



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

27 January 1983

Dear Miss Maynard.

Thank you for your letter of 10 January about the sinking of the General Belgrano.

As I told the House in answer to Tam Dalyell's Question on 20 January, I do not agree that there is any case for an inquiry. It is true that at the very moment of the attack the Belgrano was heading west and was outside the Total Exclusion Zone, but the inference that she represented no threat is false. As has been made plain on a number of occasions, there were indications on 2 May that the Task Force was threatened by the Belgrano and her escorts to the south and by other Argentine warships, including the 25 de Mayo, to the north. It was a threat that could not be ignored without endangering British ships and the lives of British seamen. The action taken was fully within the principles set out in our warning of 23 April, to which you do not refer in your letter and part of which said that any approach on the part of Argentine warships, including submarines, naval auxiliaries, or military aircraft which could amount to a threat to interfere with the mission of British Forces in the South Atlantic would encounter the appropriate response.

/ You claim

You claim that it is now known that, by the time the Belgrano was sunk, the Argentine Military Council had agreed to peace talks. You should not forget that we had, for our part, already long been making determined efforts to reach a peaceful solution to the problems created by Argentina's unprovoked aggression. I take it that your point is that HMG knew that the Argentines had decided to agree terms that we could reasonably accept and that we ordered that the Belgrano be sunk to avert a peaceful settlement. I can only repeat that this is totally untrue. The Belgrano was sunk for military reasons.

Louis Rieck
Raymond S. White

Miss Joan Maynard, M.P.