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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

9 April 1984

BELGRANO: ELEVEN QUESTIONS BY MR. TAM DALYELL, MP

The Prime Minister has seen your letter of 6 April and the draft reply to the questions posed by Mr. Dalyell, MP, in the Foreign Affairs Debate on 22 March.

The Prime Minister is generally content that Sir Geoffrey Howe should reply as he proposes but believes that some of the answers could be read as implying that we accept some of Mr. Dalyell's propositions.

On page 3 of your enclosure, the lengthy answer in the middle of the page suggests that a signing ceremony had been arranged in Lima on 2 May. Unless there is clear evidence that this was the case, it might be better to adjust the reply to avoid any such implication. In any event, the final two words ("or encouragement") of the answer seem unnecessary.

With regard to the next question, the answer ("The British Government received no such indication") suggests that we now accept that Galtieri had made a decision in principle to withdraw from the Islands.

The second sentence of the answer on the top of page 4 could carry the same implication. The Prime Minister has asked "What makes us think that the Argentines were prepared to withdraw?"

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

A. J. COLES

CST.

P.F. Ricketts, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

cc

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

6 April, 1984

Dear John,

Belgrano: Eleven Questions by Mr Tam Dalyell MP

In the course of the Foreign Affairs Debate in the House on 22 March, Mr Tam Dalyell MP posed eleven questions about the events surrounding the sinking of the Belgrano. These were all prompted by the recently-published book 'The Sinking of the Belgrano', by Desmond Rice and Arthur Bavshon.

I enclose a copy of the reply which Sir Geoffrey Howe proposes to send. I also enclose a fuller note setting out the Confidential background on which the replies to the various points are based. The reply to Question 2 takes account of the Prime Minister's reply to Mr Denzil Davies, MP of 4 April.

Sir Geoffrey would be grateful to know whether the Prime Minister and the Defence Secretary are content with the proposed reply. He also proposes to arrange for the draft reply to be seen by Mr Pym before it issues.

I am copying this to Richard Mottram (MOD).

Yours ever,
Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

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TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM: Secretary of State

Reference

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO: Tam Dalyell Esq MP
House of Commons

Your Reference

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING


SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

During the Foreign Affairs Debate in the House on 22 March you asked a series of eleven questions about the events surrounding the sinking of the Argentine cruiser General Belgrano on 2 May 1982 (Official Report, Vol 56, Cols 1260-1261). For convenience I enclose with this letter a note setting out the text of your questions together with my replies.

CAVEAT.....

Enclosures—flag(s).....



MR TAM DALYELL'S QUESTIONS IN THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS DEBATE,
22 MARCH 1984 (OFFICIAL REPORT, VOL 56, COLS 1260-1261):
ANSWERS BY THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY

QUESTION

First, the Prime Minister has insisted that there was no contact with the right hon Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr Pym) in Washington about the Peruvian initiative before the sinking of the Belgrano, but Al Haig, whose memoirs are to be published on 25 March, told Gavshon that there had been 'communications with London', according to The Observer of 5 June 1983. Manuel Ulloa, Peru's incumbent Prime Minister, stresses that he kept Ambassador Charles Wallace very closely informed about all aspects of the peace negotiations and is certain that Wallace was in close touch with London. I talked to Ulloa in his house in the Miraflores district of Lima and that is exactly what he told me. Will the Prime Minister therefore acknowledge that the War Cabinet changed the rules of engagement, knowing that promising peace talks were in progress?

QUESTION

Fifthly, if, as Peruvian Government leaders maintain, Ambassador Wallace was kept closely advised about the progress of the peace talks through 1 and 2 May, did Mr Wallace in his turn keep the Foreign and Commonwealth Office informed? Specifically, did he not transmit to London an outline of the proposed seven-point proposal providing, among other things, for an Argentine withdrawal from the Falklands?


ANSWER

The Government have repeatedly stated, clearly and explicitly, that news of the Peruvian proposals did not reach London until over three hours after the attack on the 'General Belgrano'.

You referred to an article in The Observer on 5 June 1983 reporting a journalist's telephone conversation with Mr Haig. That account quoted Mr Haig only as saying that 'our communications with London did not suggest that we were on the verge of a breakthrough'. It does not claim that Mr Haig said that he had been in contact with the British Government about the ideas he had been discussing with the Peruvians. You are mistaken if you interpret the report to mean that Mr Haig had discussed the Peruvian proposals with anyone in the British Government here on 1 or 2 May.

You refer to Mr Charles Wallace, our then Ambassador in Lima. I can assure you categorically - and my Department have been in contact yet again with Mr Wallace, in view of the references to him

/by Messrs Rice and



by Messrs Rice and Gavshon - that no information about the Peruvian proposals was put to him until he called on the then Foreign Minister of Peru, Dr Arias Stella, at the latter's request, at 18.30 local time (23.30 GMT) on 2 May. Indeed, when Mr Wallace saw Dr Arias Stella on other Falklands business on 1 May, the Peruvian Foreign Minister gave no indication that any initiative was being contemplated.

Having summoned Mr Wallace on 2 May, Dr Arias Stella gave him details of what the Peruvians had in mind. Mr Wallace reported this to London immediately in a telegram despatched at 20.03 local time (01.03 GMT on 3 May) - ie six hours after the attack on the Belgrano. President Belaúnde had first announced the Peruvian initiative at a press conference in Lima half an hour before Mr Wallace was summoned by the Foreign Minister, but specifically declined to give any details. The Ambassador also reported that announcement promptly by telegram to London.

QUESTION

Secondly, the Belgrano was within the sights of HMS Conqueror before the departure of the right hon Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East for Washington on 1 May 1982. Why was the then Foreign Secretary, a member of the War Cabinet, not informed of this extremely important development?

ANSWER

Mr Pym left for Washington on the afternoon of 1 May, which was the day on which the Conqueror first sighted the Belgrano. However, 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 to request a change in the Rules of Engagement to permit the Belgrano to be attacked outside the Total Exclusion Zone.

QUESTION

Thirdly, 'The Sinking of the Belgrano' and The Economist both make clear that arrangements had been made for the loan or the purchase or, in some form, the use of a United States aircraft carrier in the event that HMS Hermes or Invincible, or both, were lost in the campaign. Was the Foreign Secretary of the day, and the War Cabinet, made aware of this?

ANSWER

No such arrangement was made, so there was no question of Mr Pym or other members of the War Cabinet being made aware of it.

QUESTION

Fourthly, did General Haig telephone the Prime Minister at any time on 1 May or 2 May 1982 on the subject of the Peruvian peace initiative or on any other related matter?.

/ANSWER



ANSWER

No such telephone call was made.

QUESTION

Sixthly, after Galtieri's acceptance in principle of the peace proposal, did Ambassador Wallace report to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that he had been invited, along with Argentina's ambassador in Lima, to attend a formal signing ceremony on the night of 2 May?

QUESTION

Seventhly, did Charles Wallace seek Foreign and Commonwealth Office or Prime Ministerial authority to attend that signing ceremony and what, if any, instructions were sent to him?

ANSWER

This sounds as if Mr Wallace had been consulted

Mr Wallace did not at any stage report that he and his Argentine colleague had been invited to attend such a ceremony; there was consequently no question of his asking for authority to attend it. He did report - in the telegram of 3 May to which I have already referred - that Dr Arias had told him that the Peruvians expected that, if their proposals were acceptable to both Britain and Argentina, the signature of an interim document would take place in Lima: but he did not report that signature was anticipated that same day. I might add that President Belaúnde had said at his press conference on the evening of 2 May that the Argentines were still considering his proposals and that he hoped to make an announcement about them later that night or the following day. I cannot of course speak for the Peruvian Government, but against this background it would seem unlikely that they expected any kind of ceremony to take place that night. At all events, if they did, it was without the British Government's knowledge [or encouragement.]

QUESTION

Eighthly, in advance of the War Cabinet decision to attack the Belgrano, was there anyone in London who had been told of the Galtieri decision in principle to withdraw from the islands, or that the Argentine fleet was homeward bound?

ANSWER

This sounds as if we accept now that Galtieri had made such a decision

The British Government received no such indication.

QUESTION

Ninthly, if nobody in London was so informed, have any attempts been made subsequently to establish why the right hon Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East, the British embassy in Washington and the British embassy in Lima failed to do so?

/ANSWER



ANSWER

Mr Pym and our Embassies in Washington and Lima reported, fully and promptly, all the relevant information that was available to them. But they, like their colleagues in London, were not aware of any indications that the Argentines might be prepared to withdraw from the Falklands or that they had ordered their fleet home.

What makes us think US Ministers were prepared to withdraw? —

QUESTION

Tenthly, both the Prime Minister and the right hon Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East referred dismissively to the Peruvian peace proposals as no more than a mere outline. Haig described it to Gavshon in his book as

" a formulation that provided hope that a settlement could be reached" .

The Peruvians - President Belaúnde, Ulloa and former Foreign Minister Arias Stella - all regarded it as a firm and thorough basis for an agreement. How can the British characterisation be reconciled with the United States and Peruvian descriptions? Some of us look forward very much to seeing what Haig's memoirs say about how advanced the Peruvian proposals were.

They have not been published.

ANSWER

Mr Pym has already given a full account of the way in which the Peruvian proposals were described to him, and of his discussion of them with Mr Haig, in his letter published in the Daily Mirror on 20 May 1983. Mr Haig's account, as published in The Sunday Telegraph on 1 April, makes it quite clear that on 2 May 1982 Mr Haig and President Belaúnde 'worked all day' on the new proposals: this is consistent with what Mr Pym has said.

QUESTION

Finally, was the right hon Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East speaking with the knowledge and authority of the War Cabinet when he told journalists in Washington on the evening of 1 May 1982 that

" no further military action is envisaged at the moment, except to keep the exclusion zone secure" ?
Had he been briefed in any way on the military situation before leaving London? Did he have any telephonic contact with any of his Foreign and Commonwealth advisers on Sunday 2 May 1982?

ANSWER

You query Mr Pym's comments to journalists on his arrival in Washington on the evening of 1 May 1982 that 'no further military action is envisaged at the moment, except to keep the Exclusion Zone secure', as if this were inconsistent with the subsequent

/attack on the



attack on the Belgrano (thereby implying that Mr Pym was ignorant of the military situation). There is no inconsistency. As has repeatedly been explained (for example, by Lady Young in reply to a similar suggestion by Lord Hatch of Lusby in the House of Lords on 13 July 1983), the Government had notified the Argentine Government in a message delivered on 23 April 1982 - and immediately circulated in the Security Council - that the declaration of the 200-mile Maritime Exclusion Zone around the Falkland Islands was without prejudice to our right to take additional measures of self-defence and that 'any approach on the part of Argentine warships . . . which could amount to a threat to interfere with the mission of British forces in the South Atlantic will encounter the appropriate response.' The Belgrano constituted a real threat on 2 May. For that reason, and for that reason alone, the Belgrano was attacked. If it had not been, the Belgrano would have been free to carry out attacks on our own ships. Of course Mr Pym was fully briefed before his departure for Washington. His letter to the Daily Mirror explains why he saw no need to telephone London on 2 May.

First, the Prime Minister has insisted that there was no contact with the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) in Washington about the Peruvian initiative before the sinking of the *Belgrano*, but Al Haig, whose memoirs are to be published on 25 March, told Gavshon that there had been "communications with London", according to *The Observer* of 5 June 1983. Manuel Ulloa, Peru's incumbent Prime Minister, stresses that he kept Ambassador Charles Wallace very closely informed about all aspects of the peace negotiations and is certain that Wallace was in close touch with London. I talked to Ulloa in his house in the Miraflores district of Lima and that is exactly what he told me. Will the Prime Minister therefore acknowledge that the War Cabinet changed the rules of engagement, knowing that promising peace talks were in progress?

Fifthly, if, as Peruvian Government leaders maintain, Ambassador Wallace was kept closely advised about the progress of the peace talks through 1 and 2 May, did Mr. Wallace in his turn keep the Foreign and Commonwealth Office informed? Specifically, did he not transmit to London an outline of the proposed seven-point proposal providing, among other things, for an Argentine withdrawal from the Falklands?

Draft Answer

1. The Government have repeatedly stated, clearly and explicitly, that news of the Peruvian proposals did not reach London until over three hours after the attack on the 'General Belgrano'.
2. You referred to an article in *The Observer* on 5 June 1983 reporting a journalist's telephone conversation with Mr Haig. That account quoted Mr Haig only as saying that 'our communications with London did not suggest that we were on the verge of a breakthrough'. It does not claim that Mr Haig said that he had been in contact with the British Government about the ideas he had been discussing with the Peruvians. You are mistaken if you interpret the report to mean that Mr Haig had discussed the Peruvian proposals with anyone in the British Government here on 1 or 2 May.

3. You refer to Mr Charles Wallace, our then Ambassador in Lima. I can assure you categorically - and my Department have been in contact yet again with Mr Wallace, in view of the references to him by Messrs Rice and Gavshon - that no information about the Peruvian proposals was put to him until he called on the then Foreign Minister of Peru, Dr Arias Stella, at the latter's request, at 18.30 local time (23.30 GMT) on 2 May. Indeed, when Mr Wallace saw Dr Arias Stella on other Falklands business on 1 May, the Peruvian Foreign Minister gave no indication that any initiative was being contemplated.

4. Having summoned Mr Wallace on 2 May, Dr Arias Stella gave him details of what the Peruvians had in mind. Mr Wallace reported this to London immediately in a telegram despatched at 20.03 local time (01.03 GMT on 3 May) - ie six hours after the attack on the Belgrano. President Belaúnde had first announced the Peruvian initiative at a press conference in Lima half an hour before Mr Wallace was summoned by the Foreign Minister, but specifically declined to give any details. The Ambassador also reported that announcement promptly by telegram to London.

Background

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C 1. The answer to the point at the end of Question 1, about when news of the Peruvian proposals reached London, was first used by the Prime Minister in response to an oral question in the House of Commons on 12 May 1983. Lord Belstead, in the House of Lords on the same date, was the first to give the precise timing - 2215Z on 2 May - of the despatch of the telegram from Washington.

D 2. The Observer article which Mr Dalyell quotes provides no evidence to support the suggestion - echoed in Questions 4 and 11 - that Mr Pym or Mr Haig had been in direct touch with HMG from Washington shortly before the Rules of Engagement were changed.

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3. Mr Dalyell's questions about when and how the then British Ambassador to Peru, Mr Wallace, had been informed of the Peruvian proposals have not previously been answered in Parliament, but Ministers have approved Notes for Supplementaries in the terms now used. Sir N Henderson gave an accurate account of events in Lima in his article in the Economist of 12 November (page 56). The assertion that Mr Wallace was kept closely informed by the Peruvians about all aspects of the peace negotiations appears in Gavshon and Rice's book (pages 83-4), although that version attributes the claim to the Peruvian Foreign Minister, Dr Arias Stella, rather than to the more staunchly pro-Argentine Prime Minister, Dr Ulloa. Mr Wallace reiterated the true facts when he commented on the Gavshon/Rice version (Montevideo Telno 136 of 22 March 1984). His original reporting telegrams from Lima (134 and 137 of 3 May 1982) confirm that he knew nothing about the Peruvian proposals until the Foreign Minister summoned him to tell him about them. He could not have known from the local media that anything was in the offing because President Belaúnde only announced the fact - but not the details - of the Peruvian initiative at a press conference immediately before Mr Wallace was summoned by the Foreign Minister (Lima Telno 139 of 3 May 1982 and Reuter report reproduced in The New Statesman of 13 May 1983).

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Secondly, the Belgrano was within the sights of HMS Conqueror before the departure of the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East for Washington on 1 May 1982. Why was the then Foreign Secretary, a member of the War Cabinet, not informed of this extremely important development?

Draft Answer

Mr Pym left for Washington on the afternoon of 1 May, which was the day on which the Conqueror first sighted the Belgrano. However, 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 to request a change in the Rules of Engagement to permit the Belgrano to be attacked outside the Total Exclusion Zone.

Background

This question cannot be answered factually without revealing the time at which news of HMS Conqueror's detection of the Belgrano was received in London. This has not so far been made public. The answer is consistent with the Prime Minister's letter of 4 April to Mr Denzil Davies MP.

Thirdly, "The Sinking of the *Belgrano*" and *The Economist* both make clear that arrangements had been made for the loan or the purchase or, in some form, the use of a United States aircraft carrier in the event that HMS *Hermes* or *Invincible*, or both, were lost in the campaign. Was the Foreign Secretary of the day, and the War Cabinet, made aware of this?

Draft Answer

No such arrangement was made, so there was no question of Mr Pym or other members of the War Cabinet being made aware of it.

Background

L 1. An (unsigned) article by Simon Jenkins in The Economist
of 3 March 1984 claimed that 'the Americans decided that if
the Argentines sank either of the British carriers, *Hermes*
or *Invincible*, they would immediately replace it. Though
known to certain British naval and diplomatic officials,
M this was not known to the War Cabinet'. Gavshon and Rice
(page 51) attribute to Sir N Henderson the comment that,
if either or both the British carriers had been lost, 'we
would have had to ask the Americans to make one available
to us'. In a recent informal conversation with the Head of
N FID, Sir Nicholas Henderson firmly maintained that he said
no such thing. But he does recall reporting from Washington
on 3 May 1982 (Telno 1572) that Mr Weinberger had told him
that he was 'waiting to hear whether he could help by
sending down a carrier' which 'might serve as a mobile runway
for us'. This idea was not apparently dependent on the
loss of one of our own carriers; nor is there any record on
our papers of it ever being followed up. It is not clear
whether Mr Weinberger's 'wait' followed a request from us
or an offer by him - the latter is the more plausible
O interpretation of his remark. Either way, The Times
(among others) reported on 9 March that Mr Weinberger had
denied that any such offer had been made.

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Fourthly, did General Haig telephone the Prime Minister at any time on 1 May or 2 May 1982 on the subject of the Peruvian peace initiative or on any other related matter?

Draft Answer

No such telephone call was made.

Background

1. A BBC 2 Newsnight programme on 29 April 1983 claimed among other things that an anonymous American source had stated that Mr Haig personally had telephoned the Prime Minister before the Chequers meeting on 2 May 1982. In his commentary of 9 May, 1983, Mr Fearn concluded that 'from the evidence on the file, none of these assertions has any truth in it and all can be firmly rebutted'. Mr Dalyell drew attention in Question 1 to the fact that Mr Haig's memoirs are shortly to be published (his reference to 25 March related only to the start of the serialisation of the memoirs in The Sunday Telegraph: the book itself is not due out until the end of April. The extract published on 25 March covered only Mr Haig's negotiations up to the end of the first week of April 1982). In Question 10, Mr Dalyell has insinuated that the memoirs might contradict certain points in the official British account of events. We have asked HM Embassy to try to obtain the full text of the book. Meanwhile, the instalment published on 25 March showed general solidarity with our position. One cannot be certain that his account of 1-2 May will coincide with ours, but some of the remarks attributed to him by The Observer give grounds for optimism.

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Sixthly, after Galvani's acceptance in principle of the peace proposal, did Ambassador Wallace report to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that he had been invited, along with Argentina's ambassador in Lima, to attend a formal signing ceremony on the night of 2 May?

Seventhly, did Charles Wallace seek Foreign and Commonwealth Office or Prime Ministerial authority to attend that signing ceremony and what, if any, instructions were sent to him?

Draft Answer

1. You asked me two questions about 'a formal signing ceremony on the night of 2 May in Lima'. Mr Wallace did not at any stage report that he and his Argentine colleague had been invited to attend such a ceremony; there was consequently no question of his asking for authority to attend it. He did report - in the telegram of 3 May to which I have already referred - that Dr Arias had told him that the Peruvians expected that, if their proposals were acceptable to both Britain and Argentina, the signature of an interim document would take place in Lima: but he did not report that signature was anticipated that same day. I might add that President Belaúnde had said at his press conference on the evening of 2 May that the Argentines were still considering his proposals and that he hoped to make an announcement about them later that night or the following day. I cannot of course speak for the Peruvian Government, but against this background it would seem unlikely that they expected any kind of ceremony to take place that night. At all events, if they did, it was without the British Government's knowledge or encouragement.

Background

1. The draft answer sets out all that Mr Wallace was told about a signing ceremony in Lima. It is clear that the Peruvians did have such a ceremony in mind, if not for the evening of 2 May - as Gavshon and Rice claim - then for shortly afterwards. As Mr Fearn commented in paragraph 6 of his analysis, 'it has . . . to be borne in mind that

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/Mr Haig

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Mr Haig may well for tactical reasons have given Dr Arias Stella a misleading impression of British acquiescence and involvement'. It would in any case be unwise to dismiss talk of preparations for a signing ceremony. Indeed, for all we know, the Peruvians may have gone to the extent of preparing a text 'bound in red leather', as Mr Dalyell, quoting an article by Mr Paul Foot in the Daily Mirror on 5 May 1983, has claimed ad nauseam, eg in an adjournment debate in the House of Commons on 12 May 1983 (Col 1007). The draft answer repeats Lady Young's remark to Lord Hatch of Lusby in a debate in the House of Lords on 13 July 1983 (Cols 876 and 884): 'I cannot speak for the Peruvian Government, but if any document had been drawn up it was without our knowledge or encouragement'.

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Eighthly, in advance of the War Cabinet decision to attack the Belgrano, was there anyone in London who had been told of the Galtieri decision in principle to withdraw from the islands, or that the Argentine fleet was homeward bound?

Draft Answer

1. You asked whether, before the decision was taken to attack the Belgrano, anyone in London had been told of 'the Galtieri decision in principle to withdraw from the Islands, or that the Argentine fleet was homeward bound'. The British Government received no such indication.

Background

1. It is part of Mr Dalyell's thesis that the Belgrano was sunk because HMG knew that Galtieri had in principle accepted the Peruvian proposals. The evidence suggests that he may have indicated to President Belaúnde that he personally was prepared to accept them but that this was subject to the views of his colleagues. Either way, HMG at the time knew nothing about the proposals and the Argentines' reactions to them. Nor, if we had known, would the Argentines' negotiating record during the preceding month have lent credibility to Argentine professions of readiness to accept them.

2. With the second part of Question 8, Mr Dalyell is seeking to circumvent Ministers' customary refusal to comment on the allegation he has frequently made that HMG knew from intercepted Argentine signals that the Belgrano, along with the other elements of the Argentine fleet then on patrol, had been instructed to return to port well before the attack took place (one of his most recent interventions on this was on 30 November 1983 when he unsuccessfully sought an emergency debate). On this occasion Mr Dalyell does not refer to intelligence reports, so it is less easy to avoid comment. If something is included along the proposed lines, this will be the first time he has been told that we did not see intercepts of the sort he alleges. Thorough research has been carried out, without producing any trace of the supposed messages. It is possible that Mr Dalyell and others like Gavshon and Rice - who refer to them (page 81), citing Argentine sources - are the victims of Argentine disinformation. A denial that HMG ever saw such messages would seem overdue.

Ninethly, if nobody in London was so informed, have any attempts been made subsequently to establish why the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East, the British embassy in Washington and the British embassy in Lima failed to do so?

Draft Answer

1. Mr Pym and our Embassies in Washington and Lima reported, fully and promptly, all the relevant information that was available to them. But they, like their colleagues in London, were not aware of any indications that the Argentines might be prepared to withdraw from the Falklands or that they had ordered their fleet home.

Background

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I 1. The answer to question 9 follows logically from that to question 8. As far as Galtieri's reaction to the Peruvian proposals is concerned, there is no evidence on our files that Mr Haig told Mr Pym of the Argentine President's 'acceptance in principle'. Gavshon and Rice claim (page 93) that Mr Haig was informed of the Argentine reaction 'between 8 and 12 noon' Lima time (noon in Lima was 1 p.m. in Washington - ie after Mr Haig's morning meeting with Mr Pym). Washington's reporting telegram (no 1566 of 2 May) said only that 'the Americans had heard this morning via Costa Méndez that Argentina might be able to accept something like them' (the Peruvian proposals). Mr Wallace in Lima was told by Dr Arias Stella that evening that Galtieri was 'favourably disposed' towards them (Lima telno 137 of 3 May 1982).

Tenally, both the Prime Minister and the right hon. Member for Cambridgehire, South-East referred dismissively to the Peruvian peace proposals as no more than a mere outline. Haig described it to Gavshon in his book as

"a formulation that provided hope that a settlement could be reached"

The Peruvians—President Belaunde, Ulloa and former Foreign Minister Arias Stella—all regarded it as a firm and thorough basis for an agreement. How can the British characterisation be reconciled with the United States and Peruvian descriptions? Some of us look forward very much to seeing what Haig's memoirs say about how advanced the Peruvian proposals were.

Draft Answer

Mr Pym has already given a full account of the way in which the Peruvian proposals were described to him, and of his discussion of them with Mr Haig, in his letter published in the Daily Mirror on 20 May 1983. Mr Haig's account, as published in The Sunday Telegraph on 1 April, makes it quite clear that on 2 May 1982 Mr Haig and President Belaunde 'worked all day' on the new proposals: this is consistent with what Mr Pym has said.

Background

Mr Pym's letter to the Daily Mirror, published on 20 May 1983, assesses the proposals as "at best a promising basis for further work". Immediately before the passage from Gavshon and Rice which Mr Dalyell quotes, there is another quoting Dr Arias Stella as saying that the Peruvian proposal 'was the result of very intensive negotiations, mainly with Haig, whom we always took to be speaking for Britain. We thought that we had worked out a completely practical proposal which had a fair and balanced text ...' (pages 93-94).

Finally, was the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East speaking with the knowledge and authority of the War Cabinet when he told journalists in Washington on the evening of 1 May 1982 that 'no further military action is envisaged at the moment, except to keep the exclusion zone secure'? Had he been briefed in any way on the military situation before leaving London? Did he have any telephonic contact with any of his Foreign and Commonwealth Office advisers on Sunday 2 May 1982?

Draft Answer

1. Finally, you query Mr Pym's comments to journalists on his arrival in Washington on the evening of 1 May 1982 that 'no further military action is envisaged at the moment, except to keep the Exclusion Zone secure', as if this were inconsistent with the subsequent attack on the Belgrano (thereby implying that Mr Pym was ignorant of the military situation). There is no inconsistency. As has repeatedly been explained (for example, by Lady Young in reply to a similar suggestion by Lord Hatch of Lusby in the House of Lords on 13 July 1983), the Government had notified the Argentine Government in a message delivered on 23 April 1982 - and immediately circulated in the Security Council - that the declaration of the 200-mile Maritime Exclusion Zone around the Falkland Islands was without prejudice to our right to take additional measures of self-defence and that 'any approach on the part of Argentine warships . . . which could amount to a threat to interfere with the mission of British forces in the South Atlantic will encounter the appropriate response.' The Belgrano constituted a real threat on 2 May. For that reason, and for that reason alone, the Belgrano was attacked. If it had not been, the Belgrano would have been free to carry out attacks on our own ships. Of course Mr Pym was fully briefed before his departure for Washington. His letter to the Daily Mirror explains why he saw no need to telephone London on 2 May.

/Background

Background

S 1. The difficulty about a factual answer about military briefing is the same as that entailed in question No 2 above. The language suggested in the first part of the draft reflects what Lady Young told Lord Hatch of Lusby on 13 July 1983 (col 884).

X 2. Mr Pym's comment in his Daily Mirror article that 'There is no basis whatsoever for any suggestion that, following my first talk with Mr Haig, I should have leapt to the telephone to report to my colleagues that peace was at hand' suggests that he did not initiate any such contact. In the other direction, Mr Fearn's chronology, and Mr Wright's minute of 2 May 1982 at flag B of that analysis, show that there was a telephone call from the FCO to the Embassy in Washington to ensure that Mr Pym was informed of the change in the Rules of Engagement to allow the Task Force to engage Argentine warships outside the TEZ; and another a short time before that. But there is no record of any telephone conversation at this time with Mr Pym himself; nor of any mention of the Belgrano in those between Mr Wright and the Embassy.

PRIME MINISTER

BELGRANO

The Foreign Secretary seeks your agreement to answers which he proposes to send by letter to Tam Dalyell - in response to questions which the latter asked in the Foreign Affairs Debate.

The answers themselves seem satisfactory to me. But I have submitted to you separately yet another letter from Tam Dalyell, this time to you, containing a further series of questions. I am consulting Departments about the reply to that letter, but I am inclined to think that, as a matter of tactics, there is little point in answering all the queries he puts. I believe it would be better for you to say that his one object is to establish that we attacked the Belgrano to destroy the Peruvian peace initiative and that that is simply not true, as your letter to Denzil Davies makes clear. Full stop.

The immediate tactical question is whether it is best for the Foreign Secretary to take a similar line or to send the detailed reply which he proposes. Perhaps the best thing is for him to send the detailed reply, on the grounds that the questions were put but not answered before you wrote to Denzil Davies, and that thereafter the Government take the line that there is no point in replying in detail to Mr. Dalyell.

Agree that the Foreign Secretary should reply as he proposes?

Yes not A.S.C. I think his answer need revision. As in previous some of them accept it seems to me that Tam Dalyell's proposition is not

6 April 1984