



JA VC/33

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

18 February 1985

BELGRANO DEBATE

We spoke yesterday about your Secretary of State's speech in the House of Commons today and the documents which it will be necessary to lay in the Library of the House.

I reported to the Prime Minister that the exhibits at the trial included the minutes of 9 May from the Minister of State's office to Mr. Ponting, Mr. Ponting's submission of the same date, the minute of 10 May from PS Minister of State to you and your minute of 11 May to PS Minister of State: these refer to a discussion which Mr. Stanley had had with Mr. Coles here and were the occasion of a story in The Observer yesterday.

Although these documents give some scope for mischief to those who might wish to suggest - as The Observer did yesterday - that Mr. Stanley's contact with No. 10 was with the Prime Minister herself, the Prime Minister agrees that it would be right for all the documents exhibited at the trial to be made available to the House of Commons. If it is necessary in the debate to deal with the references to Mr. Stanley's contacts with Mr. Coles, the point will need to be made that the Prime Minister was not involved in these discussions which were part of the process of consultation between Departments in preparing advice for Mr. Heseltine and the Prime Minister on replies to Mr. Dalyell.

We agreed that, in order not to extend the range of documents laid in the Library beyond those exhibited at the trial, your Secretary of State would not quote in his speech from Mr. Ponting's minute of 10 April about the reply to Mr. Dalyell's letter of 5 April to the Prime Minister.

I should be grateful if you and John Oughton could ensure that any references in your Secretary of State's speech or Mr. Stanley's speech to consultation with No. 10 are cleared with this office.

I am copying this letter to John Oughton in Mr. Stanley's Office, and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Richard Mottram, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence.

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