



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

1 October 1984

Dear Richard,

BELGRANO

I sent you on 28 September a further letter from Mr. George Foulkes, MP, to the Prime Minister about the Belgrano and asked for a draft reply.

The Prime Minister's inclination is to send a short reply of the sort suggested in my letter to you, but she would welcome the Defence Secretary's views and would be guided by them.

Yours sincerely,  
Chris Powell

(C.D. POWELL)

Richard Mottram, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence.



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

28 September 1984

BELGRANO

BF1  
I enclose a copy of a further letter from Mr. George Foulkes, MP, putting a large number of detailed questions on the Belgrano incident. I should be grateful for a draft reply.

It is for consideration whether the Prime Minister should not simply send a short reply which says that she has already set out clearly in the earlier letter and annex what happened and corrected certain earlier statements. She has nothing further to add and does not therefore propose to continue the correspondence. Against this, the Defence Secretary is likely to have to answer the detailed questions at some stage, so there is nothing to be lost by giving a full reply now.

I think the Prime Minister would welcome the Defence Secretary's advice on which would be the better course.

I am sending a copy of this letter and the enclosure to Colin Budd (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

C.D. POWELL

Richard Mottram, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence.

From: George Foulkes. M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

27 September 1984

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The Rt Hon Mrs Margaret Thatcher MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1

Dear Prime Minister

Thank you for your letter of 19th September.

Your reply failed to answer the question in my letter of 14th September and I am obliged to ask it again. When did the War Cabinet learn of the change in the course of the Belgrano communicated to Northwood at 3.40 pm on 2nd May? If the War Cabinet as such did not learn of the change, when did you as Prime Minister? You will appreciate my concern. Since the end of hostilities and the Argentine surrender on 14th June over 75 questions relating to the sinking of the Belgrano have been asked in the House of Commons. Yet on no occasion has your Government sought to rectify the errors and misleading impressions given by Sir John Nott in his statement to the House of Commons on 4th May.

I would seek clarification on the following points:

1. At what time on 2nd May did Admiral Woodward seek a change in the Rules of Engagement? If the Belgrano was posing a threat, why was a change not sought immediately after visual contact had been established with the Belgrano at 2.00 pm on 1st May?
2. You state in paragraph 7 in the annex to your letter that "On May 1st . . . the Foreign Secretary raised the need for a further warning to the Argentine Government". Was this communicated to the War Cabinet orally or in writing?
3. In your speech to the House of Commons on 14th April (Hansard vol. 21 col. 1147) you state in connection with the establishment of the Maritime Exclusion Zone: ". . . any Argentine warships and Argentine Naval Auxiliaries found within this Zone are treated as hostile and are liable to be attacked by British Forces . . . It appears to have exerted influence on Argentina, whose navy has been concentrated outside the zone. If the zone is challenged, we shall take that as the clearest evidence that the search for a peaceful solution has been abandoned." What influence did it exert and did the change in the Rules of Engagement accompanying the establishment of the MEZ, and subsequently the TEZ, allow attacks on Argentine positions outside the zones?

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4. Why were the Rules of Engagement changed on 2nd May to allow attacks on all Argentine ships, and not just the Belgrano, as requested by Admiral Woodward?
5. In your answer to Denzil Davies of 4th April, 1984, you quote Admiral Woodward as saying, relating to the Belgrano, "I therefore sought, for the first and only time throughout the campaign, a major change to the Rules of Engagement". Did he not seek a change on 30th April to enable an attack on '25 de Mayo'? If not, on whose advice did you authorise a change?
6. As no formal state of war existed and action was taken under Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, was the change in the Rules of Engagement on 2nd May immediately reported to the Security Council as required by Article 51? If not, on what date was it reported?
7. In establishing the MEZ and the TEZ, what criteria were used and on whose advice was 200 miles fixed as the limit?
8. When did (a) Northwood and (b) the War Cabinet learn of Argentinian orders for their ships to return to base?
9. Whether you will place in the Library of the House of Commons the log of Conqueror's movements for 2nd - 4th May 1982.
10. Has national security been damaged by your letter to me of 19th September 1984? If not how do you explain the comment of your Minister on 16th December 1982 (Hansard col 261 ) in which he refuses to reveal facts, revealed in your letter, on the grounds of a "detriment of our security".
11. Did the War Cabinet meet daily throughout the conflict and was the Attorney General present at the meeting of 2nd May?
12. Why did you claim on 21st February 1984 in answer to Mr Dalyell's question on the Belgrano (Hansard col 695) that: "The full facts are there... They support the Government's case". Do you not agree that the full facts had not been given on that date?
13. Whether you agree with statements made by Lord Lewin in the same Panorama programme to which you referred in your letter, that the Belgrano "was a threat as long as she existed".
14. Why did Conqueror believe that the Belgrano was still afloat without steering on 3rd May?
15. You state that "On the basis of all the material that was available at the time, my colleagues and I were satisfied that we took the right decisions". Has any material been made available to you since that would have led you to take different actions?

- 3 -

I look forward to receiving answers to these points as well as to my previous question of 14th September, which was not answered in your reply of 19th September.

Yours sincerely

*Am Clarke*

fp GEORGE FOULKES MP

Dictated by Mr Foulkes and signed in his absence.

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