

SECRET

PRIME MINISTER

THERE HAS BEEN A NEW AND MORE SERIOUS 'BELGRANO' LEAK. THE NEW STATESMAN TODAY (DUNCAN CAMPBELL) ARE RUNNING A LONG STORY WHICH HAS TWO MAJOR THEMES:

1. THAT ODSA APPROVED THE SINKING OF THE ARGENTINE AIRCRAFT CARRIER 'THE 25TH MAY' BEFORE THE SINKING OF THE BELGRANO BUT BRITISH SUBMARINES WERE UNABLE TO FIND IT. THIS IT IS CLAIMED IS AN INDICATION OF A LACK OF BRITISH INTEREST IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. THIS ASSERTION IS BUTTRESSED BY THE ALLEGATION THAT THE FOREIGN SECRETARY AT THE TIME AND THE ATTORNEY GENERAL SPOKE AGAINST THE SINKING OF THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER AND SENT A JOINT MINUTE SETTING OUT THEIR OPPOSITION.
2. THAT A POLARIS SUBMARINE WAS SENT TO THE ASCENSION ISLANDS, WITHIN RANGE OF ARGENTINA.

IT IS CLEAR THAT THE NEW STATESMAN HAVE NO MORE PAPERS THAN WERE LEAKED LAST WEEK. EQUALLY HOWEVER IT IS CLEAR THAT THEY HAVE ACCESS TO A VERY WELL INFORMED SOURCE. THIS SEEMS HIGHLY LIKELY TO HAVE BEEN THE MOD ASSISTANT SECRETARY WHO HAS BEEN CHARGED WITH THE ORIGINAL LEAK. THE MOST LIKELY EXPLANATION IS THAT HE HAS DECIDED TO TELL 'ALL HE KNOWS' IN A HIGHLY TENDENTIOUS FORM TO THE NEW STATESMAN.

THE AMOUNT OF PRESS INTEREST IN ALL THIS VARIES BETWEEN KEEN (THE GUARDIAN) AND NONE (THE POPULARS). IT IS LIKELY HOWEVER THAT THIS WILL HOT UP.

IN THE MEANTIME THE MOD OFFICER CONCERNED IS BEING REINTERVIEWED IN RELATION TO THE INFORMATION PASSED TO THE NEW STATESMAN. MOD ARE ADVISING BOTH ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE LEAKS AND THEIR SOURCE, A RESOLUTE NO COMMENT. IN THE MEANTIME THEY ARE ANALYSING JUST WHAT INFORMATION HAS BEEN PUBLISHED.

FROM TIM FLESHER  
23 AUGUST 1984

From: Sir Ewen Broadbent, KCB, CMG,  
Second Permanent Under Secretary of State



2ndPUS/678/84

**CONFIDENTIAL**  
**MINISTRY OF DEFENCE**

Main Building, Whitehall, London SW1A 2HB

Telephone (Direct Dialling) 01-218-7115

(Switchboard) 01-218 9000

23rd August, 1984.

Sir Thomas Hetherington, KCB, CBE, QC,  
Director of Public Prosecutions,  
4-12 Queen Anne's Gate,  
London, SW1H 9AZ.

*Dear Tom*

You will have seen the article by Duncan Campbell in today's New Statesman.

2. This article has been quickly examined by MOD staff, in consultation with the FCO. Much of it is made up of clever editing, in the Campbell style, of existing public material drawn from a variety of sources some of which he acknowledges, supplemented by the two documents which were sent by Mr. Ponting to Mr. Dalyell (it is interesting that the second page of one of them did not appear to find its way to Duncan Campbell). But there are two areas where it appears that Campbell has had access to new material or oral reports based on new material:-

- a. the minute of 1st May 1982 from the Foreign Secretary (not the Attorney General and the Foreign Secretary as Campbell alleges);
- b. part or all of two notes on military options, which were available in MOD, one on a very restricted distribution.

3. Campbell also makes great play about Polaris movements. We have not found any basis for his assertions and therefore no relevant documents. There is no evidence of Polaris deployments to Ascension and this has been confirmed today by Lord Lewin.

4. In the course of considering the replies to the series of BELGRANO questions this Spring, my Secretary of State called for a comprehensive report, which necessarily drew on very highly classified material and papers which had had a very restricted circulation, such as the minute in paragraph 2 a. above. Mr. Ponting prepared this report.

CONFIDENTIAL

5. The preliminary conclusion which we draw is that some material (or the contents thereof) has been leaked to Campbell in addition to that contained in the two documents already leaked and that Ponting would, from his knowledge, have been in a position to do this for at least some if not all of the information in the article.

6. You may agree that this should call for further Police investigation. If you do, I see merit in the same MDP police officers carrying this out because they are now well immersed in the material and could I suggest be quickly effective. I would therefore inform the Chief Constable MDP that we considered the article contained prima facie leaks which we wish him to investigate.

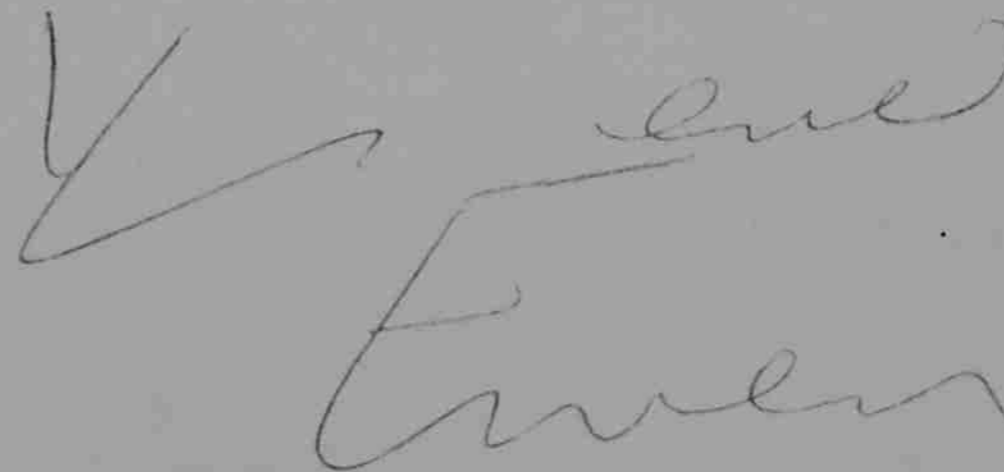
7. There are two other aspects arising from the article:-

a. The verbatim reproduction of the Confidential minute by Head of DS11. You will presumably be considering this aspect.

b. What is now said publicly. Campbell carefully avoids any reference to Ponting. On the allegations about the BELGRANO, the No.10 position last night was "No comment".

One possible line would be to say that the question is to be the subject of further consideration by the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, but my Minister of State does not consider this could be held indefinitely. A more tenable line is to say that the article is the subject of police inquiries, but this could alert Ponting and Campbell. Our view is that we should try to hold the "No comment" line for 48 hours possibly amplified by the reference to the Prime Minister's letter of 4th April to Mr. Denzil Davies and then see where we stand in the light of the further investigations, when it could be that we can fall back on a sub judice position.

8. Copies to Antony Acland, John Jones, Peter Le Cheminant, Robin Butler and (for his return) Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Ewen', is written in the lower right quadrant of the page.