



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~836 7022~~ 218 2111/3

MO 5/21

26th February 1985

Dear RMin,

BELGRANO: RELEASE OF DOCUMENTS

We spoke on the telephone yesterday about the documents placed in the Library of the House of Commons, following our discussions on Sunday 17th February and your letter of 18th February. My Secretary of State decided to place in the House those documents which he quoted in his speech, rather than all those disclosed to the Court. As a complicating factor, he also placed in the Library one document - a minute from Sir Clive Whitmore dated 30th March - which was not disclosed to the Court but the disclosure of which showed that the claims now being made by Mr Ponting about events on 30th March are not true. I attach for ease of reference a copy of the documents we have thus far provided.

Mr Heseltine intends, if and when pressed, to provide further documents provided they have already been read out in open Court.

You asked for a line in case this issue arose at Prime Minister's questions. Could I suggest the following:

"My Rt Hon Friend made it clear in last Monday's Debate that the trial of Mr Ponting had created wholly exceptional circumstances in which policy advice given to Ministers by officials related to the sinking of the Belgrano had been disclosed in open Court. In the light of this, he himself quoted from such documents and placed those from which he quoted in the House of Commons Library. He would, I am sure, consider placing in the Library other relevant documents which were disclosed in open Court."

If asked about the disclosure of Sir Clive Whitmore's minute:

F E R Butler Esq



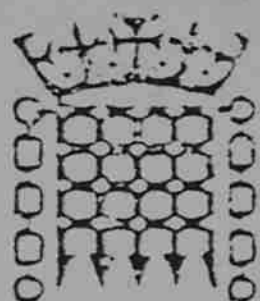
"This was necessary in order to show the
in consistencies in Mr Ponting's account published
in the Observer of 17th February.

[Hon Members opposite who are interested in the
disclosure of documents might ask why Mr Ponting
did not reveal to the Court that he was the author
of the anonymous letter to the Hon Member for
Linlithgow dated 24th April.]"

Yours ever

Richard Mottram

(R C MOTTRAM)



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

6 March 1984

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
House of Commons

Dear Prime Minister

I am writing on behalf of the Shadow Cabinet to ask for your comments on the serious discrepancies which exist between the Government's version of the circumstances surrounding the sinking of the General Belgrano by HMS Conqueror on 2 May 1982 and statements made regarding the affair in two recent publications.

The Government maintains, in paragraph 110 of the Falklands Campaign: the Lessons, Cmd 8758 that the Conqueror detected the Belgrano on 2 May 1982. Yet in the book "Our Falklands War: the men of the Task Force tell THEIR story", by Geoffrey Underwood, the Commander of the Conqueror is reported to have said that he visually sighted the Belgrano early in the afternoon of 1 May and followed it for over 30 hours.

In another book published on 5 March, "The Sinking of the Belgrano", by Desmond Rice and Arthur Gavshon, the authors also maintain that the General Belgrano had been located 48 hours before it was sunk and was then trailed for more than 30 hours. They further assert that when the Belgrano was sunk it was on course for the Argentine coastline.

Because of the widespread concern regarding the reasons behind the sinking of the Belgrano, I should be grateful for your comments.

Yours sincerely

RT HON DENZIL DAVIES MP

DS5/9/9/46-11

5/21

16 March 1984

APS/Secretary of State thro' PS/Minister(AF)

Copy to:
PS/FJS
Sec/CNS
DUS(P)
DUS(N)
AUS(NS)
DNW
DNOT

*Let 1 done to ink this
Submission fully sets out the
balance of arguments between
Draft 1 and Draft 2 which
we have now dismissed
Apr 2/3*

LETTER FROM THE SHADOW CABINET TO THE PRIME MINISTER ON
GENERAL BELGRANO

You asked for a draft reply to send to No 10 for the Prime Minister to send to Denzil Davies and the Shadow Cabinet. Minister(AF) asked me to prepare a draft admitting for the first time that BELGRANO was sighted on 1 May and not 2 May, this is Draft 2 attached. I have however prepared an alternative reply, Draft 1, which maintains the existing public line. There are no operational or intelligence reasons for withholding the 1 May date and the choice between the drafts is therefore essentially political.


No Drafts on GDR bases were sought

2. Any decision to admit the 1 May date will need to take into account that:

- a. Sir John Nott in the Commons on 4 May 1982, the Official Despatch and the Falklands White Paper all say that BELGRANO was detected on 2 May.
- b. On 10 December 1982 Mr Dalyell was told by Mr Blaker that it would not be in the public interest to say at what time the first contact with BELGRANO was made by an RN submarine.
- c. The Government has frequently taken the line that the affair has been fully explained and the Prime Minister took this position on 21 February 1984 in the Commons in response to a supplementary from Mr Dalyell.

However, if it were decided to admit the 1 May date, it might be possible to argue:

- a. Sir John Nott's statement was clearly meant to refer to sinking (8pm London time) not detection.



b. In the Lords on 13 July 1983 Lady Young explained the White Paper by saying that it referred to the events of 2 May and not when BELGRANO was first located.

c. An answer based on visual contact made on 1 May is not wholly inconsistent with Mr Blaker's reply on 10 December 1982. (There was a sonar contact with the escorting tanker of the BELGRANO group on the afternoon of 30 April.)

3. Whatever the arguments for admitting the 1 May date (and this would bring the Government's position into line with the interview given by Commander Wreford-Brown) the main objection to a change of position is that it will only encourage Mr Dalyell in his other accusations. Mr Dalyell will also use the admission to continue his argument that the sinking was for political not military reasons. Any admission will also raise questions about why the admission was not made when the discrepancy first emerged about a year ago.

4. This minute and Draft 2 are classified CONFIDENTIAL because of the existence of the draft. If it is decided to use Draft 2 it is unclassified.



C S PONTING
Head of DS5

Att

DRAFT LETTER FROM PRIME MINISTER TO DENZIL DAVIES MP

DRAFT 1

1. Thank you for your letter of 6 March, about the sinking of the Argentine cruiser General Belgrano on 2 May 1982.

2. I do not accept that there are serious discrepancies in the Government's explanation of the reasons for the sinking of the General Belgrano. We have consistently made it clear that the cruiser was sunk for military reasons because she presented a threat to the Task Force. (1)

3. Paragraph 110 of Command 8758 described the events of 2 May which led to the sinking of the Belgrano. As Lady Young explained on 13 July 1983 it was not intended to say when the cruiser was first located. In fact we have consistently said that it would not be in the public interest to say when the Belgrano was first located. That remains the position. In any case the time at which Belgrano was first located is not relevant to the decision to attack her. (not said before) (2) (3) (4) (5) It was on 2 May that the Task Force Commander, in the light of the threat posed by the Belgrano group as part of the wider configuration of Argentine Naval Forces, sought and obtained a change in the Rules of Engagement to enable Belgrano to be attacked outside the Total Exclusion Zone. (5)

4. When she was attacked Belgrano was on a course of 280°. She had made many changes of course during the day and could have done so again at any time. Her precise course at any given moment was irrelevant to the threat that she presented. (5) (4)

5. You allege that there is "widespread concern regarding the reasons behind the sinking of the Belgrano". I do not believe that

is so. It is fully understood that the Government's overriding
and proper concern was to take the necessary measures to protect
the Task Force - which had been sent to the South Atlantic with
all-party support.

DRAFT LETTER FROM PRIME MINISTER TO DENZIL DAVIES MP

DRAFT 2

1. Thank you for your letter of 6 March, about the sinking of the Argentine cruiser General Belgrano on 2 May 1982.

2. I do not accept that there are serious discrepancies in the Government's explanation of the reasons for the sinking of the General Belgrano. We have consistently made it clear that the cruiser was sunk for military reasons because she presented a threat to the Task Force. (1)

3. Paragraph 110 of Command 8758 described the events of 2 May which led to the sinking of the Belgrano. As Lady Young explained on 13 July 1983, it was not intended to say when the cruiser was first located. The Government has declined to give this information before now for security reasons, because of the insight it would give into our knowledge of Argentine naval movements. Although this is still an important constraint on what we can say about the events of the time, this constraint is now of less importance and I can confirm that Belgrano was first sighted by HMS Conqueror on the afternoon of 1 May. (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) (11) (12) (13) (14) (15) (16) (17) (18) (19) (20) (21) (22) (23) (24) (25) (26) (27) (28) (29) (30) (31) (32) (33) (34) (35) (36) (37) (38) (39) (40) (41) (42) (43) (44) (45) (46) (47) (48) (49) (50) (51) (52) (53) (54) (55) (56) (57) (58) (59) (60) (61) (62) (63) (64) (65) (66) (67) (68) (69) (70) (71) (72) (73) (74) (75) (76) (77) (78) (79) (80) (81) (82) (83) (84) (85) (86) (87) (88) (89) (90) (91) (92) (93) (94) (95) (96) (97) (98) (99) (100)

4. The time that Belgrano was first sighted is not of course relevant to the decision to attack her. As Peter Blaker explained in a written answer on 29 November 1982, it was on 2 May that the Task Force Commander, in the light of the threat posed by the Belgrano group as part of the wider configuration of Argentine Naval Forces, sought and obtained a change in the Rules of Engagement to enable Belgrano to be attacked outside the Total Exclusion Zone, and therefore it was on 2 May that the ship was sunk. (101) (102) (103) (104) (105) (106) (107) (108) (109) (110) (111) (112) (113) (114) (115) (116) (117) (118) (119) (120) (121) (122) (123) (124) (125) (126) (127) (128) (129) (130) (131) (132) (133) (134) (135) (136) (137) (138) (139) (140) (141) (142) (143) (144) (145) (146) (147) (148) (149) (150) (151) (152) (153) (154) (155) (156) (157) (158) (159) (160) (161) (162) (163) (164) (165) (166) (167) (168) (169) (170) (171) (172) (173) (174) (175) (176) (177) (178) (179) (180) (181) (182) (183) (184) (185) (186) (187) (188) (189) (190) (191) (192) (193) (194) (195) (196) (197) (198) (199) (200)

5. When she was attacked Belgrano was on a course of 280° . She had made many changes of course during the day and could have done so again at any time. Her precise course at any given moment was irrelevant to the threat that she presented.

5

4

6. You allege that there is "widespread concern regarding the reasons behind the sinking of the Belgrano". I do not believe that is so. It is fully understood that the Government's overriding and proper concern was to take the necessary measures to protect the Task Force - which had been sent to the South Atlantic with all-party support.

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Mi



Copy to:

PS/Minister (AF)
Sec/VCNS
MA/DCDS (I)
AUS (NS)
DNOT

MO 5/21

22nd March 1984

Head of DS5

SINKING OF THE BELGRANO

You submitted on 16th March (not to all or needed) advice on the response which might be made to Denzil Davies's letter of 6th March about the circumstances surrounding the sinking of the BELGRANO and in particular when HMS CONQUEROR first detected the ship. The Secretary of State has now received the attached letter from Tam Dalyell posing another 9 questions. Further allegations arising from the book published by Messrs Rice and Gavshon seem likely to arise.

2. Before reaching a view on the line to be taken in the Denzil Davies letter, the Secretary of State wishes to consider the implications of a more forthcoming line for how we would handle new allegations arising from the Gavshon book and how we would respond to Dalyell. The Secretary of State has therefore decided that it would be preferable to delay a reply to Denzil Davies for the time being while we look at the wider context and I have agreed this approach with No 10.

3. The Secretary of State wishes to know the substance of what happened at the beginning of May 1982 in relation to the BELGRANO and the Argentine aircraft carrier in order to judge how much of this can properly be made public without security implications. For the purpose of considering



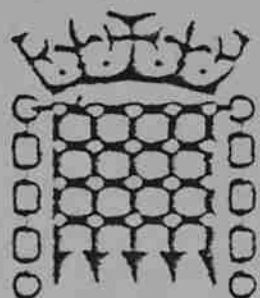
the substance; he would be grateful for a detailed chronology of the events leading up to the sinking of the BELGRANO. This should cover the answers to the questions raised by Mr Dalyell in his latest letter together with those to the following questions:

- a. What rules of engagement in relation to attacks on Argentine ships were in force prior to 2nd May?
- b. What was the nature of the intelligence which showed that the BELGRANO group was a threat to the Task Force, when was it first available and when was it drawn directly to the attention of Ministers?
- c. What was the precise sequence of events and their timings... which led to the change in the rules of engagement enabling CONQUEROR to sink the BELGRANO? When was the request initiated, what chain did it pass through, when was it put to Ministers? What was the nature of the decision communicated to HMS CONQUEROR?
- d. What was the sequence of events in relation to the Peruvian peace initiative and when and in what form was this available to Ministers in London?
- e. Was any intelligence received which might have suggested that the Argentine Navy had been ordered on or about 1st May to return to port? If so, when was it received and what happened to it?
- f. Do we know why the then Secretary of State referred in his statement to the House on 4th May 1982 to the BELGRANO being detected at 8pm London time on 2nd May?

4. This list of questions is simply those which occur to me and is not meant to be exhaustive. What the Secretary of State is seeking is a comprehensive account of events which covers all the information and not just that which underpins the main defensive line we have used hitherto. I would be happy to have this in log form with the relevant documents enclosed - given the possible sensitivity of some of the information involved there would be no need of course to copy it widely within the Department.

5. Additionally, I should be grateful for a draft reply to Mr Dalyell's latest letter together with advice on whether the line proposed to be taken with Dalyell affects the line proposed to be taken with Denzil Davies.

6. Would it be possible to have this further advice by midday on Wednesday 28th March, on the assumption that the factual information must already largely have been collected at one stage either here or at Northwood? I should be happy of course to discuss any problems in meeting the Secretary of State's requirements.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Monday 19 March 1984

Rt Hon Michael Helestone
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1

Dan Michael,

In view of Cecil Parkinson's interview on TV-AM last Sunday week, and the Prime Minister's reply to my question on the matter (Wednesday 14 March), I would be most grateful if you would respond to the following questions.

1. At what time on 30 April 1982 did HMS Conqueror first detect the Belgrano on its sonar? What was the estimated position, course and speed of the Belgrano at the time?
2. At what time did HMS Conqueror come into visual contact with the Belgrano on 1 May 1982 and what was the course, speed and position of the Belgrano at the time?
3. At what time on 1 May 1982 did HMS Conqueror observe the RAS involving the Belgrano and an oiler and what was the course, speed and position of the Belgrano at the time?
4. What was the course followed by the Belgrano throughout the period in which it was being tracked by HMS Conqueror?
5. What was its speed when it was attacked?
6. Why were Mk 8 torpedoes used in preference to Mk 24s and can both of these weapons be set for proximity detonation?
7. At what time was the order to sink the Belgrano sent from Northwood on 2 May? Were any signals sent or received by HMS Conqueror between the issuing of that order and its execution?
8. When did HMS Splendid first detect the Argentinian CVA on 1 May, for how long did it maintain contact and what was the course and speed of the CVA during this time?
9. Was the CVA under surveillance by aircraft or satellite at any time on 30 April to 2 May? If so, what information concerning course, speed and signals exchanges was obtained during this period?

Yours sincerely

Tam Dalyell

Tam Dalyell M P

DRAFT LETTER TO TAM DALYELL MP

Thank you for your letter of 19 March.

As I expect you know the Prime Minister has, in a letter to Denzil Davies, confirmed that the BELGRANO was sighted on 1 May.

However, The other questions you have raised in your letter all concern detailed operational and intelligence matters on which I am not prepared to comment.

SECRET

PUS/V84/300

30th March, 1984.

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE

Copies to: PS/Minister(AF)
CNS
DCDS(I)
Head of DS5

5/21

SINKING OF THE BELGRANO

After the Secretary of State's meeting this morning had broken up, he, you and I had a further word on the question of where, in the Prime Minister's reply to Mr. Denzil Davies MP, we could legitimately draw the line and stand absolutely firmly on the argument that to disclose any more information would be contrary to national security. We thought that it might well be possible to reveal that the CONQUEROR first detected the BELGRANO group on 30th April 1982 and first sighted the BELGRANO itself on 1st May but that we should not allow ourselves to be driven beyond that point, whatever the pressures. I have accordingly revised the letter for the Prime Minister to send to Mr. Davies, and I have put in square brackets in the attached draft the sentence which gives this new information. If the Prime Minister decides that she does not want to go this far, then the simple deletion of the passage in brackets leaves us with a reply which stands pat on the existing line. Either version will make it clear that the CONQUEROR had been keeping in contact with the BELGRANO before the Task Force Commander asked for a change in the Rules of Engagement.

JWW.

PUS

SECRET

02
DRAFT LETTER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO DENZIL DAVIES MP

1. Thank you for your letter of 6 March about the sinking of the Argentinian cruiser General Belgrano on 2 May 1982.

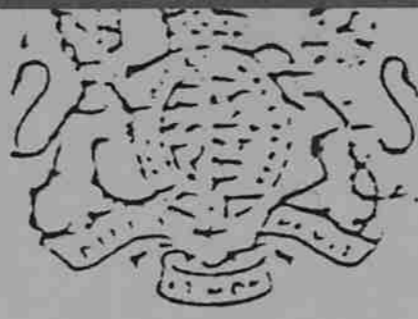
2. Paragraph 110 of Command 8758 described the events of 2 May which led to the sinking of the cruiser. As Janet Young explained in the House of Lords on 13 July 1983, that account was not intended to say when the cruiser was first located. [In fact the Conqueror first detected the Belgrano group on 30 April, and she sighted the Belgrano on 1 May for the first time.] But the essential point is that it was on 2 May that the Task Force Commander, in the light of the latest assessment of the threat posed by the Belgrano group as part of the wider disposition of Argentinian naval forces, sought and obtained from Ministers a change in the Rules of Engagement to permit the Belgrano to be attacked outside the Total Exclusion Zone.

§ When she was attacked the Belgrano was on a course of 280°. She had made a number of changes of course during the day and could have done so again at any time. Her precise course at any given moment was irrelevant to the threat that she presented.

It was the Government's overriding and proper concern to take all the measures available to protect the Task Force.

3. In the light of all the information available to us at the time I know of no reason to question the rightness of that decision.

OR



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

WILL NOT
RECEIVE
THIS UNTIL
1615 TODAY

Dear Mr. Pons,

4th April 1984

Thank you for your letter of 6 March about the sinking of the General Belgrano.

The background to this event is worth recalling. On 30 April the Total Exclusion Zone was established around the Falkland Islands. On 1 May attacks by Vulcan and Sea Harrier aircraft were carried out on Stanley airfield as part of the process of enforcing the Total Exclusion Zone. On the same day the Task Force came under attack for the first time from the Argentine airforce and some Argentine aircraft were shot down. We were all very conscious of the risk that these assaults on the Task Force would be backed up by attacks by surface ships and submarines of the Argentine Navy and by aircraft from their carrier, the 25 de Mayo. All British units were on maximum alert to deal with any naval or air attacks.

HMS Conqueror, on patrol south of the Falkland Islands, detected an Argentine oiler auxiliary which was accompanying the Belgrano on 30 April. She sighted the Belgrano for the first time on 1 May when it was accompanied by two destroyers armed with Exocet missiles. Paragraph 110 of Command 8758 describes the events of 2 May which led to the sinking of the cruiser. As Janet Young explained in the House of Lords on 13 July 1983, that account was not intended to say when the cruiser was first located. The essential point is that it was on 2 May that we had indications about the movements of the Argentine fleet which led the Task Force Commander, Admiral Woodward, to request a change in the Rules of Engagement to permit the Belgrano to be attacked outside the Total Exclusion Zone.

/ The

The circumstances on that day have been well described by Admiral Woodward in his lecture at the Royal United Services Institute on 20 October 1982:

"Early on the morning on 2 May, all the indications were that 25 de Mayo, the Argentinian carrier, and a group of escorts had slipped past my forward SSN barrier to the north, while the cruiser General Belgrano and her escorts were attempting to complete the pincer movement from the south, still outside the Total Exclusion Zone. But Belgrano still had Conqueror on the trail. My fear was that Belgrano would lose the SSN as she ran over the shallow water of the Burdwood Bank, and that my forward SSN barrier would be evaded down there too. I therefore sought, for the first and only time throughout the campaign, a major change to the Rules of Engagement to enable Conqueror to attack Belgrano outside the Exclusion Zone."

Ministers agreed to the proposed change in the Rules of Engagement at about 1 p.m. London time on 2 May. Orders were sent immediately to HMS Conqueror, which attacked the Belgrano at 8 p.m. London time. Because of the indications that the Belgrano posed a threat to the task force, her precise position and course at the time she was sunk were irrelevant.

The first indications of the possible Peruvian peace proposals reached London from Washington at 11.15 p.m. London time and from Lima at 2 a.m. London time on 3 May.

My comments on paragraph 3 about the first contacts with the Belgrano group go further than we have been prepared to do hitherto. I have only felt able to do this now as, "with the passage of time, those events have lost some of their original operational significance."

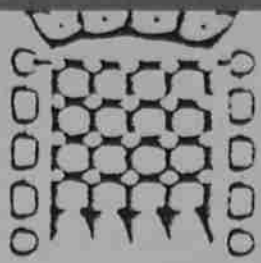
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Throughout the events described above it was a major concern of the Government to protect by all the means available the Task Force which had been despatched to the South Atlantic with all-party support.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

The Rt. Hon. Denzil Davies, M.P.



5/4/84

The Prime Minister.

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

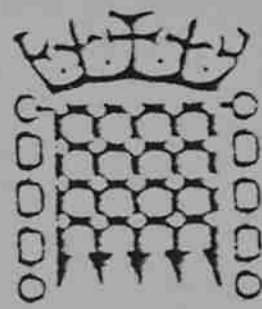
Dear Prime Minister,

Denzil Davies has very kindly given me a copy of your letter to him of April 4th, 1984, responding to his letter of March 6th, 1984, written at the behest of the Shadow Cabinet. Denzil will be replying doubtless, as he thinks fit, after consideration with Shadow Cabinet colleagues. In the meantime, you are aware of my own interest, and I would like to say that your reply does go some way towards confirming a number of facts, to which I have been drawing attention in recent months. You also confirm some of the information contained in the recently published book, "The Sinking of the Belgrano" by Desmond Rice and Arthur ~~W~~Wshon, about which I am asking you in an Oral Question, Number 5, on Thursday April 12th.

However, your letter, Prime Minister, still leaves a number of serious questions, unanswered and unclear. In view of the Government's ever-changing explanations about the circumstances surrounding your order to sink the Belgrano, it would be helpful if you would address yourself to the following issues:

1. Paragraph 2 of your letter. In backgrounding the military situation on May 1, 1982, you say the air attacks on Port Stanley Airfield were for the purpose of enforcing the Total Exclusion Zone. Since cluster bombs, air-burst shells, and other anti-personnel devices were used, Prime Minister, how can you really suggest that this was part of the process of enforcing the Total Exclusion Zone?

Paragraph 3 of your letter. Was HMS Conqueror^s instructed to search for and locate the Belgrano by Admiral Woodward, by Fleet Headquarters, Northwood, or by whom? In other words, who perceived the Belgrano Group to be a threat to the Task Force in general, and as you have argued on Television, our Carriers in particular? Candidly, I have suspected



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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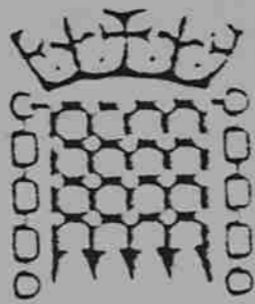
for many months that the notion that the Belgrano Group were endangering the Task Force emerged as a post-facto rationalisation.

3. Paragraph 3 of your letter. You relate that Admiral Woodward asked for a change in the Rules of Engagement to permit the Belgrano to be attacked outside the Total Exclusion Zone - and, as we all know, you and Members of the War Cabinet agreed to that change. Why then did your former Defence Minister, (Sir) John Nott, a Member of the War Cabinet, who participated in the deliberations on the matter, mislead the House of Commons without any corrective by you, by saying on 4th and 5th May that the decision to torpedo the Belgrano was taken by the Submarine Commander? Parliament, Press, and People were deceived.

4. Paragraph 3 of your letter. You refer to destroyers armed with Exocet missiles. Do I take it that the Government is backing away from its original claim that Belgrano also was armed with Exocets?

5. Paragraph 3 of your letter. Can you explain why the Conqueror detected an Argentine oiler auxiliary in the Belgrano Group, when the signals from the 44 year old iron-clad, USS Phoenix (Belgrano) were considerably stronger?

6. Paragraph 3 of your letter. You stress that on 2 May "we had indications about the movements of the Argentine Fleet" which led to Admiral Woodward's request for a change in the Rules of Engagement. What precisely were those "indications"? My information is that the Argentine Fleet was by that time under orders to return to base, and you knew that. Gavshon and Rice in their book cite precise times (20.00 hours on May 1, and 01.19 hours on May 2) when those orders were sent by Admiral Allara, and the Naval Command in Buenos Aires. The text of one of those messages is included in their book.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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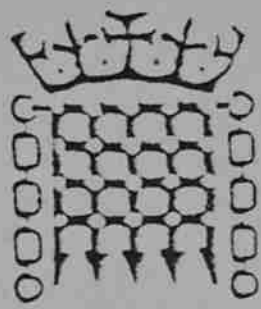
7. Paragraph 5 of your letter. You quote Admiral Woodward as saying that his request for a major change to the rules of engagement in order to attack the Belgrano was "the first and only time throughout the campaign" he had made such a request.

This is just not true, Prime Minister, because when Conqueror was in Argentine Territorial waters he again asked for a change in the Rules of Engagement, so as to be able to operate within those waters. (Reference Gavshan and Rice, Page 130.)

8. Paragraph 5 of your letter. Prime Minister, will you please explain how the Belgrano and her Group, sailing on a 280 degree course, (confirmed to me in Parliamentary answers), sailing West North West, could in any way have been completing a pincer movement? Have you ever heard of naval ships engaging in a pincer movement while retreating to home port in an opposite direction? And, can you explain how on earth it was that a huge, slow-moving hulk like the ancient Carrier, 25th May, could have "slipped past" the sophisticated, speedy nuclear powered submarine, presumably HMS Splendid, which was "trailing her" and which had been built at a cost of many millions to the British tax-payer?

9. Paragraph 6 of your letter. Will you explain, Prime Minister, your assertion that it was irrelevant to the sinking that the Belgrano was heading homewards and well outside the Exclusion Zone and nowhere near the Burdwood Bank?

10. Paragraph 7 of your letter. Has your Government enquired into the reasons why the British Embassies in Washington and Lima took so long to report on the Peruvian Peace Initiative, and its preparation, if, as you claim "first indications" only reached London at 23.15 hours on May 2, and 0200 hours May 3 respectively? Did you know that an Associated Press Despatch from Lima, timed 23.44 hours, BST, May 2, said that



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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President Fernando Belaunde Terry had announced that Britain and Argentina that night would end hostilities over the Falklands? Reuters and other international wire services carried similar reports. (Gavshon and Rice page xlv)

11. Paragraph 8 of your letter. In what way would earlier disclosure of "first contacts" with the Belgrano Group have prejudiced operations? Disclosure for instance after the end of hostilities in June 1982? Don't you think that it would be far better if you and your Government were to be open and truthful with the House of Commons and the British people?

I look forward to your early response.

Yours sincerely,
Ian Dudgeon



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

12 April 1984

Dear Mr. Dalyell

Thank you for your letter of 5 April about the Belgrano.

I take it that your objective in asking these further questions of detail is to try, as you have tried for some two years, to establish your contention that the Belgrano was attacked in order to destroy the prospects for peace negotiations based on the Peruvian proposals. That is simply not true.

Geoffrey Howe will be replying to the various questions you raised in the Foreign Affairs Debate on 22 March. But since I have made the Government's position absolutely clear yet again in my letter of 4 April to Denzil Davies, I do not think it useful to prolong these exchanges.

Yours sincerely

Raymond Storer

Tam Dalyell, Esq., M.P.

" Dear Mr Dalyell,

For what I hope will be obvious reasons I cannot give you my name but I can tell you that I have full access to exactly what happened to the Belgrano. You have probably seen by now that Michael Heseltine has not covered any of the questions that you posed in your letter in March. This was against the advice of officials but in line with what John Stanley recommended. None of the information is classified and to get answers you should put the questions down as ^{P.Q.s} ~~Parliamentary Questions~~. The answers will be quite interesting. In addition you might like to consider another linked question. Did the change in the rules of engagement on 2nd May refer only to the Belgrano or did they go wider? When were the rules of engagement changed to allow an attack on the 25 de Mayo? Was this on 2nd May or was it earlier? If so, when?

You are on the right track. Keep going."