that you can see, unless you have been pre-briefed before you left base and given a priority that said go for this ship or go for that ship.

WOODWARD

Right-thinking dark blue aviators say never go round a second time, because now he knows you are coming and he will probably get you first.

SERGIO PRADO

My question is specifically for the Navy. Did they have any benefit after the war, especially in terms of budget and consideration in defence, and also were they considering that benefit during the war?

LEACH

I have to say in all honestly that yes, we did derive some benefit, but I did not have this in mind beforehand, it was entirely unpredictable. I will simply quote the case, which was the obvious one, that prior to the war, as part of the 1981 defence review,* the carrier *Invincible* was due to be sold to the Australians.* As a result of what she did in the war and all that, and very much with the agreement of the Australians, this possible sale never eventualised at all. And that was a major boost for us.

Cmnd 8288, The UK Defence Programme: The Way Forward, general known as The Nott Review, 1981.

For further details see Dorman, Kandiah and Staerck (eds.), *The Nott Review* (London: ICBH, 2002), p. 61.

NICHOLAS TINDALL

Admiral Woodward, we hear about the loneliness of command in the Navy, we know what it is like being alone making decisions out on the high seas, what was it like to be a taskforce commander making those decisions when you are actually losing ships? We have heard about the casualties forecast beforehand, but what was it like to be actually out there by yourself with no one to turn to?

WOODWARD

I wrote a book about that,* but perhaps you haven't read it. (By the way, it is not on sale anymore.) You did what you had been trained for. You don't necessarily enjoy it and you do what you have to. The Navy has a long-standing tradition of going forward, even though it doesn't actually agree with the management or is not very sanguine about its opportunities. That is what we do, and we count for more in the rest of the world for that sort of reason. So you just go and do it. You don't say, 'Hey boss, this is a bad idea, I think that we should not be going this way at all', unless you have got a bloody good reason. And the only sort of bloody good reason is a dozen or two dozen ships sunk. Then you can reasonably turn round and say, 'Well, yes, not going too well, is it boss'. But I am very happy to say that the First Sea Lord got it absolutely right and

Sir John Woodward with Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander* (London: Bluejacket, 1992).

we didn't lose a dozen ships. So, as I am told his nanny said to him when he was six, 'You will never know, Henry, if you don't try'!

RICHARD PERRY

My question is for Lord Parkinson and Sir John Nott. How was the make-up of the War Cabinet decided in terms of qualities, personalities and responsibilities, and in particular for Lord Parkinson: what did he bring to the War Cabinet which the Secretaries of State didn't?

PARKINSON

Sir Francis Pym (Lord Pym), Conservative politician Defence Secretary, 1979-81; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Paymaster General, and Leader of the House of Commons, 1981; Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons, 1981-2; Foreign Secretary, 1982-3.

The American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) is one of the main American television broadcasters.

I think the principal thing was that I wasn't a Secretary of State, so I didn't go into the War Cabinet with a departmental angle, I went in as a sort of non-departmental minister. Why? I have never had a satisfactory explanation, I have to tell you! John Nott tells me, I think I am paraphrasing this, that he wanted a contemporary there, because he was a little concerned that Francis Pym* and Willie Whitelaw had served in the war and so on together, were a different generation and he might be the odd one out. So he wanted a contemporary. Margaret Thatcher tells me that she wanted me there so that I could do a lot of the media, and that is how it turned out in the end. I did a mass of broadcasting, not only in the UK, at all sorts of odd hours. When my more important colleagues were trying to get some sleep prior to another big decision-taking day, I would be appearing on ABC* on their 10 o'clock news.

There is quite an amusing story about that. At the War Cabinet on the day before we were due to land we had all been aware that the diplomatic negotiations had broken down and the next question was going to be 'when are you going to land' or 'what is going to happen now'. We came up with a formula, which was that there would be an intensification of landings. There had been a number of raids and the implication was that they would increase in number. Of course what we wanted desperately to do was to kill the notion that we were on our way in at that time. This was the formula that I used in all sorts of broadcasts that day. I eventually found myself in the ABC studios up Charlotte Street at about 3 o'clock in the morning and a rather small dark chap came up to me and said, 'Are you going in tonight?'. He said, 'You can rely on me, I am totally discreet, this is entirely off the record', so I said, 'Okay, I'll give you the inside story: there will be an intensification of activities from now on'. This is absolutely true. This chap said, 'Thank you', and left me, and I heard him on the phone to his editors in New York or wherever it was saying, 'I have just spoken to a member of the War Cabinet and they are not landing tonight', which is exactly of course the message that we wanted to give! I only found out later that it was Carl Bernstein of *All the President's Men* fame,* who had been shipped over. So I couldn't have told a slight white lie to a more useful person!

Carl Bernstein, American journalist. A *Washington Post* journalist who, with Bob Woodward, famously exposed the Watergate scandal.

The answer to your question is, if you look at the others – there was the Prime Minister, there was the Home Secretary who was the Deputy Prime Minister,* there was the Foreign Secretary, there was

William Whitelaw was Home Secretary.

Sir John Nott was the Secretary of State for Defence.

the Defence Secretary* – their jobs entitled them to be there. I was the most junior member of the Cabinet and you never ask 'Why me?' when you get an instruction to attend a meeting of that kind. All I can tell you is that I found it one of the most extraordinary and fascinating three months of my political life. John will tell you more.

NOTT

I wasn't happy that there were only four politicians initially, because – I was quite wrong about this, completely and utterly wrong – it was quite possible that Willie Whitelaw would be emotionally supportive of Francis Pym and I didn't think that I and the Foreign Secretary, because of the differing jobs we had, would be likely always to take the same view, as indeed we didn't. I was there to support the military campaign and Francis [Pym] was there quite rightly to do his damnedest to bring about a negotiated settlement. So I was worried initially. When I talked to Margaret Thatcher initially about who should be in the War Cabinet, there were only four of us, and I wanted a fifth because I thought that Margaret and I might be the two hawks and Willie and Francis might be the two doves. I was completely wrong, because Willie Whitelaw always supported Margaret Thatcher, every time, whether she was right or wrong, on anything! And Francis was indeed a dove, but it was useful having five politicians. Then we also had the Attorney General, who I was a bit nervous about, I wasn't too keen on having a lawyer attached to the War Cabinet, but fortunately Michael Havers* was much more keen on his service as a Fleet Air Arm officer than he was on being Attorney General! So Michael Havers was also a hawk and poor old Francis Pym was a bit isolated. That is how the personalities worked out.

Sir Michael Havers (Lord Havers, 1923-92), Conservative politician. Attorney General 1979-87; Lord Chancellor, 1987.

BRAMALL

One of the reasons why we won the war is that there was no one from the Treasury on the War Cabinet!

PARKINSON

I think there is a case for a non-departmental minister, because people do tend to just see things from their department's point of view. We were lucky, we had a very broadminded group of colleagues. But it is quite useful to have somebody who doesn't have an angle, but is just looking at it from the point of view of the sort of objective, semi-informed observer. I found after that that Margaret Thatcher used me on a lot of key committees, just because I didn't have a departmental angle.

NOTT

I have just one last word I would like to say and that is, the key person on the War Cabinet, apart from obviously the Prime Minister, was the Chief of the Defence Staff.

PARKINSON

Yes.

NOTT Terry Lewin, from beginning to end, was exceptional. Mainly because he handled the Prime Minister absolutely brilliantly, he was a delightful charming man, he was also extremely determined. I think the key people undoubtedly were Margaret Thatcher and Terry Lewin. Of course the commanders in the field were important, but Terry Lewin was an exceptional man and did an exceptional job.

TILL Thank you. We spend a lot of time at this college doing campaign analysis, looking over historical examples to see what the lessons are for today, and I think we will all go away with a huge amount of material for us to digest and think about. I really must say thank you to so many people for making this possible, a big exercise as you can imagine. I would like to thank the ICBH for the original inspiration in setting this series up and for being so helpful. I would like to thank Commander Harrie Harrison and his J3 team for doing all nitty-gritty work behind the scenes, and Dr Andy Dorman and the team from my own department, and Bob, who is behind that black window at the back there, and all the people from SERCo in making it possible, but obviously most of all the people around this table. Lawrence Freedman for setting the scene so well, all the speakers for being so candid and so polite, but also you, the audience, for coming. I hope and I think you thought it was worth it, but please join me in thanking the speakers on the table.

Elite Oral History and the Global Implications Of the Falklands Conflict: British Persectives

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This paper was presented at the International Oral History Conference, Rome, Italy, 23-26 June 2004.

On 5 June 2002 a 'witness seminar' was held on the Falklands War, a conflict between the United Kingdom and Argentina that had occurred twenty years previously. This war was over the disputed possession of certain islands in the South Atlantic, called the Falkland Islands by the British, and Ilas Malvinas by the Argentineans.[1] These islands lie 300 miles from the Strait of Magellan, close to the Argentinean mainland, and 8000 miles from the United Kingdom. These islands form part of a group of British possessions in the South Atlantic, which include South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.

The Witness Seminar Programme

Since its founding in 1986, the Institute of Contemporary British History (ICBH) has been uniquely associated with the production of witness seminars on events or developments that have taken place within the bounds of living memory. Key participants in significant historical events are invited to meet around the seminar table to discuss and debate the issues surrounding the chosen topic as they remember them. Witness seminars thus operate as group interviews, chaired by a senior academic or someone of similar status, which are taped and transcribed. The transcript of the interview is returned to the participants for their corrections and they are allowed to alter or redact any portions of their utterances. The resultant transcript that is produced is regarded as the agreed, final document, and it is made available for research. Over 70 witness seminars have been organised since 1986, with around half having been published to date. Until 2000, they were regularly published in the academic journal, *Contemporary British History* and its predecessor, *Contemporary Record*. Since 2000, they have been published either individually or in collections, and are made available on the web.

The Falklands War witness seminar was part of an established series of oral history projects on British defence policy issues, which commenced in 1986 with a major project on British official policy-making during the 1956 Suez Crisis. Since then, witness seminars have been held on key UK defence issues, such as *The 1957 Sandys White Paper*,[2] the *Decision to Withdraw From the East of Suez*,[3] and *The 1981 Nott Review*.[4] All these projects were organised with the support and participation of other institutions within the University of London, either the Department of War Studies, King's College London or with the Defence Studies Department of the Joint Service Command and Staff College, Watchfield, Wiltshire, which is staffed and run by King's College London.

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1 In this paper these islands will be referred to as the Falkland Islands.

2 Michael D. Kandiah and Gillian Staerck (eds.), *The Move to the 1957 Sandys White Paper* (London, 2002).

3 Peter Catterall, Michael D. Kandiah and Gillian Staerck (eds.), *The Decision to Withdraw from the East of Suez* (London, 2002).

4 Andrew Dorman, Michael D. Kandiah and Gillian Staerck (eds.), *The Nott Review* (London, 2002).

Historical Context

It is necessary to provide a brief background to the Falkland conflict. The narrative that follows is probably relatively uncontroversial for the British, but may not be so for Argentineans; nevertheless, it will be useful in understanding the context within which the British elites believed they were operating.[5]

The first British landings on these particular islands were in 1690, when they were named after Lord Falkland, a Lord of the Admiralty. However, the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 confirmed to Spain her traditional possessions in the Americas, including nearby external islands, such as these ones in the South Atlantic. Even so, as the eighteenth century progressed, both British and French interest grew because of the islands' strategic proximity to Cape Horne. In 1766, Britain established her first permanent settlement there, expelling the French from the island. The French settlement had, in the meantime, ceded sovereignty to Spain. Intensive negotiations between the two countries resulted in the Spanish agreeing to a British presence on the islands in 1770 but reserving the right of sovereignty. The British settlement was abandoned in 1774. Following her independence from Spain in 1816, Argentina claimed possession of the Falklands Islands but the British strongly disputed this. In 1833, Captain Onslow of the Royal Navy forced out the Argentineans and claimed suzerainty of the islands for the British Crown. Subsequently, the British maintained that their rights of sovereignty had not been relinquished during the negotiations with the Spanish in 1770, and in 1842 formally began establishing a colonial administration. As time went on, the United Kingdom's claim to sovereignty of the Falklands was to be based on her continued, peaceful rule of the islands, and upon the desire of the population, largely of British extraction, to remain British.

After the Second World War, Argentina began to press her claims to the islands more aggressively in the newly established United Nations, which appeared not to look favourably upon colonial powers maintaining their possessions. This resulted in the passage of UN Resolution 2065 in 1965, which described the problem as a colonial dispute and urged the governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to find a peaceful solution. Initially, both sides appeared to be flexible in their approach, but the British position was complicated by the Falkland Islanders' rejection in 1980 of any accommodation to Argentina's claims of sovereignty. The islanders had become suspicious of Argentinean activities in the area: in 1976 they (the Argentineans) had set up a scientific base in the South Sandwich Island and subsequently refused British requests to leave. Consequently, by the early 1980s negotiations between the United Kingdom and Argentina over the future of the islands had, for all intents and purposes, stalled.

In late March 1982, the Argentineans occupied South Georgia, which led to a strong protest in the United Nations from the UK's Ambassador to the UN, Sir Anthony Parsons. On Friday, 2 April 1982, the Argentineans began the occupation of the Falkland Islands. With only a small number of defending Royal Marines and a handful of other soldiers, and confronted with considerably superior numbers of Argentinean forces, the Governor of Falklands, Rex Hunt, surrendered.[6] He and the British military personnel were allowed to leave the islands.

Initially what followed was a period of intensive diplomatic negotiations, during which the UK attempted to secure world opinion behind her. Concomitantly, the British Government, led by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, announced that it would be sending a Task Force to regain the islands. On 3 April 1982, Royal Navy ships began sailing southward from Portsmouth harbour. During this period, American 'shuttle' diplomacy was initiated by Secretary of State Alexander Haig, who attempted to mediate a settlement between the two US allies. The Task Force, which was to consist of 13 warships and 4 supply ships, reach the South Georgia on 21 April and begin

5 The background survey is based on a synthesis of a number of studies including: David Brown, *The Royal Navy and the Falklands War* (London: Leo Cooper, 1987); and Michael Parsons, *The Falklands War* (London: Sutton, 2000).

6 See his *My Falklands Days* (London: Politico's, 2002).

enforcing a Two Hundred Mile Exclusion Zone around the Falkland Islands. Actual military engagements began in early May and, following around three weeks of intensive amphibious and ground warfare, on 14 June 1983 Argentinean troops formally surrendered to British forces.

Aims of the Witness Seminar

The aim of the 2002 witness seminar was to re-examine from the British political and military elite's points of view the following:

* the events which had led to the conflict,
* the background of the decision for the British government to go to war,
* the military prosecution of the war itself from the UK's point of view;
* the management of international opinion by the UK;
* the political implications and the impact of the war;
* the context within which the war was fought;
* what they continued to find contentious; and
* what they wanted memorialised.

Venue of the Witness Seminar

The witness seminar was held at the Joint Services Command and Staff College (JSCSC), Watchfield, Wiltshire, which is an academic training unit for military personnel. The principal reason for holding the event at this venue was to ensure that the participants felt comfortable that they would be giving their testimony in a location that they felt was appropriate, unthreatening, and comfortable. In particular, the surroundings allowed for the military participants, although retired, to be accorded treatment commensurate with their former rank.

Participants

All surviving senior military officers and the politicians, diplomats and civil servants who were directly involved with the conduct of the war, were invited. The two exceptions were the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, who for health reasons is now no longer able to participate in such events; and the Foreign Secretary at the time, Lord Carrington.

The eventual list of participants (and their position during the war) was as follows:
Air-Chief Marshal Sir Michael Armitage, Director of Service Intelligence;
Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Michael Beetham, Chief of Air Staff;
Field Marshal The Lord Bramall of Bushfield, Chief of General Staff;
Captain Michael Clapp, Commodore of Amphibious Warfare;
Lord Parkinson of Carnforth, Chairman of the Conservative Party, Paymaster-General and Member of the War Cabinet;
Air Marshal Sir John Curtiss, Air-Officer Commanding No.18 Group RAF and Air Advisor to Commander-in-Chief Fleet;
Sir Nicholas Henderson, HM Ambassador to the United States;
Sir Roger Jackling, Head of DS11, Ministry of Defence;
Major-General Sir Jeremy Moore, Land deputy to CINC Fleet and later Commander Land Forces Falkland Islands;
Sir John Nott, Secretary of State for Defence;
Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff;
Major General Julian Thompson, Commander 3 Commando Brigade;
Admiral Sir John (Sandy) Woodward, Flag Officer First Flotilla and Senior Task Group Commander;

The witness seminar was introduced by a short paper given by Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman, Department of War Studies, King's College, London. He is the Official Historian of the

Falklands Conflict and this work is forthcoming. The event was chaired by Professor Geoffrey Till, a historian, who is head of Department of Defence Studies at the JSCSC.

This witness seminars, like of all the others previously organised, was held in the presence of an audience. The audience was allowed to question the participants towards the end of the witness seminar, and thus they added their testimony to the record. The composition of the audience comprised of some academics who work in the field of military history but, given the venue was a military establishment, it was largely comprised of military officers. The following chose to contribute:

Stewart Bourne, of the Royal Navy;
Jock Gardner, Naval Historical Branch;
Dr Eric Grove, Department of History, University of Hull;
Peter Freeman, a lawyer;
Sulle Alhaji, a soldier who fought in the war;
Cdr Mike Beardall;
Major Sergio Prado, from Argentina;
Lt Commander Nicholas Tindall, of the Royal Navy;
and Lt Col. Richard Perry of the Royal Navy.

Memories of the Falklands War

As would be expected, different groups of individuals remembered and emphasised different aspects of the Falklands War in their testimonies. Participants broadly fell into three distinct groups: politicians; diplomats; and soldiers, each of whom will now be considered in turn.

The Politicians

The Conservative Party was won the 1979 General Election, led by Margaret Thatcher. For Conservative politicians, their memories were dominated by the difficulties they faced domestically at the time (which of necessity will be touched upon here because otherwise it would not be possible to understand the circumstances in which the politicians operated), and by their recollection of the complexities and difficulties of the decisions they had to take. In their minds, the South Atlantic had not been a frontline defence concern for the country, which continued to be the Soviet threat to Western Europe. It was a shock to them that the Argentineans actually chose to mount a military campaign to gain control of the islands. They recalled, further, prior to the invasion that they had not been convinced of the necessity of maintaining a British presence in the South Atlantic in the 1980s. Consequently, they believed that fighting a war to keep these islands, which were located thousands of miles away from UK, was fraught with difficulties. Lord Parkinson, Conservative Party Chairman, recalled that the Government found itself in a perilous position at home in the immediate aftermath of the invasion:

> [The Deputy Foreign Secretary] Humphrey Atkins … [had to tell the House of Commons] 'we have no information'. The government sounded incredibly weak and ill informed and my immediate reaction was 'Oh my God, what a mess we are in'. (p.19)

Soon afterwards, Atkins was forced to resign following criticisms that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the British foreign ministry, had mishandled affairs prior to the invasion. Turning around this perception at home was a key achievement of the Government, aided by a compliant and aggressively nationalistic press and, just as importantly, a weak parliamentary opposition.[7] As Parkinson commented, 'We were very lucky that we had Michael Foot leading the

7 This is not to suggest that the Conservatives faced no domestic opposition. One of the government's most persistent anti-war critics in the House of Commons was a senior Labour MP, Tam Dalyell, who subsequently wrote *One Man's Falklands* (London, 1982).

Labour Party… Michael Foot hated fascists and hated [the Argentinean leader] Galtieri as a result and was amazingly staunch.' For the politicians, it would have been impossible to have fought the war if they had significant internal opposition to its conduct.

According to Sir John Nott, the Defence Secretary at the time, memories of the 1956 Suez Crisis haunted many of his colleagues, particularly *vis-à-vis* the management of international affairs. Nott and Parkinson, although neither combatants nor active politicians at the time of Suez, both found that they had learnt two lessons from that event: the hostility of the international community; and the lack of support from the Americans. The latter had proved fundamental in forcing the British to withdraw from the Suez Canal zone. According to their testimony, British politicians believed that they could not have fought the war without at least the tactic support of the USA, and they wanted, and were fortunately enough to be able to secure, more positive support. Defence Secretary Nott commented, 'the Pentagon were absolutely wonderful and [US Secretary of Defense] Weinberger personally was wonderful in providing us with so much help.'

However, the politicians recalled finding that they could not take American support for granted: neither American public opinion nor the Reagan administration's. In Nott's opinion:

> … it was Nico [Henderson]'s work as Ambassador in the United States that swung American public opinion behind us. I believe (and I would like him to comment) that unless Nico [Henderson] had brought American public opinion really round behind the Brits and unless Congress had come round on our side – which was in some ways contrary to Reagan and the State Department's policy in favour of South American dictators and Central America – we would have been in very great difficulty. (p.36)

For the politicians, then, the recollection of the war was not purely in military terms but was also in the context of a difficult diplomatic relations with the UK's most important ally.

The Diplomats

Of the senior diplomats involved with the conduct of the Falklands War, only Sir Nicholas Henderson participated in the witness seminar. This was principally because the other senior UK diplomat, Sir Anthony Parsons, had died in 1996. For Henderson, the Ambassador to Washington, keeping good personal relations with the US Secretary of State, Alexander Haig was vital and he did his best to do this throughout the war. According to Henderson's recollections, he had numerous meetings with the Secretary of State, who

> kept saying to me, he said this so many times that I have to repeat it to you, 'We will never do another Suez on you', by which he meant the way Americans quarrelled with us publicly over the Suez catastrophe, 'but we have to show the American people and the Congress that the Argentineans are not prepared to have any negotiated settlement that is reasonable. You, the British, have to show that you are ready to have a settlement. If there is a settlement that is possible then we shall go for it, but I don't think there is – but my negotiation must show that it is the Argentineans who are making it impossible.' (p.36)

Henderson, for his part, said that he did not believe then that negotiations were likely to bear fruit but found that he had to comply.

Furthermore, he too recalled finding that the British could not automatically count on American support. He remembered that:

> America was very close, politically and diplomatically, at that stage … to Argentina. They were using Argentina and depending upon them a great deal for support with the problems they were having in Central America and they were disinclined therefore to discount assurances they got from Argentina that they were not bent upon aggression. (p.26)

However, as a diplomat, the lesson that Henderson had learnt from the 1956 Suez crisis was that his best strategy would be to keep communications as clear as he could between the two governments, and that events would prove the British position correct. In his belief in the inherent correctness of the British position and the need to educate the Americans of British views, Henderson's mindset is reminiscent to that of Harold Macmillan, Prime Minister between 1957-63, who saw the Americans as representing 'the new Roman Empire', and who felt that 'we Britons, like the Greeks of old, must teach them how to make it go'.[8]

The Soldiers

While the British military elites acknowledged the importance of continued American help in the conduct of the war, they were sceptical of the goodwill of the US military establishment. The Commander of the Task Force, Admiral Sir Sandy Woodward recalled:

> The depth of the sentiment … in the United States was brought home to me when I went over in September 1982 to meet the then Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic, Admiral Harry Train in Norfolk, Virginia. I was introduced into the presence and greeted moderately perfunctorily, but the first sentence was 'Well, there are no lessons to be learnt from your little war. Well, no new ones, anyway.' The other half of the briefing was 'And I want you to know that my son's godfather is Admiral Jorge Anaya.' That was the most succinct briefing I had from an American, ever! Down to three sentences and it told you exactly about the split. Here was the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic, who was pro-Argentinean and not pro-British. (p.37)

Regarding the offer of destroyers by US Secretary of State Weinberger, they were less impressed than the politicians and diplomats. According to Admiral Sir Henry Leach, chief of the Royal Navy, while it was a

> … most generous offer … It would have been for us to man her, run her and operate her. Now without going into too much technical detail, suffice it to say that the Americans for their main propulsion machinery use high-pressure steam. We do not, and the difference in the operation of such machinery would have taken – I wouldn't care to put a precise time on it – finite time to have made our people safe and effective operators of that ship, quite apart from the significantly differing characteristics in terms of aircraft handling and so forth. Quite apart also from the fact that we in the Navy then no longer had any fixed wing aircraft and a certain amount of adaptation, cross training or whatever with our Royal Air Force colleagues would have been necessary. Rightly or wrongly, and I believe correctly, although it was a highly generous offer, it was not taken up. (p.64)

British military elites' memories were shaped by two further factors. First, for quite some time the military machine in the UK had been under-funded and undervalued, and they were keen to stem and even to reverse this trend. Second, they were convinced that the United Kingdom continued to have a major military role to play in world affairs.[9] The successful outcome of the Falklands War strengthened this belief and helped them promote their views at home and abroad. As Admiral Leach recalled:

> … prior to the war, as part of the 1981 defence review,[10] the carrier *Invincible* was due to be sold to the Australians. As a result of what she did in the war and all that, and very much with the

8 Quoted in Alex Danchev, 'On Specialness', *International Affairs*, Vol.72 No. 4 (1996), p. 740.

9 For further details see Dorman, Kandiah and Staerck, *The Nott Review*, p. 61.

10 *Cmnd 8288, 'The UK Defence Programme: The Way Forward'*, general known as the 1981 Nott Review after Sir John Nott, the Defence Secretary.

> agreement of the Australians, this possible sale never eventualised at all. And that was a major boost for us. (p.44)

Of the three groups identified, only the British military establishment openly articulated a desire to maintain Imperial aspirations, albeit in a modified and diminished form.

The Sinking of the Belgrano

According to all participants, there was one event that they believed could have fatally undermined Britain's conduct of the Falklands War in the eyes of the world. This was the decision taken by the Thatcher Cabinet to sink the *General Belgrano*, one of the largest ships in the Argentinean navy, on 2 May 1982. The decision was controversial, both at home and abroad, because it was unclear if the *Belgrano* was sailing towards or away from the 200 Mile Exclusion Zone which had been imposed by the British. If the former, then it would be considered a tragedy of war; if the later, a dangerous breech of the rules of engagement. According to Defence Secretary Nott, 'the Germans were deeply upset about the *Belgrano*.' Moreover, he recalled:

> I 'misled' Parliament … I didn't really get my statement checked out by the civil servants. Of course, I then retired from politics, which was fortunate, and my successors then had about three years of trouble with the statement that I had made, which was in fact marginally inaccurate actually, because I said that the *Belgrano* was heading for the Task Force, when it had, in fact, momentarily turned in a different direction, for what that is worth. But I made a statement based upon the knowledge that I had at the time. (p.44)

For their part, the military elite unanimously believed that, whatever direction the *Belgrano* may have been heading, it was a danger to British interests and that the decision to sink it was, militarily and indeed morally, the correct one. For all participants, the fact that the UK had succeeding in managing opinion both at home and aboard was highly fortuitous.

Lingering Imperial Illusions?

While it is clear from the memories of the members of the British elite who conducted the Falklands War from London that, as a group, the imperial appetite had largely abated, they recognised that her imperial past could still impose itself unexpectedly and disconcertingly upon them. Before the Argentinean occupation of the island in March 1982, most of them did not actually know where these islands where. However, once events unfolded as they did, the British elite were unanimous in their belief that it right and correct that they should fight to keep the Falklands Islands and that, for the foreseeable future at least, the islands should remain British. In this way, they shared a belief that while Britain was no longer the Imperial power that she had been, she was still – and had a right to be – at the top table of world affairs. It was a troublesome and dangerous world in which Britain would have to hold on to the coat tails of their superpower ally, the Americans. But this had to be done. [11]

11 For a discussion of the views of the elites of an earlier generation, see M. D. Kandiah and Gillian Staerck, "Reliable Allies': Anglo-American Relations', in Wolfram Kaiser and Gillian Staerck (eds.), *Contracting Options, British Foreign Policy, 1955-1964* (London:, 2000), pp. 135-70.

Elite Oral History and the Global Implications Of the Falklands Conflict: An American View

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This paper was presented at the International Oral History Conference, Rome, Italy, 23-26 June 2004.

The Presidential Oral History Program (POHP) of the University of Virginia's Miller Center of Public Affairs hosted 'The Falklands Roundtable' in conjunction with the Institute of (now Centre for) Contemporary British History (ICBH) on 15 and 16 May 2003 in Washington, DC. The Falklands Roundtable was the second of a two-part series sponsored by the Miller Center in conjunction with the ICBH. The first session was held in June 2002, at the Joint Services Command and Staff College, on the twentieth anniversary of the Falklands War. Many major figures from the Thatcher government and the British military shared their perspectives on the war at a Witness Seminar organised by the ICBH.

The Miller Center Falklands Roundtable was designed to capture the recollections of key participants from the Reagan administration who were involved in the Falklands crisis. The Falklands War tested the 'special relationship' between the United States and the United Kingdom, and in particular it strained the partnership of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. The transcript of the Miller Center Roundtable, when available, will provide future generations of scholars and students a deeper understanding of the relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom, between the United States and Latin America, and of the foreign policy of the Reagan years.

Let me first discuss the structural differences between the ICBH Witness Seminar and the Falklands Roundtable. The ICBH Witness Seminar had thirteen witnesses, a chair, and a paper-giver, and the Witness Seminar also allowed several questions from the large, mostly military, audience assembled at the Joint Services Command and Staff College for the afternoon session. Our Roundtable was a smaller gathering, consisting of eight participants and two moderators, and an audience of nine persons, including the Director of the Presidential Oral History Program, Professor James Sterling Young, and two faculty members from the ICBH, its Director, Dr Harriet Jones and Dr Michael Kandiah, Director of the Witness Seminar Programme. Professor Kathleen Burk of University College, London, served as the Roundtable co-chair with me, while Dr Christopher Collins of the Margaret Thatcher Foundation and Professor Michael Parsons of the University of Pau, France, asked questions at various times over the course of the two day sessions.

The Roundtable was the first topical 'group' oral history conducted by the Miller Center's Presidential Oral History Program. This was new territory for the POHP faculty and staff; our oral histories generally consist of a small team of three or four scholars interviewing a single individual, although in some instances respondents will include members of their staffs in the interview; on one occasion a former Cabinet Secretary had two former associates with him in the interview room and four other assistants participating via speaker phone.

After a visit from Harriet Jones and Michael Kandiah of the ICBH in October 2001, we were inspired to begin experimenting with topical, group oral histories. To date the POHP has conducted two thematic group interviews. The second group event brought together all of the Directors of the White House Office of Legislative Affairs from Nixon to Clinton, and was organ-

ised by my colleague Russell Riley. Both were successful events, and resources and faculty time permitting, we hope to conduct more thematic group interviews in the future.

The Falklands Roundtable brought together many key foreign policy and defence officials from the Reagan years. Foremost among the group was former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, a longtime Reagan ally who had also served in the Nixon administration. At the time of the Falklands Crisis, press accounts portrayed Weinberger as an 'Anglophile,' and noted that Winston Churchill was one of his heroes. He viewed the Argentine assault on the Falklands as a classic case of aggression, and wasted little time in offering technical, logistical, and intelligence assistance to the United Kingdom. As he later observed in his memoir,

> I felt that naked aggression, as practiced by the Argentinean military dictatorship, should not be encouraged, nor indirectly supported by our indifference or neutrality ... I therefore passed the word to the Department that all existing UK requests for military equipment, and other requests for equipment or other types of support, short of our actual participation in their military action, should be granted immediately. I knew how vital speed would be for the extraordinarily difficult operation they were about to undertake.[1]

Weinberger tapped one of his most able deputies, Dov Zakheim (Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for International Security Policy), to oversee the aid effort and ensure that there were no unnecessary delays, and the assistance effort proceeded in a remarkably efficient manner. It may have been one of the Pentagon's most impressive logistical operations, surpassed in efficiency only by the emergency airlift of supplies to Israel during the Yom Kippur War of 1973.

Perhaps one of the more interesting and in some ways troublesome aspects of the Reagan administration and the Falklands War Crisis concerns the question of whether Weinberger authorised aid to Great Britain without the approval of the President; there is evidence indicating that aid began to flow at a time when the administration's position appeared to be in flux. Weinberger has stated on many occasions that he believed he was doing the President's bidding in swiftly offering military assistance to the United Kingdom, that he 'never had any doubt that the President's heart was with Britain.'[2]

Weinberger is something of a legendary figure among members of the British government who served during the Falklands war; the story is frequently told of his 'generous' offer to HM Ambassador to the United States, Nicholas Henderson. As Henderson recounted,

> The circumstances were extraordinary, because at a garden party at the British Embassy he [Weinberger] took me aside and more or less said, 'Would you like a carrier'.

Henderson went on to add,

> We can't exaggerate the help we got from Caspar Weinberger throughout, from 1 April on, frankly. All the supplies and oil and everything that went to Ascension made all the difference to us. I think all the service people would agree with that. [3]

Defence Secretary John Nott agreed, observing that

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1 Caspar Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years at the Pentagon* (London: Michael Joseph, Ltd., 1990), p.144.

2 Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace*, p. 146.

3 Andrew Dorman, Michael D. Kandiah, Gillian Staerck, (eds.), ICBH/King's College London at JSCSC Witness Seminar, *The Falklands War*, June 5, 2002. Testimony of Sir Nicholas Henderson, HM Ambassador to the United States, p.64. All citations hereafter referred to as Falklands Witness Seminar.

> our greatest allies in material and other senses were the Americans. Without Weinberger's assistance we would have had a much more difficult time. The Americans, in the form of Weinberger and the Pentagon, were our greatest ally.[4]

Another key Falklands Roundtable participant was the US Ambassador to the United Nations, Jeane Kirkpatrick. It had been reported in 1982 at the time of the crisis that Mrs Kirkpatrick 'tilted' toward the Argentine position in the dispute over the Falklands/ Malvinas, a point which she has since disputed. Mrs Kirkpatrick was an expert on Latin America, and had established a reputation for taking a hawkish line regarding leftist insurgencies in Central America, particularly Nicaragua and El Salvador. The Argentine military was covertly involved in the training of anti-Marxist forces in both of those conflicts, and there was media speculation that this influenced some Reagan administration's 'hawks,' particularly Kirkpatrick, to view Argentina's position on the Malvinas in a somewhat favourable light.

Ronald Reagan's biographer, Lou Cannon, has unequivocally stated that Kirkpatrick supported Argentina during the Falklands Crisis, and that Secretary of State Alexander Haig attempted to have her fired as a result. It was, according to Cannon, a suggestion resisted by National Security Advisor William Clark, and by President Reagan as well, who 'upbraided Haig for trying to bring her to heel.'[5] Haig, in his own memoir, noted that he received repeated complaints from Sir Nicholas Henderson about Kirkpatrick's public and private statements to the Argentineans. Haig went on to claim that in National Security Council meetings Kirkpatrick 'vehemently opposed an approach that condemned Argentina and supported Britain on the basis of international law.'[6] There remain a number of outstanding questions regarding the extent of the divisions within the Reagan administration over the Falklands War, including the position of Mrs Kirkpatrick.

Unfortunately, we were unable to arrange the participation of former Secretary of State Alexander Haig. There are reports that the tension between Alexander Haig and other former Reagan administration officials has not abated, and it is possible that this may have contributed to Haig's decision not to participate. One former Reagan administration official indicated to me that if Secretary Haig were in the same room as Caspar Weinberger and Jeane Kirkpatrick 'there would be blood on the floor.' Alexander Haig's absence from our Roundtable was deeply felt, but the POHP later arranged an interview with him to discuss his entire tenure as Secretary of State, including his role in the Falklands Crisis and in particular his shuttle diplomacy between Buenos Aires and London.

Nevertheless, despite his absence, Alexander Haig's presence was felt both at the ICBH Witness Seminar and at our own Roundtable. His Falklands mediation effort was a frequent topic of conversation at both sessions, drawing a mix of praise and condemnation. According to Sir Nicholas:

> Mrs Thatcher, frankly, was terrifically intolerant of it [Haig's shuttle diplomacy], she thought it was monstrous that anybody should be negotiating about something so outrageous as the occupation of the Falkland Islands, but it was essential to have America on our side. And I think we have to thank not just Weinberger, but also Haig and those who helped us in the White House – who were not very numerous.[7]

Haig earned little credit for his attempt to avert the war, and he resigned as Secretary of State on 25 June 1982, eleven days after the final surrender of Argentine forces on the Falklands Islands.

We were able to compensate somewhat for Secretary Haig's absence with the participation of

4 Falklands Witness Seminar, Testimony of Sir Nicholas Henderson and Sir John Nott, pp.36-7.
5 Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), p. 166.
6 Alexander M. Haig, Jr., *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy* (New York: MacMillan, 1984), pp. 268-9.
7 Falklands Witness Seminar, Testimony of Sir Nicholas Henderson, p.36.

David Gompert, a key member of Haig's mediation team. Gompert was the Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, and later served as Deputy to the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Lawrence Eagleburger. He had formerly been an assistant to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and was a member of Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy entourage. Gompert vividly recounted the excruciating 8,000 mile journeys between London and Buenos Aires, and the difficulties of dealing with a *junta* in which no one expected the British to respond to the seizure of the Malvinas with force. Gompert, along with other Roundtable participants, also discussed Haig's relationship with the White House staff, which was often strained, and with the President, which was somewhat distant.

Gompert's testimony cast the Haig mediation effort in a somewhat favourable light, and helped clarify the Secretary's motives in issuing statements which were at odds with information coming out of the Pentagon. At a time when aid was already flowing to Britain, Haig denied this was happening, hoping to use the threat of American aid to the UK as a last resort, as a lever, to compel the Argentineans to make diplomatic concessions. The Falklands Crisis offers yet another example of the differing worldviews held by the Pentagon and the State Department; of how the agendas of both departments are often at odds, and frequently lead to confusion and misunderstanding abroad.

Further testimony regarding the American diplomatic initiatives surrounding the crisis was presented by Harry Shlaudeman, the US envoy to Argentina, and by Edward Streator, the Deputy Chief of Mission at the Court of St James. Shlaudeman recalled the internal workings of the ruling Argentine *junta* and the motives behind their risky seizure of the Falklands. Shlaudeman expressed his regret over his inability to persuade the *junta* leadership and members of the Argentine military to seek a peaceful solution to the Malvinas problem, and noted, as has been reported elsewhere, that the *junta* decided to invade the Malvinas at the last minute with relatively little preparation. In a rather moving moment, he recounted the Falklands episode as the most painful event in his thirty-seven year diplomatic career.

Drawing on experiences in London, Edward Streator recounted the divisions within the Thatcher government and his efforts to aid the Haig mediation initiative. Streator provided a particularly bracing account of the mood in Britain in the immediate aftermath of the seizure of the Falklands by Argentina, and recalled the pessimism he heard at the highest levels of the Thatcher government regarding the ability of the UK to retake the islands. Streator considered Alexander Haig's diplomatic initiative to be a make or break episode in the Secretary's career, and reaffirmed the notion that without American assistance the British would not have defeated the Argentineans.

The remaining members of the Roundtable were drawn from the leadership of the American military, some of whom had professional relationships with members of the Argentine or British high command (or in some cases both services) and many of whom played a role in the massive assistance effort mobilised to aid the British. Much of the American military assistance came in the form of fuel, spare parts, and intelligence, but it also appears that the American military took steps to ensure that weapons used by Argentina did not function properly. At the very least, the Argentineans were not informed how to set fuses and timing mechanisms on certain weapons systems, many of which struck British warships but failed to explode.

Our military panellists included General Paul Gorman, who was Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the time of the Falklands Crisis, and later went on to be Commander-in-Chief of the United States Southern Command. (Paul Gorman also served for a time as an editor and author of the famous 'Pentagon Papers,' the secret history of the Vietnam War that caused such a stir when they were leaked to the American press in 1971). Admiral Thomas Hayward served as the Chief of Naval Operations from 1978-1982, capping almost 40 years of service in the United States Navy which began shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The final member of our trio of military participants was Admiral Harry Train, who was the Commander-

in-Chief of the US Atlantic Command and the Commander-in-Chief of the US Atlantic Fleet at the time of the Falklands War.

Admiral Train brought his knowledge as a military practitioner to the Roundtable, but he also offered his insights as a serious student of the Falklands War. He is the author of an essay written for the *Naval War College Review* in 1988, 'An Analysis of the Falklands/Malvinas Campaign,' which, according to Train, 'by whatever name you wish to use, it [the Falklands War] is a classic case of the breakdown of deterrence. It is a war that should never have happened. But it did, and therefore presents a case study rich in political and military mistakes.'[8] He is also the author of an unpublished manuscript, 'The Falkland Islands Campaign, A Case Study,' a detailed examination of the conflict that includes daily summaries of the events leading up to and including the war. Train's manuscript proved to be an invaluable resource, for Admiral Train was given complete access to the military leadership of both Argentina and Britain, and to 'classified records and analyses from both sides and to the classified operations orders, correspondence and messages.'[9] Interestingly, Train was suspected by some members of the British military to harbour sympathies for the Argentineans. In his witness seminar testimony, one British Admiral recounted the following exchange with Admiral Train in September, 1982, just months after the conclusion of the war.

> I went over ... to meet the then Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic, Admiral Harry Train, in Norfolk, Virginia. I was introduced into the presence and greeted moderately perfunctorily, but the first sentence was, 'Well, there are no lessons to be learnt from your little war. Well, no new ones, anyway.' The other half of the briefing was 'And I want you to know that my son's godfather is Admiral Jorge Anaya [Chief of Staff of the Argentine Navy, 1981-82]. That was the most succinct briefing I had from an American, ever! ... Here was the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic, who was pro-Argentinean and not pro-British.[10]

The Falklands War was not a seminal event of the Reagan Years, as Sir Lawrence Friedman, the official historian of the Falklands Conflict for the British Cabinet, has observed: 'An American, talking about the Falklands afterwards, was asked, 'I suppose this was an issue that was a bit on the back burner for you?'; to which he replied, 'Back burner? It wasn't even on the stove!'"[111] This sentiment was echoed to some extent by the Roundtable participants; nonetheless, it is my belief that the American response to the Falklands Crisis offers many lessons about the difficulties of conflict mediation, but more specifically, about policymaking during the Reagan years. The episode also revealed something of a schism within the administration over the importance of American ties with Latin America vs. Europe, with 'old world' vs. 'new world' alliances – a schism which has persisted throughout American history.

Despite the tendency of Americans to dismiss the significance of the Falklands Crisis, the war had a number of important consequences that were not fully appreciated at the time. The victory in the Falklands improved the standing of the British military in the eyes of their American counterparts, and served to strengthen the relationship between Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. The Reagan-Thatcher alliance remained firm throughout the 1980s, and held together during such stressful times as the American invasion of Grenada, a Commonwealth nation, in October, 1983. That same autumn, the US deployed her Pershing and Cruise Missiles in Western Europe, an action which may have contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union later in the dec-

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8 Admiral Harry D. Train, II, (Ret.), 'An Analysis of the Falklands/Malvinas Islands Campaign,' *Naval War College Review*, Vol. XLI, No. 1, Winter 1988, pp. 33-50.

9 Harry D. Train, II, 'The Falkland Islands Campaign: A Case Study,' unpublished manuscript provided by the author to the Miller Center POHP.

10 Falklands Witness Seminar, testimony of Admiral Sir John (Sandy) Woodward, Flag Officer First Flotilla and Senior Task Group Commander, p.37.

11 Falklands Witness Seminar, Opening statement of Sir Lawrence Friedman, p.14.

ade. The Reagan-Thatcher relationship was one of the key alliances of the Cold War, both in terms of the firm approach the two leaders took toward the USSR, but it also paved the way for the warming of relations that occurred after the Geneva Summit of November 1985. Mrs Thatcher's endorsement of Mikhail Gorbachev as a man 'you can do business with,' reassured Reagan's domestic conservative base that he could reach out to the new Soviet leader. A British defeat in the Falklands would have effected the 'special relationship' between the United States and the U.K. in a variety of ways, likely leading to the collapse of the Thatcher government, and a weakening of NATO's military reputation *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union. It is then that one realises that this 'little war' was a very critical event indeed for the Western alliance and for the outcome of the Cold War.

Our Falklands Roundtable[12] was the first of what we hope will be further joint endeavours with the ICBH, and we are also in the early stages of forging relationships with the other foreign oral history programmes. As a follow-up to the visit of Harriet Jones and Michael Kandiah in October, 2001, I visited the UK in June 2002, and observed the aforementioned Falklands Witness Seminar and another seminar on financial/banking reforms from the Thatcher-era. I also met with the ICBH faculty and staff to learn about their processes and procedures, and met some of the organisation's Board members as well. Professor James S. Young and I attended the Conference on 'Contemporary History, Public Life, and Oral Sources' in Groningen, Holland, in August/September 2003, hosted by the Nederlands Centrum voor Contemporaine Geschiedenis (NCCG),[13] where we exchanged ideas with scholars from the UK, Holland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Italy. The POHP has ongoing contacts with the faculty at the Contemporary History Project at the University of Oslo and in November, 2003, we hosted a visit from five members of the Oslo faculty who visited the Miller Center for an exchange of ideas on interviewing techniques, transcript preparation and editing, publishing concerns, and funding issues. A reciprocal visit from Miller Center faculty may occur in the coming months. In the Spring of 2002 we hosted a visit from a faculty member from the University of Stockholm, Kjell Ostberg, and we maintain frequent contact with faculty and staff at the NCCG. Professor Young presented a paper and held discussions with scholars in Japan working on oral history projects, while Professor Russell Riley, a former Academic Program Director at the Salzburg Seminar in Salzburg, Austria, has maintained his contacts with the faculty at that institution and continues to explore possible joint endeavours.

These relationships should continue to grow, for all of us have much to learn about differing techniques of oral history and, more importantly, of the workings of different systems of government. It seems particularly important in this time that we forge a deeper understanding between scholars, students, and citizens around the globe. One of my goals is to someday incorporate the Argentine perspective it into our Falklands/Malvinas oral histories; we recognise that until that time our account of this conflict will be incomplete.

The relationship formed between the POHP and our European and Asian colleagues is but a small step in increasing international understanding, yet all of these contacts are important in a time of strained international relations. We all benefit greatly from global exchanges where policymakers from nations come together to speak to history, and in no arena is this more important than in matters of war and peace. The Falklands War, while not a major event in the annals of my country's history, nonetheless provides lessons applicable to most conflicts: the consequences of domestic politics, particularly runaway nationalism, on the world arena; the skewed perceptions of policymakers and the public on the edge of and in the midst of war; the need for communication and the importance of constantly nurturing negotiation and diplomacy even when evidence of tangible results is difficult to discern.

12 The 'Falklands Roundtable' is available at http://millercenter.virginia.edu/programs/poh/falklands.html.

13 In 2003 the Netherlands Centre of Contemporary History (NCCG) stopped initiating new activities.