



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

21 October 1983

Prime Minister

- ① Content for Sir N. Henderson to write the article?
- ② Would you like to see the text?

Dear John,

A-J.C. 24/10

The Prime Minister will wish to be aware of the intention of Sir Nicholas Henderson to write an article about the Falklands crisis, which would be published in the Economist.

The initiative came from Sir N Henderson in July. He told us that his idea was to write about the bearing of the sinking of the Belgrano on the negotiations that were current at the time, as seen through the eyes of the United States authorities. Sir N Henderson said he particularly wished to help us to scotch the myths that were developing about the Belgrano. Our view at that stage, when speculation about the Belgrano was continuing, was that we would have no objection to his writing such a piece, provided we could see it first.

In September, Sir N Henderson showed us a draft article. He had expanded the scope to a point where it was unrecognisable from the basis earlier agreed with us: he addressed at much greater length than the Belgrano episode the whole question of the United States' help to us, both material and diplomatic. We pointed out the political drawbacks of reviving this issue. These reservations have been echoed by senior officials in the State Department whom we have consulted. But Sir N Henderson has been encouraged by Mr Haig and Mr Weinberger to draw attention to the United States' help for us, which, Sir N Henderson insists, has not been properly understood in Britain. Most recently he has quoted Mr Deaver as seeing advantage in the publication of an account of the US contribution. (None of the three has seen any text.)

While we were debating with Sir N Henderson the case for publishing material about the United States' role, controversy over the Belgrano died down and Sir Robin Day's revelation about Mr Foot's private views encouraged us to think that the Labour Party would not be inclined to revive the issue. We therefore suggested to him that, while we would welcome a piece in support of our account when the issue did surface again, we would prefer him not to publish an article whose principal effect would be to restimulate discussion. \*~~~~~\* that Mr Tam Dalyell has travelled to Peru and may be received by

/President

A J Coles Esq  
10 Downing Street

\*~\* Passage deleted and retained under Section 3(4) of the Official Secrets Act 1989. 17 January 2013



President Belaunde. A further, Dalyell-inspired, round of Belgrano controversy thus appears inevitable. It may, therefore, be that we can put Sir N Henderson's perseverance to good effect.

At our suggestion, Sir N Henderson is currently revising his article, in order to shorten his coverage of the United States' role and to excise altogether his more provocative passages on the subject. We have asked him to concentrate on the Belgrano, as well as to ensure that his account is fully consistent with those already given by Ministers in Parliament and in the Press. He has just given us a revised text, designed to meet these aims, which we shall study very carefully. It would meanwhile be helpful to know whether the Prime Minister sees objection to Sir N Henderson going ahead on these lines. He is evidently under considerable pressure from the Economist. Andrew Wright has suggested that, if in the end no article is forthcoming, the implication must be that we are not sure of our ground on the Belgrano. We do not of course wish to have our arms twisted in this way, but given the Dalyell factor, the Foreign Secretary thinks that the balance of advantage does now lie in allowing Sir N Henderson to go ahead on the terms described, preferably delaying publication until Mr Dalyell has made his next public move. We will of course clear the text in detail here before publication, and would be happy to show it to you also if you so wish.

*Yours ever*

*J E Holmes*

(J E Holmes)  
Private Secretary