

E. R.
INTERVIEW WITH DR. DAVID OWEN, MP, AND JOHN SARGENT ON THE WORLD AT ONE
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Interviewer: Does it seem to you as if the Government has been withholding information?

Dr. Owen: It looks very like it. I must say it's a very damaging thing to have to say and I hope it's proven not to be the case but as the hours went by it became increasingly obvious that an invasion had taken place and yet the House of Commons was not being given the full information. I hope this is not the case but it certainly looks like it.

Interviewer: But why should the Government do that?

Dr. Owen: Well I've been trying to ask that question myself. I can't see any real reason. I mean they may have hoped to be able to play for time hoping that Naval Forces would get there, who perhaps say two days steaming away but that wouldn't really have justified not letting the House know as soon as they had a flash telegram from the Governor that there had actually been an invasion.

Interviewer: As a former Secretary you had to deal with this problem the last time it occurred. What do you think the Government should now do?

Dr. Owen: I think it's going to be extremely difficult to get this back if they've got forces on the island they will also have air cover they'll have ships in the area. Even if we now make a major demonstration of Naval Forces it's going to be extremely difficult to get these back. The tragic error was not to deploy Naval Forces down there at the end of February and early March when there was ample warning that the situation was flaring up. This is exactly what we did four years ago. We did it in fact in total secrecy. The Argentinians probably never knew that the Force was there and then we were able to negotiate with them, we were negotiating with the knowledge and I had the knowledge that I had Naval Forces behind me. But I do want to warn people against a belief that Britain can now simply re-invade the Islands and

get them back. It's going to be mighty difficult to do it and I think the main emphasis now will have to go on diplomacy, getting the maximum pressure. I suspect only the American administration and President Reagan has any chance of being listened to by the Argentinian junta. I'm not sure they will be, it's a very nasty vicious government with no respect of human rights. They've obviously made a deliberate decision and there's no chance of them giving this up without a very bitter fight.

Interviewer: Is there a danger now of humiliation for the British Government?

Dr. Owen: Yes, I mean if this is true and the Falkland Islands have been invaded, we are faced by the most appalling humiliation. It is terrible and there will have to be a very major inquiry. This is one of the most humiliating defeats for Britain I suppose that we've suffered, well certainly since Suez and in many ways it's more humiliating than that. But the Government should have responded earlier and I think the House of Commons will now want to have a look at the whole way in which this affair has been conducted. I think one can see it ending up in a special Commission such as Parliament set up after the Dardanelles. I mean this is a very major question and there are some serious political and military questions that will have to be asked. And I must say I think it's a very grave situation we face now.