

The 'Dogs of War' plot

London Sunday Times

LONDON — Alan Murphy broke one of the cardinal rules of the mercenary's trade. He wrote things down. That may explain why, six weeks ago, Murphy shot a policeman and then, apparently, himself.

What Murphy's written records show is that millionaire novelist Frederick Forsyth's best-seller, "The Dogs of War," was based on Forsyth's real-life but abortive attempt to overthrow an African government.

Around his neighborhood in East London, Murphy was known as a delivery driver, body-building fanatic and firearms collector. It was after local children talked of seeing guns that two constables went to Murphy's apartment. Murphy opened fire with a .38-caliber revolver, wounding one policeman in the chest.

Police laid siege to the apartment. After an hour, they heard a single shot. They broke into the apartment and found Murphy dead of a bullet through the heart.

They also found what Murphy apparently had been trying to protect: not his modest arsenal, but his sensitive collection of documents.

Murphy was 43 when he died. For 15 years he had been a professional mercenary — one of the tough breed that Forsyth labeled "The Dogs of War." Through those years, he kept a diary and any other documents he could obtain. All over Europe, Murphy's ex-comrades now are wondering uneasily what Scotland Yard's Special Branch learned from Murphy's records.

From Murphy's ex-comrades — now scattered now over Europe and southern Africa — the story of his most remarkable assignment was pieced together: The attempt in 1972-73 to overthrow the government of Equatorial Guinea in West Africa under a plan devised and financed by Forsyth.

And "The Dogs of War" appears to be a thinly disguised account of that operation.

There is, however, one major difference. After a daring sea assault, Forsyth's valiant fictional band succeeded in its objective of taking over the West African state he called Zangaro. In real life, Forsyth's mercenaries were arrested by Spanish police 3,000 miles from their target and ignominiously packed off home.

overthrow of Francisco Macias Nguema, president for life of Equatorial Guinea. From his palace on Macias Nguema Island — more widely known as Fernando Poo — he rules in summary fashion. Supported by shock troops called Youths in March with Macias, he imprisons, deports or kills all political opponents.

The country had other attractions as a target. Fernando Poo lies 100 miles off the Nigerian coast and was the base for flights into Biafra during the civil war. About 20,000 Biafran workers and their families already lived there. It was Gay — with his ability, rare among mercenaries, to distinguish fact from fantasy — who pointed out to Forsyth the one major obstacle: neither of them had any money.

By 1972 Forsyth had solved that problem, too. "The Day of the Jackal" had made him a rich man. In the spring of 1972, Forsyth asked Gay to reconnoiter Fernando Poo.

Tourists are scarcely welcomed there, but Gay got a visa in Cameroon. A few days of exploring possible landing sites and observing the palace's defenses were enough. A dozen determined mercenaries, backed by 40 to 50 ex-Biafran soldiers, Gay reported, could take Fernando Poo. The cost, Gay reckoned, would be about \$75,000. Forsyth told Gay to go ahead.

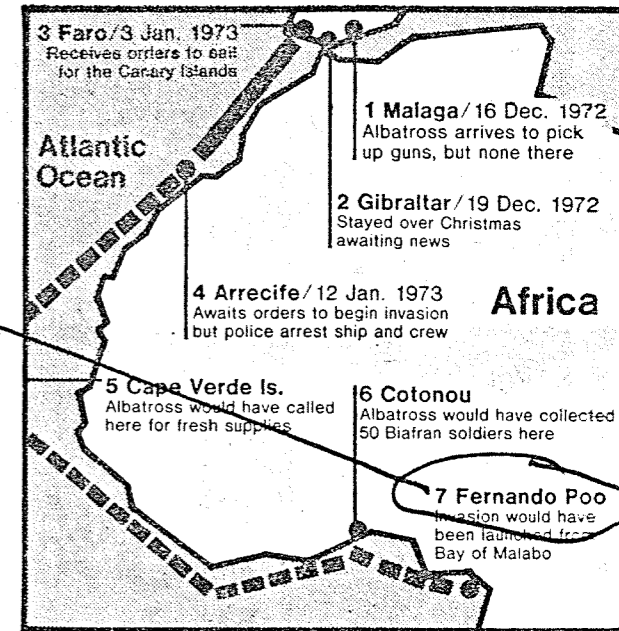
As Forsyth recounted it in his book, planning was complex, meticulous, brilliant. The reality fell somewhat short of this.

Certainly, it involved all the thriller writers' paraphernalia of false passports, numbered bank accounts, crooked arms dealers and false weapons "end users" certificates.

Gay had two false passports, in the names of Greaves and Mair. It was Gay's method of acquiring these — essentially by purloining other persons' identities — that Forsyth used in "The Day of The Jackal."

And it was in the name of Henry George Greaves that, as the first step in the operation, Gay opened account No. 4700903193 at the Kreditbank, Ostend, Belgium. The next step was to approach a prominent Hamburg arms dealer with a shopping list: 40 Belgian automatic rifles, four light machineguns, two 60-mm mortars, two bazookas, 40,000 rounds of ammunition and a good deal more.

The dealer agreed to supply them from a stockpile in Spain. He also agreed to obtain, through judicious



The itinerary for the abortive coup

Defense Ministry would provide an export licence. And a pliable Iraqi diplomat would supply an "end user" certificate, purporting to show that the arms were bound for Iraq.

Gay paid a deposit of about \$30,000. He also introduced the dealer, by phone, to his "principal," a "Mr. Van Cleef." "Any problems," Gay said, "talk to him." Van Cleef was Forsyth.

With arms apparently fixed, Gay set about acquiring men, a boat and a plan.

For men, Gay hired nine French and Belgian mercenaries; a Hungarian, Al Varga, who had come West in 1956, and three Englishmen: a former RAF military policeman, Scott Sanderson, who had advertised his services in the London Daily Telegraph; a Convent Garden porter, Ronald Gorman, and Murphy, who had fought with Gay in the Congo and against him in Nigeria. The pay was \$1,200 a month.

Gay found his boat in the southern Spanish resort

what can these

Dear Tim
Pocket Books
is publishing
both Devils
Masquerade and
Schrodinger's Cat
Cat Vol I, so my
money worries
are over, at least
until next year
Dig these
synchronizers,
man - as we
used to say in
the '60s.
Hope all is
well with you
Bob W

THELEMA

DOG
STAR?