

研究会記録

WRITING OFFICIAL HISTORY: THE FALKLANDS CAMPAIGN

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【概要】

10月16日（金）、ロンドン大学キングス・カレッジ副学長であるサー・ローレンス・フリードマンを迎えて、研究会が開催された。フリードマン博士は、フォークランド戦争のオフィシャル・ヒストリアンとして同戦争に関する公刊戦史を2冊出版されており、本研究会では、次のような同戦争の公刊戦史執筆上の苦勞及び問題点が紹介された。

1982年4月2日、アルゼンチンが英国保護領であったフォークランド諸島の南ジョージア島を占拠した。前日の1日にキングス・カレッジの戦争研究学部に教授として迎えられたばかりであり、冷戦下の核戦略問題の専門家であった博士は、事件の内容が専門外であるが、戦争研究の研究者として、戦争が実際にどう戦われるのか、その現実的な内容の理解をさらに深めることに意義があると考えた。そこで、公刊戦史を刊行する前にフォークランド戦争に関する著書2冊を執筆し、公刊戦史については文書公開の30年ルールにより関係公文書が大量に開示されたのちの2013年に取り組みうと決めていた。

しかし、1996年に英国政府から公刊戦史を残して欲しいとの要望があり、博士は、政府が保存している一次史料に目を通すことができる絶好の機会を活かすため、自身の計画を前倒しにして公刊戦史を執筆することにし、全2巻の公刊戦史の刊行に8年を費やした。

博士は、公刊戦史の定義を「公に認可された歴史ではなく、情報の出処が公であり、生情報を扱っているもの」という意味に理解している。また、内閣官房の記録係も、博士個人の視点で執筆することを認めていた。そこで、博士は、総じて、「全てを書く」ことに拘った。というのも、中途半端な情報発信をすると、何か隠しているとの疑惑がもたれ易いので、このようなマイナス・イメージを払拭することを意識したからであった。

一方、博士は、みんなが知っていることに何を加えるべきかについて悩んだ。その結果、入手した情報で解決できる余地のあるもの——どのような意思決定がなされたのか（なぜなされたのか、なぜなされなかったのか）を明らかにした。また、後方支援などの一般読者の関心が薄い部分であっても、戦争を語るうえで重要なものについては、きちんと歴史を残すことにした。

刊行後、外交面ばかりで、軍事面の記述が少ないとの指摘を受けた。その理由は2つあった。第1の理由は、史料の対象が英国議会及び官庁の公文書中心であったためであり、

第2の理由は、軍事面の説明よりも優先して、何のために戦争を始めるのかに関する説明を重視したからであった。

一方、軍事面について、退役軍人が現地の戦況に特化して書いた著作には、①体験した配置からは全てを見渡せない限界があり、部分的見方しかできない部分、②戦場の錯誤や思い込みによる不正確な部分、という限界がどうしても含まれることを考慮すべきである。特に、地上戦を執筆した部分については、見解の相違による論争があり、苦勞した。とにかく、時間が経ったときには、見解の相違があった、ということを変えて考える必要がある。暗号化装置がないために指揮官同士の間で口頭によるやりとりが多かったことから、無線交信記録としては何も残っていないことが多かった。この状況は現在でも同じである。

現在、博士は、イラク戦争に対する公式調査研究に取り組んでいるが、フォークランド戦争の公刊戦史執筆の経験が、この新たな課題に求められる調査研究上の問いを授けてくれることを期待している。特に、フォークランド戦争とイラク戦争はとても似つかないが、両戦争は、外交と軍事力の行使との関係については類似の問いを、戦争を行っている民主主義諸国が抱える諸問題を、さらには国家が戦争に踏み切る際の若者や女性の犠牲という避けられない問題を想起させてくれる。

As the month of March 1982 drew to a close it dawned on the British Government that an incident in the South Atlantic, initially thought to be rather trivial, was turning into a major crisis. The incident had begun with the discovery on 19 March of a number of Argentine scrap metal merchants who had landed without authorisation on the island of South Georgia. South Georgia, significant largely as a base for the British Antarctic Survey, was then a dependency of the Falkland Islands. On 31 March information was received confirming not only that Argentina had switched its attention to the Falkland Islands but also that it had put to sea a substantial task force with the intention of occupying the colony. Diplomatic attempts to get the invasion called off using the United States soon failed and on 2 April the invasion took place.

As it happens I officially became a Professor of War Studies on the 1st April 1982, the date I joined King's College London. So on the 2nd April I had a war. Like most people, including the Government, I was taken by surprise by the Argentine invasion and was unsure how to respond. At first I reckoned I had enough basic military knowledge to comment sensibly on events but quite soon I realised that I did not. My

expertise was in the rarefied and, in this case, essentially irrelevant world of nuclear strategy. My grasp of the technicalities of warship design or the nuances of army tactics was poor. With little hard news coming back from the South Atlantic I drew the salutary conclusion that I had little to contribute to public discussion on the conflict's course and likely outcome. The first conclusion I drew was that if I was going to be a Professor of War Studies I should make an effort to understand the wars that were actually being fought rather than those that existed only in the fevered imagination of nuclear strategists.

I therefore followed events avidly, and by the end of the decade I had written two books on the Falklands. The first was a brief overview. The second was a collaboration with an Argentine analyst, Virginia Gamba, which brought together material from both sides. It demonstrated the interaction between the calculations of the two sides that led to the war and the failure of diplomatic efforts to prevent its escalation, as well as, for the first time, the full story of the sequence that led to what was seen as the major act of escalation - the sinking of the *Belgrano*, the Argentine battleship that was sunk on 2 May 1982 with the loss of almost 350 lives. This was both the single most costly action during the war and the major political controversy after it. I had decided to return to the story again on the eve of my retirement in 2013 when the full archives would be released as a result of the application of the 30-year rule. This plan had to be brought forward when I was asked in 1996 if I would like to write the Official History of the Falklands Campaign.

The opportunity was irresistible. This would be a chance to check against the government papers what I had found out earlier through trawling all secondary sources and conducting a number of interviews with key players. By July 1997 the terms had been agreed with the Cabinet Office and the appointment was announced by the Prime Minister. Although the terms had been agreed under a conservative government my appointment was one of the first acts of the new Labour Prime Minister.

It took eight years for the two volumes to be published. The first deals with the origins of the war, ending as the Government prepares itself for the Argentine invasion. The second takes the story through the war and beyond, concluding with the restoration of diplomatic relations in 1990. For such a little war I wrote a lot of words.

An official history can easily be presented as a sort of devilish bargain. The

historian gains privileged access to every conceivable primary source, including briefing notes, official submissions, diplomatic telegrams, boxes of military signals and raw intelligence reports. In return the soul must be sold, for the output must be a sanitised account that confirms the official line. It would be foolish to pretend that there is not an issue here. The discipline of official clearance means accepting knowledge of many things that must not be divulged and also not picking on individual officials. This can at times be extremely frustrating, yet it is also part of the challenge of writing an official history. Not only can the definition of secrets be questioned (often by showing what is already in the public domain) but also it is possible to engage in negotiations with the various government agencies when they worry about particular disclosures. Subtlety of language is normally an acceptable alternative to censorship. There were many difficult editorial decisions in that grey area of material that is extremely interesting but not really essential. My basic rule was that I would not exclude any factor, including intelligence reports, which had a material affect on the conduct of the campaign nor duck any issue which a knowledgeable readership would expect to see covered. The Cabinet Office's Historical and Records Division, for whom I worked, never seemed to find this concept difficult and fully understood that the credibility of the final product depended on it being clearly my own, independent view. The account is official therefore only to the extent that it has been built up from primary sources. It is not an officially sanctioned history, so that only safe or agreed opinions are expressed.

I was clear that I was writing from a British perspective based on the British archives and not providing a comprehensive account with equivalent detail on Argentine perceptions and decision-making. I was not, however, speaking for Britain. If I was evidently simply following a political agenda then I would deservedly lose credibility. The glory of the Official History tradition is that it allows independent historians full access to the archives without insisting that they follow any particular line. All that is asked is that the use the material responsibly. I was always prepared to reach conclusions which contradicted past official positions.

My ability to follow this approach was helped by the vast amount of material already published on the Falklands. Many participants wrote up their own accounts, including the Prime Minister of the time, her Secretary of Defence and many of the senior commanders and key diplomats. They and others also gave interviews to those

who wrote the earlier histories. In addition individual soldiers, sailors and airmen have told their stories. There was an official inquiry into why the country was caught unprepared by Argentina, which provided the first open discussion ever of the role of the Joint Intelligence Committee, while there was also a number of parliamentary inquiries into the conduct of the war – including the role of the media, the performance of weapons and the lingering suspicions that the Argentine cruiser, the General Belgrano, was sunk for non-military reasons. So, even if I had been inclined to provide an approved governmental interpretation of the conflict, and had been able to identify the form it might take, the existence of so many other independent histories of the campaign would soon test the credibility of any account that diverged markedly from the ample evidence already in the public domain.

The fact that so much has already been published on the Falklands raises a different sort of question. Given that I am passing over some very familiar ground and telling a story that, in broad terms, is already well known, what exactly can an Official History add? As an account grounded in the documentary record it provides an opportunity to explore with the best possible information the lingering controversies left over from the Falklands. It also opens a window on the decision making process that identifies not only why the British acted the way that they did, but also why they did not act in other ways - the options that were discussed but not pursued. It reveals the expectations and anxieties, and the pressures weighing down upon those responsible for advising upon and reaching decisions, as they appeared at the time rather than as they were remembered later. In addition, an unofficial historian might feel able to ignore many of the discussions of logistics or economic measures or international law that were highly relevant but may appear tedious to general readers. An official historian must aim to be reasonably complete and so accept the risk of being, at times, at least to some readers, boring.

Diplomatic history, for example, is an acquired taste because there is so little action and so much apparently endless deliberations about how best to draft paragraphs, the meaning of which become steadily more obscure the more the longer the drafting goes on. The challenge in writing about the diplomacy is to explain the stakes behind the competing forms of language. For example, from the first attempted negotiations between Britain and Argentina in the late 1960s, efforts have foundered on whether, the 'wishes' or the islanders should be paramount or their 'interests'

merely taken into account. The first formulation gives the islanders a veto; the second allows them to be overruled on the grounds that they are not necessarily the best judges of their own interests. The failure to resolve this problem gave a ritualistic quality to many of the actual negotiations. In the late 1970s the Argentine side grumbled that they were appearing to their own public opinion as ‘one of those delegations sent to the imperial court of Byzantium and which stayed there years consuming its energies in discussing methodological problems and semantics, while real negotiations made no progress at all.’

When the new Conservative Government tried to find a way to resolve the problem in 1980 the effort backfired, leading to an Argentine conviction that the British had no policy other than procrastination. Buenos Aires took matters into their own hands in April 1982, leading to international attempts to find an alternative to armed force to remove them from the Falklands. First US Secretary of State Alexander Haig and then the UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar tried to find a way out of the impasse. Fortunately the two key Ambassadors in Britain’s diplomatic effort, Sir Nicholas Henderson in Washington and Sir Anthony Parsons at the UN, wrote full, lucid and often entertaining reports of their conversations. This means that the material on the diplomacy surrounding the Falklands campaign is very full. I suspect there will be interest in how far the government was prepared to go in order to get a settlement, or at least to demonstrate sufficient flexibility in order to make a decent case that any failure was Argentina’s fault. Another important sub-text is the real tension that developed in US-UK relations over this period, despite the extraordinary efforts by the Pentagon on Britain’s behalf in terms of the supply of weapons and materiel, and despite Margaret Thatcher’s good personal relations with President Reagan. It was particularly galling for Thatcher, who as Prime Minister had embraced the special relationship so naturally, to find her closest ally acting as an even-handed intermediary between the aggressor and the aggrieved.

When the book was published one criticism was that I had spent far more time on the diplomacy, covered in minute detail, than on the various military engagements, covered with irritating brevity. There is, I confess, a personal preference in this. I am more at home discussing policy-making and diplomacy than military operations and I lacked the material to improve much on many of the first-hand accounts of the land battles. The balance of material was, however, determined by another factor. Whitehall

and Parliament spent most of their time on the diplomacy and very little on military operations. The Prime Minister's files have numerous reports from embassies about the problems of convincing other governments of the rightness of the British cause, or at least on why armed force was being used in the name of this cause, and very little on how armed force might be used, especially once the extensive discussions of rules of engagement were largely over. Moreover the land battles took up very little time. Other than the first major battle - Goose Green - which was a complicated, and controversial, encounter, they were not drawn out. The bulk of the major engagements were concentrated in the last few days of the war. In terms of activity, therefore, days were spent on negotiation compared with the hours that were spent in battle. Of course a lot of time was spent in thinking about battle and preparing for it, and I hope I have done justice to the strategic and tactical planning as well as to the logistical aspects of the war. For those involved in the battles they were intense and complex affairs but their basic form and development were relatively straightforward.

Veterans have written extensively on the Falklands. They often achieve what I do not attempt, which is to recreate the sounds, sights, smells and pain of battle. These events by their nature generate fallible records, suspect memories and partial perceptions, leaving aside any deliberate distortion and myth-making. So the accounts are often contradictory. It is therefore frustrating, and contrary to what is often claimed to be the arbitrating role of an official historian, to be unable to settle authoritatively many of the disagreements, particularly those concerning the land battles. With so much disparate and often disconnected activity is compressed in time and space, unpacking the story is bound to require more words than can realistically be made available. In addition the detail also gets confused and it can be surprising how many differences still persist on questions of timings and casualties. The problem, however, goes deeper. Precisely because of the intensity and confusion of battle there is rarely an agreed account. Some records of some signals are kept. Others are discarded almost immediately. Owing to the lack of secure communication means, most situation reports (Sitreps) were back and forth along the command structure by word of mouth. Only in exceptional circumstances were messages sent by radio and they were recorded even more rarely due to a lack of administrative backup. During the Battle of Mount Tumbledown, for example, a long Sitrep was sent by radio but no paper record of it was maintained. So while I have had access to materials unavailable

to earlier historians, as often as not I have had to draw on those who got to the participants while their memories were still fresh and uncluttered.

This was a war fought with a small margin of error. More so than was perhaps realised by those not directly involved at the time, final success could by no means be taken for granted. Ministers and commanders-in-chief could only take matters so far before handing over the burden down the chain of command to the point where everything depended on the courage and professionalism of a few individuals. This was why the campaign, let alone the individual military engagements of which it was composed, could be turned by moments of heroism or losses of nerve or acts of will or tactical errors. So while from a top down perspective - which is how this was written - battles can be described with some confidence, because their material consequences can usually be measured and some rough sequence of events identified, this cannot begin to do justice to the dramas of battle. Campaigns such as this, let alone the particular military engagements of which they are composed, can be turned by moments of heroism or losses of nerve or acts of will or tactical errors. I felt very frustrated that I could not tell the story at the level of the individual although there are many extraordinary individual stories that could be told. This was partly also why I did not name individuals who might be blamed for particular mishaps, such as Sheffield or Sir Galahad. Apart from a natural disinclination to censure someone operating under pressures and in circumstances of which I have no experience, I also felt it unfair to pick on people with no right of reply in a publication that was not the result of a formal commission of inquiry but did carry an official title.

More so than was perhaps realised by those not directly involved at the time, final success could by no means be taken for granted. The Argentines might have made some different choices – kept their navy at sea after the Belgrano, or, after the landing, attacked the ships carrying troops, equipment and material, rather than the warships escorting them, or patrolled more aggressively while the British moved across the island towards the capital, Stanley. If they had done then the result could have been different. The loss of one of the two carriers, would have forced the government to reconsider its position. The major success of the Argentines was in the sinking of the converted container ship, Atlantic Conveyor, with the loss of a number of helicopters, including three Chinooks. This had an immediate effect on British options. Every movement of troops and equipment thereafter became extremely difficult. This led to

arguments between the Commander of 3 Commando Brigade, Julian Thompson, who was inclined to wait until he was joined by 5 Infantry Brigade, and London, which, after a number of ship losses, wanted to regain the military initiative and was nervous about international pressure for a cease-fire which would leave the British with just a toe-hold on the Falklands. Out of this argument came the battle for Goose Green. The competition for scarce assets was the cause of the confused movement of 5 Brigade towards Bluff Cove, which culminated in tragedy when Argentine aircraft caught the Sir Galahad before the Welsh Guards had disembarked.

The sinking of the Belgrano was also a reflection of weakness rather than strength, a fear that the task force was vulnerable to an audacious Argentina naval attack. My conclusion may disappoint those who remain convinced that the Prime Minister wanted the cruiser sunk in order to prevent peace breaking out because she wanted to fight and win a war. The Government created a problem for itself because its initial description of the attack was inaccurate in several material respects, and it was not corrected when better information became important, but the key claim, that the attack was ordered for military reasons, remains valid. As part of my consideration of the aftermath of the war I looked at the development of the Belgrano 'scandal'. Whereas the government files on the actual event are very thin, those on how to deal with public and Parliamentary inquiries are voluminous.

The story of the post-war Falklands is in many respects far less familiar than the story of the war itself. Before the war successive governments followed the islanders' wishes when it came to possible diplomatic settlements but not when it came to spending money on the economic and social development of the Islands. If Argentina had shown restraint, the continuing decline in population would probably have led eventually to an untenable situation. Instead, its lack of restraint led the British government to strengthen the garrison and build an airport that allows for reinforcement in a crisis but also much greater communication with the outside world. The economy boomed, largely as a result of fishing licenses, and the population has increased. Whether the suffering involved in any war – and a 1,000 died in this one – is worth the political gain is an inevitable question. All that can be said with the Falklands was that the islanders gained an economic and political stability that they had hitherto lacked, and at least the Argentines got rid of their military junta and began a period of democratic government.

I never doubted that my account would be challenged. No historian, however careful, and however much reviewed by Whitehall, is infallible. Errors creep in. When they are pointed out they should be acknowledged. Between the first and second editions I spent a lot of time addressing small points of detail about which particular individuals cared a lot and some large matters connected with questions of command and the role of the Royal Navy. Even when there is agreement on evidence, there will always be questions of interpretation. Events are often confused and ambiguous, supporting a number of interpretations. More intensive analysis or a fresh look at the sources may eventually provide the basis for a strong challenge to any set of conclusions. Lastly new research will throw new light on what had previously been assumed to be proven facts. In these ways challenges to the details and interpretations contained in any historical work, including my own, are both inevitable and to be welcomed.

One of the most interesting consequences of the publication of the book was that it led to some fascinating discussions with some of the senior commanders, and for the last part of this talk I want to explore the issue they raised of the tension of a high command engaged in a challenging campaign. The issues turn on both the nature of the formal command structure and the informal relationships between the commanders, especially Admiral Sandy Woodward, in charge of the Carrier Battle Group, Commodore Michael Clapp, who had specific responsibility for the amphibious landing, and Brigadier Julian Thompson, who was in charge of the landing force. The individual memoirs by all three personalities have addressed these issues and they confirm that there were – to say the least – different understandings of how well this worked and what was appropriate. This mattered because there were at times real differences over strategy and tactics, which often reflected distinctive concerns.

I outlined these disagreements in the first edition of the book along with a discussion of some of their causes. It is of course a problem when trying to record any dispute that the historian can appear to be taking sides, merely by repeating the criticisms one officer has made of another or in trying to assess the validity of particular criticisms. It was always likely that the Official History would open up some of the old disputes but less likely that the three commanders would find ways of discussing these issues that allowed them to agree on many of their sources and understand better how they arose. It was my privilege to be part of these discussions.

There were certain features of the military campaign that shaped its conduct and the nature of the command relationships. Any major military operation at this time would have been experimental because it was bound to be fought with equipment and concepts that had not been properly tested in battle. Only the most senior commanders were veterans of the Second World War: experience elsewhere was largely confined to low-intensity operations. For some operations contingency plans existed: recovering the Falklands was not amongst them. The limited military analysis of the problem had been confined to demonstrating just how difficult, and probably foolhardy, such an operation might be. As the commanders first tried to make sense of what actually would be required to retake the Falklands after the Argentine occupation, elements of the operation were understood but only in a quite different context. Fighting the Warsaw Pact, the Navy would have had more to fear from submarines and long range air-to-surface missiles in open water than directly from aircraft with iron bombs and guns. An amphibious landing in the context of reinforcing a NATO country, assumed a host nation able to provide escorts and air cover and transports from the beach rather than from an offshore battle group.

Any command structure will find the transition from peace to war difficult. Numerous decisions have to be taken in a great hurry, with incomplete information. Each decision is potentially extremely serious. The number and frequency of individual decisions mean that the orders that flow from them often arrive without great clarity or full explanation and those whose activities might be affected are left out of the loop. A further factor in this case, adding to the improvised quality of the operation, was the backdrop of intense diplomatic activity, geared to producing a peaceful solution which could have produced an abrupt conclusion to the military preparations at any time. Even in the absence of a settlement the diplomacy always had the possibility of influencing the speed and focus of military activity. To the time pressures created by diplomacy could be added those resulting from the limited durability of the Task Force in the face of continuing operations in harsh conditions, likely to become even harsher with the arrival of the South Atlantic winter. Vital strategic decisions were being taken in London well after the Task Force had set sail - on rules of engagement, reinforcements and ultimate objectives. Because of the long logistics line, resources were scarce and there were many competing tasks for which they might be allocated.

Officers would find themselves ordered to undertake tasks for reasons that remained obscure and with capabilities that were unavailable.

With the Task Force put hurriedly together for Operation Corporate these problems were aggravated. There was no joint headquarters, and air and land advice had to be drawn into the naval headquarters at Northwood. There were command procedures that might have been expected to be followed in defining individual areas of responsibility, particularly with regard to the conduct of an amphibious landing. Not everyone appeared aware of them. Many of the key commanders did not know each other and there was little opportunity for them to get acquainted. They did not have a chance to explore their differences or develop plans together through regular meetings. Once they were dispersed into their separate task groups, combining the everyday burdens of command with the detail of their own particular next steps, then it was even harder to appreciate the distinctive problems being faced elsewhere. Voice communications were through the unsatisfactory Defence Secure Speech system (DSSS), which often left meanings unclear and could only involve two people. So there was no possibility for conference calls. Woodward and Clapp, for example, could have their own separate conversations on the same issue with Sir John Fieldhouse, the overall commander of the task force at the Northwood HQ, without being aware that he had spoken to the other. While the carrier battle group, led by Woodward, had the latest communications equipment, the amphibious force led by Clapp did not. Some modern satellite communications had been fitted to Clapp's command ship, Fearless, but he was unsure of its reliability and many of the ships under his command, such as the RFAs and merchant ships, had very basic kit. Even ship-to-shore communications were problematic, which created difficulties between Clapp and Thompson once the latter had joined troops on the beachhead though they had worked closely together on Fearless. Woodward had to concern himself with the interaction of a large number of demands with a wide geographic spread; Clapp was focused more narrowly on the dangers that his ships would face in the rather confined Amphibious Operations Area (AOA) for which he had to prepare. When General Jeremy Moore arrived to lead land operations different problems developed. Although Clapp shared Fearless with Moore and had regular personal contact, he was not part of the discussions the Moore had with the other land commanders even though he would somehow have to support them. At the same time Moore did provide information on the wider concerns that were

current in London.

Against this background it is not surprising or indeed unusual that relations between the various commanders were at times bad-tempered. So the well-publicised tensions between Woodward, in charge of the carrier battle group, and Thompson and Clapp, preparing for the amphibious landing, were largely a function of the circumstances in which they found themselves as much as personality clashes or even the formal command structure, although ambiguities here certainly did not help. The major ambiguity in the arrangements concerned Woodward's relationship with Clapp, in charge of the amphibious landing, and Thompson, in charge of the landing force. Woodward was the more senior and the initial command arrangements put him in charge of all three Task Groups heading South. There was concern about the geographic spread of the forces notionally under Woodward's command and their disparate roles, especially once a further task group was created to retake South Georgia. Clapp believed that he needed a direct relationship with Fieldhouse. Fieldhouse agreed and by 10 April a new arrangement was in place that had all four Task Group Commanders reporting directly to him.

However then Woodward was made *primus inter pares* and this did create an ambiguity because it suggested that there would be circumstances when he would be more overtly in charge. The main idea on the part of Fieldhouse's staff, it would appear, was that Woodward was to have a superior co-ordinating role, particularly with regard to shared assets, such as escorts, and, crucially, to make it clear that Woodward had to be able to defend his main assets, and especially carriers, before anything else, because if one of those was lost so too would be the campaign. Yet this approach raised questions about the standing of Woodward's views on matters that appeared to be squarely the responsibility of Clapp and Thompson, such as the choice of where to land on the Falklands, yet where Woodward also had an interest because of its direct relevance to his ability to sustain air support over an extended period. Moreover because of the wider range of Woodward's responsibilities, and the fact that he was in charge of the engagements with Argentine forces prior to the landing, Fieldhouse did tend to treat him as the senior commander.

Of the various difficulties experienced it is probably the case that poor communications caused far more problems than ambiguity in command. The

consequences of both were illustrated when the three men met on board Fearless on 16 April. After this there were a number of occasions for mutual irritation, at times vigorously expressed. Yet despite this the relevant commanders largely respected each others' professional judgements and, of course, the overall campaign objectives were achieved. Where misapprehensions had emerged, with regard to the capabilities of Rapiers air defences or the advisability of a feint to draw out Argentine forces, the hurried and unsatisfactory nature of the conversations seems to be largely to blame. This is not to deny the importance of personality and the fact that given the stakes for all involved it would have been surprising, even alarming, if the key commanders lacked a tough-minded and stubborn streak.

I am currently involved in another official study – this time the official UK inquiry into the Iraq War, which will involve the public questioning of leading officials and politicians. Because of its nature I can't go into detail on its likely scope – let alone its conclusions – but I hope that the experience I gained during this official history will help me be able to ask the searching questions required for this new task. While the two wars were very different they both raise similar questions of the relationship between diplomacy and the use of force, the problems of democracies fighting wars, and the unavoidable question of the value of the sacrifices of the young men – and women – who die or get maimed when nations go to war.