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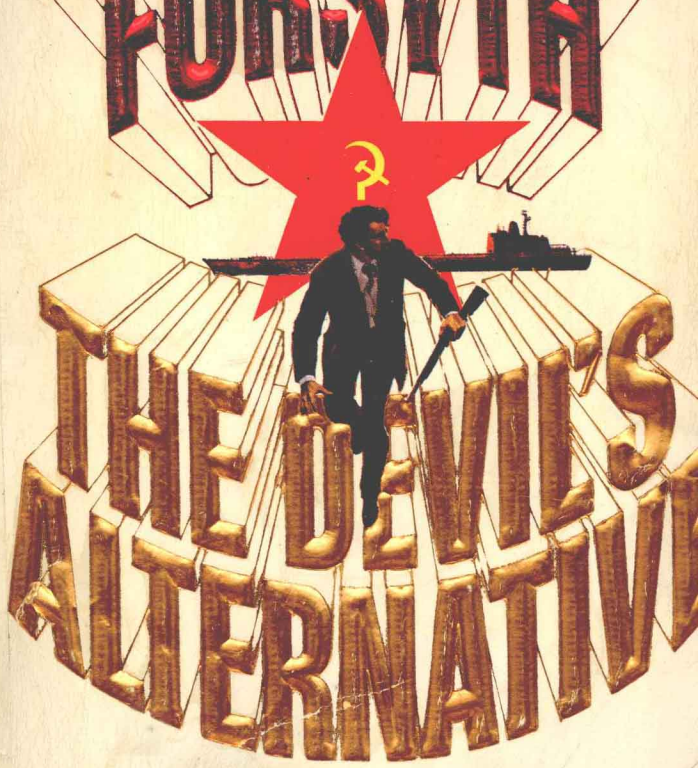
FREDERICK FORSYTH



THE DEVIL'S ALTERNATIVE

The Devil's Alternative

Frederick Forsyth

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THE DOGS OF WAR
THE ODESSA FILE
THE SHEPHERD

FOR FREDERICK STUART,
WHO DOES NOT KNOW YET

The Devil's Alternative

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

FREDERICK FORSYTH was born in Ashford, England in 1938 and educated at Tonbridge School. He has been an RAF fighter pilot, newspaperman, foreign correspondent and BBC radio and television reporter. Mr. Forsyth has traveled to more than forty countries in Europe, the Middle East, North and West Africa, and speaks several languages including French, German and Russian. His first book, *The Biafra Story,* was published in 1969, followed by his bestsellers, *The Day of the Jackal, The Odessa File,* and *The Dogs of War* (all made into motion pictures), *The Shepherd* and, most recently, *The Devil's Alternative.* Describing his work habits, Mr. Forsyth comments, "I don't compose as I type, I put down a finished article. Very rarely do I pause, stumped for words or details. I might pause to go and check a fact. I do 12 pages a day minimum and if it's flowing well, I might go to 18." Before writing his latest novel, Mr. Forsyth had seriously considered retiring. "But later I got the idea for *The Devil's Alternative.* I told it to my wife and she urged me to write it. She said it was too good to waste." When asked about the specialized information that fills the book, he replies, "It doesn't come from Moscow. You can't knock on the Kremlin doors and ask for information. Those marvelous Kremlinologists in Washington supplied me with it." Frederick Forsyth is presently living in Ireland, working on another novel.

FREDERICK FORSYTH
MODERN MASTER OF THE THRILLER

In an amazingly short time, Forsyth has risen to the front ranks of thriller writers. From his first, THE DAY OF THE JACKAL (which has become the classic thriller to which all other books are compared) to THE ODESSA FILE, THE DOGS OF WAR and THE SHEPHERD, Forsyth has continued to enthrall readers throughout the world with his suspense-filled writing. *Saturday Review* adds, "it is a splendid tribute to Forsyth's extraordinary expertise in plotting that you hold your breath for chapter after chapter." His fifth and newest novel, THE DEVIL'S ALTERNATIVE, will soon be published in hardcover.

THE DAY OF THE JACKAL

In this great chiller, the Jackal, a tall blond Englishman is on a murderous mission to assassinate one of the world's most heavily-guarded men—President Charles de Gaulle. The reader follows every move of this calculating mastermind as the split-second timed plot develops to its unexpected conclusion. "Makes such comparable books as THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE and THE SPY WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD seem like Hardy Boy mysteries," said *The New York Times.*

THE ODESSA FILE

A brilliant young journalist happens upon a fantastic story about a mad scheme to carry out Hitler's "final solution" twenty years after his death—involving a Mafia-like group of S.S. mass murderers. The *Cleveland Press* said, "much more complex than JACKAL . . . Intriguingly fact-packed with relentless reporting, a protagonist propelled by an unstoppable force and a time-factored chase ticking off to an explosive climax."

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In Forsyth's third #1 blockbuster, a band of mercenaries take on a dangerous assignment to topple a Third World government and set up a puppet dictatorship. The savage band of dogs of war, led by the brutal Cat, finds its plans disastrously changed. "Right on target again . . . the canvas is wider, the objective more ambitious . . . Suspense as taut as a violin string," said *John Barkham Reviews.*

THE SHEPHERD

Flying home alone on leave from Germany—his destination England—the pilot ran into sudden and dangerous fog. Radio contact with the ground ceased, the compass failed, and the vertical speed indicator no longer worked. He was headed for disaster, when suddenly out of the mist came an unexpected sight. THE SHEPHERD races to a surprising conclusion.

Read all of these novels by Frederick Forsyth, Bantam Books available wherever paperbacks are sold.

PROLOGUE

THE CASTAWAY would have been dead before sundown but for the sharp eyes of an Italian seaman called Mario. By the time he was spotted he had lapsed into unconsciousness, the exposed parts of his near-naked body grilled to second-degree burns by the relentless sun, and those parts submerged in seawater soft and white between the salt sores like the limbs of a rotting goose.

Mario Curcio was the cook-steward on the *Garibaldi*, an amiable old rust bucket out of Brindisi, thumping her way eastward toward Cape Ince and on to Trabzon in the far eastern corner of the north shore of Turkey. She was on her way to pick up a cargo of almonds from Anatolia.

Just why Mario decided that morning in the last ten days of April 1982 to empty his bucket of potato peelings over the lee rail instead of through the garbage chute at the poop, he could never explain, nor was he ever asked to. But perhaps to take a breath of fresh Black Sea air and break the monotony of the steam heat in the cramped galley, he stepped out on deck, strolled to the starboard rail, and hurled his garbage to an indifferent but patient sea. He turned away and started to lumber back to his duties. After two steps he stopped, frowned, turned, and walked back to the rail, puzzled and uncertain.

The ship was heading east-northeast to clear Cape Ince, so that as he shielded his eyes and gazed abaft the beam, the noon sun was almost straight in his face. But he was sure he had seen something out there on the blue-green rolling swell between the ship and the coast of Turkey, twenty miles to the south. Unable to see it again, he trotted up the afterdeck, mounted the outside ladders to the wing of the bridge, and peered again. Then he saw it, quite clearly, for half a second between the softly moving hills of water. He turned to the open door behind him, leading into the wheelhouse, and shouted *"Capitano!"*

Captain Vittorio Ingrao took some persuading, for Mario was a simple lad, but he was enough of a sailor to know that if a man might be out there on the water, he was duty-bound to turn his ship around and have a closer look, and his radar had indeed revealed an echo. It took the captain half an hour to bring the *Garibaldi* around and back to the spot Mario had pointed at, and then he, too, saw it.

The skiff was barely twelve feet long, and not very wide. A light craft, of the type that could have been a ship's jolly boat. Forward of midships there was a single thwart across the boat, with a hole in it for the stepping of a mast. But either there had never been a mast or it had been ill-secured and had gone overboard. With the *Garibaldi* stopped and wallowing in the swell, Captain Ingrao leaned on the bridge-wing rail and watched Mario and the bosun, Paolo Longhi, set off in the motor lifeboat to bring the skiff alongside. From his elevation he could look down into the skiff as it was towed closer.

The man in it was lying on his back in several inches of seawater. He was gaunt and emaciated, bearded and unconscious, his head to one side, breathing in short gasps. He moaned a few times as he was lifted aboard and the sailors' hands touched his flayed shoulders and chest.

There was one permanently spare cabin on the *Garibaldi*, kept free as a sort of sick bay, and the castaway was taken to it. Mario, at his own request, was given time off to tend the man, whom he soon came to regard as his personal property, as a boy will take special care of a puppy he has personally rescued from death. Longhi, the bosun, gave the man a shot of morphine from the first-aid chest to spare him the pain, and the pair of them set to work on the sunburn.

Being Calabrians they knew a bit about sunburn and prepared the best sunburn salve in the world. Mario brought from his galley a fifty-fifty mixture of fresh lemon juice and wine vinegar in a basin, a light cotton cloth torn from his pillowcase, and a bowl of ice cubes. Soaking the cloth in the mixture and wrapping it around a dozen ice cubes, he gently pressed the pad to the worst areas, where the ultraviolet rays had bitten through almost to the bone. Plumes of steam rose from the unconscious man as the freezing astringent drew the heat out of the scorched flesh. The man shuddered.

"Better a fever than death by burn shock," Mario told him in Italian. The man could not hear, and if he had, he could not have understood.

Longhi joined his skipper on the afterdeck, where the skiff had been hauled.

"Anything?" he asked.

Captain Ingrao shook his head.

"Nothing on the man, either. No watch, no name tag. A pair of cheap underpants with no label. And his beard looks about ten days old."

"There's nothing here, either," said Ingrao. "No mast, no sail, no oars. No food and no water container. No name on the boat, even. But it could have peeled off."

"A tourist from a beach resort, blown out to sea?" asked Longhi.

Ingrao shrugged. "Or a survivor from a small freighter," he said. "We'll be at Trabzonin two days. The Turkish authorities can solve that one when he wakes up and talks. Meanwhile, let's get under way. Oh, and we must cable our agent there and tell him what's happened. We'll need an ambulance on the quay when we dock."

Two days later the castaway, still barely conscious and unable to speak, was tucked up between white sheets in a sick ward in the small municipal hospital of Trabzon.

Mario the sailor had accompanied his castaway in the ambulance from the quay to the hospital, along with the ship's agent and the port's medical officer, who had insisted on checking the delirious man for communicable diseases. After waiting an hour by the bedside, he had bade his unconscious friend farewell and returned to the *Garibaldi* to prepare the crew's lunch. That had been the previous day, and the old Italian tramp steamer had sailed during the evening.

Now another man stood by the bedside, accompanied by a police officer and the white-coated doctor. All three were Turkish, but the short, broad man in the civilian suit spoke passable English.

"He'll pull through," said the doctor, "but he's very sick for the moment. Heatstroke, second-degree sunburn, exposure generally, and by the look of it, he hasn't eaten for days. Generally weak."

"What are these?" asked the civilian, gesturing at the intravenous tubes that entered both the man's arms.

"Saline drip and concentrated glucose drip for nourishment and to offset shock," said the doctor. "The sailors probably saved his life by taking the heat out of the burns, but we've bathed him in calamine to help the healing process. Now it's between him and Allah."

Umit Erdal, partner in the shipping and trading company of Erdal and Sermit, was the Lloyd's subagent for the port of Trabzon, and the *Garibaldi*'s agent had thankfully passed the matter of the castaway over to him. The sick man's eyelids fluttered in the nut-brown, bearded face. Erdal cleared his throat, bent over the figure, and spoke in his best English.

"What . . . is . . . you . . . name?" he asked slowly and clearly.

The man groaned and moved his head from side to side several times. The Lloyd's man bent his head closer to listen. *"Zradzhenyi,"* the sick man murmured, *"zradzhenyi."*

Erdal straightened up. "He's not Turkish," he said with finality, "but he seems to be called Zradzhenyi. It's probably a Ukrainian name."

Both his companions shrugged.

"I'll inform Lloyd's in London," said Erdal. "Maybe they'll have news of a missing vessel somewhere in the Black Sea."

The daily bible of the world's merchant marine fraternity is *Lloyd's List,* which is published Monday to Saturday and contains editorials, features, and news on one topic only—shipping. Its partner in harness, *Lloyd's Shipping Index,* gives the movements of the world's thirty thousand active merchant vessels: name of ship, owner, flag of registry, year of construction, tonnage, where last reported coming from, and where bound.

Both organs are published out of a building complex at Sheepen Place, Colchester, in the English county of Essex. It was to this building that Umit Erdal telexed the shipping movements into and out of the port of Trabzon, and added a small extra for the attention of the Lloyd's Shipping Intelligence Unit in the same building.

The SI unit checked their maritime casualty records to confirm that there were no recent reports of missing, sunk, or simply overdue vessels in the Black Sea, and passed the paragraph over to the editorial desk of the *List.* Here a subeditor gave it a mention as a news brief on the front page, including the name the castaway had given as his own. It appeared the following morning.

Most of those who read *Lloyd's List* that day in late April flipped past the paragraph about the unidentified man in Trabzon.

But the piece caught and held the sharp eyes and the attention of a man in his early thirties who worked as senior clerk and trusted employee in a firm of chartered shipbrokers situated in a small street called Crutched Friars in the center of the City of London, financial and commercial square mile of the British capital. His colleagues in the firm knew him as Andrew Drake.

Having absorbed the content of the paragraph, Drake left his desk and went to the company boardroom, where he consulted a framed chart of the world that showed prevailing wind and ocean-current circulation. The winds in the Black Sea during spring and summer are predominantly from the north, and the currents screw counterclockwise around this small ocean from the southern coast of the Ukraine in the far northwest of the sea, down past the coasts of Rumania and Bulgaria, then swing eastward again into the shipping lanes between Istanbul and Cape Ince.

Drake did some calculations on a scratch pad. A small skiff, setting off from the marshes of the delta of the Dniester River just south of Odessa could make four to five knots with a following wind and favorable current, southward past Rumania and Bulgaria toward Turkey. But after three days it would tend to be carried eastward, away from the Bosporus toward the eastern end of the Black Sea.

The Weather and Navigation section of *Lloyd's List* confirmed there had been bad weather nine days earlier in that area. The sort, Drake mused, that could cause a skiff in the hands of an unskilled seaman to capsize, lose its mast and all its contents, and leave its occupant, even if he could climb back into it again, at the mercy of the sun and the wind.

Two hours later Andrew Drake asked for a week of his owed holidays, and it was agreed that he could take it, but only starting the following Monday, May 3.

He was mildly excited as he waited out the week and bought himself from a nearby agency a round-trip ticket from London to Istanbul. He decided to buy the connecting ticket from Istanbul to Trabzon with cash in Istanbul. He also checked to confirm that a British passport holder needs no visa for Turkey, but after work he secured for himself the needed smallpox vaccination certificate at the British Airways medical center at Victoria.

He was excited because he thought there just might be a chance that, after years of waiting, he had found the man he was looking for. Unlike the three men by the castaway's bedside two days earlier, he knew what country the word *zradzhenyi* came from. He also knew it was not the man's name. The man in the bed had been muttering the word *betrayed* in his native tongue, and that language was Ukrainian. Which could mean that the man was a refugee Ukrainian partisan.

Andrew Drake, despite his Anglicized name, was also a Ukrainian, and a fanatic.

Drake's first call after arriving in Trabzon was at the office of Umit Erdal, whose name he had obtained from a friend at Lloyd's on the grounds that he was taking a holiday on the Turkish coast and, speaking not a word of Turkish, might need some assistance. Erdal, seeing the letter of introduction that Drake was able to produce, was happily unquestioning as to why his visitor should want to see the castaway in the local hospital. He wrote a personal letter of introduction to the hospital administrator, and, shortly after lunch, Drake was shown into the small, one-bed ward where the man lay.

The local Lloyd's agent had already told him that the man, while conscious again, spent much of the time sleeping, and during his periods of wakefulness had so far said absolutely nothing. When Drake entered the room, the invalid was lying on his back, eyes closed. Drake drew up a chair and sat by the bedside. For a time he stared at the man's haggard face. After several minutes the man's eyelids flickered, half-opened, and closed again. Whether he had seen the visitor staring at him intently, Drake did not know. But he knew the man was on the fringe of wakefulness. Slowly he leaned forward and said clearly in the sick man's ear:

"Shche ne vmerla Ukraina."

The words mean, literally, "The Ukraine is not dead," but in a looser translation would mean "The Ukraine lives on." They are the first words of the Ukrainian national anthem, banned by the Russian masters, and would be instantly recognizable to a nationally conscious Ukrainian.

The sick man's eyes flicked open, and he regarded Drake intently. After several seconds he asked in Ukrainian, "Who are you?"

"A Ukrainian, like yourself," said Drake.