



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

22 June 1987

*File No  
cc 500  
no  
HO  
Law Offices  
Sey Solictor  
CO*

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 20 May.

Mrs. Thatcher understands that the question of disclosure of extracts from your diary is under discussion between the legal representatives of those involved in your litigation.

N. L. WICKS

Mr. Narendra Sethia.

*RS*



10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Private Secretary*

28 May 1987  
Ack

I attach a copy of a letter the Prime Minister has received from Narendra Sethia of Trade Wind Yacht Charters Ltd.

BF | I should be grateful if you could provide a draft reply for Private Secretary signature, to reach me by Thursday 11 June.

(P. A. BEARPARK)

David Ball, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence.

to

**TradeWind**

**YACHT CHARTERS LTD**

RODNEY BAY MARINA PO BOX 372, RODNEY BAY ST. LUCIA, WEST INDIES

Telephone St. Lucia 28424



The Prime Minister  
The Rt. Hon. Mrs Margaret Thatcher  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1  
England U.K.

20th May 1987

Dear Prime Minister

I am forced to write to you as a result of what I believe to be wholly unwarranted interference by your Government in a series of litigations commenced by myself against various newspapers between December 1984 and February 1985. I am writing to appeal to your sense of justice and in the hope that you will recognise that such interference, apart from being unjustified and possibly illegal, completely perverts the democratic process enjoyed by the British legal system for so long. I should perhaps explain from the beginning, although you are probably aware of much of the background to my own predicament.

In August 1982, I resigned from the Royal Navy after returning from the Falklands conflict aboard the nuclear submarine HMS CONQUEROR, where I served as Supply Officer for more than 2 years. During the conflict, I had kept a diary as a record of my experiences, thinking that it might one day be useful to have a personal memento of my participation in such historic events. This diary was written up daily in full view of other Officers aboard and, although by the very nature of our circumstances aboard there were indeed items which may have been construed as classified information, no classified documents were used in writing up the diary and nor were any such documents ever taken by me or copied. Any classified parts of the diary formed only a fraction of the entire volume as the bulk of the diary dealt with routine, day-to-day life aboard.

Whilst aware that, on signing the Official Secrets Act declaration on my release from the Service, I should have handed in the diary as it had been compiled during my period of service aboard HMS CONQUEROR, I genuinely felt that as the diary was a personal record of private feelings I was not in breach of security by retaining it. After all, we are all aware that the all-embracing Official Secrets Act can turn a sneeze into a piece of restricted information.

Sometime during 1983, I gave the diary to a friend of mine who had served aboard HMS CONQUEROR during the Falklands conflict and who was, therefore, privy to the general information that it had contained regarding performance of the submarine, capabilities, tactical procedures etc. I asked him to read

the diary to consider whether it might be possible to publish parts of it one day - his father being a publisher. I made it very clear to him that should there be any classified passages, these would not be included in any such publication and I asked him to keep the diary confidential and to return it directly to me. Unfortunately, in my naivety, the diary was handed to Mr Tam Dalyell who is well known to you, copies were made and various newspapers were able to secure portions of it.

I had been quite straightforward about my intention to publish portions of the diary, by writing to the Ministry of Defence to seek guidance on what I could and could not publish. My solicitors hold copies of this correspondence which showed clearly that I had no intention of using classified portions of the diary for nefarious purposes. My intention was to be perfectly "above-board" and, having seen that other Servicemen who had served in the Falklands conflict had published books, I saw no reason why I too should not be able to publish a book.

Then, during 1984, the question of the mysterious "missing logbooks" from HMS CONQUEROR came to light. The newspapers who had had access to my diary put two and two together and got three - assuming at first that my diary was the logbook itself and then realising that it was not.

Mrs Thatcher - I believe that you know perfectly well that I have not divulged any classified information or been disloyal in any way towards the Royal Navy or the British Government. I have always known why the "log books went missing" but I have had sufficient sense of loyalty and responsibility to say nothing, even when your Government found it convenient to allow the newspapers and general public to believe that it was I who had stolen the logbooks. You may remember that I was aboard HMS CONQUEROR for more than 2 years prior to the Falklands conflict and that combined with the knowledge of the submarine's activities after her return from the Falklands makes it very clear to me why these log books 'disappeared'. I have said nothing and I would not say anything - because, unlike many people, I happen to have some loyalty. Kindly consider the possibility, however, that other persons with less sense of duty may already have discussed the matter of CONQUEROR's activities during the summer months of 1982 with journalists.

When the issue of Mr Clive Ponting raised its ugly head towards the end of 1984, the matter of the 'missing logbooks' suddenly became one of major concern, understandably. To satisfy public demand - and that of somewhat persistent Labour M.P.'s, a great show had to be made of interviewing members of CONQUEROR's crew and, as you know, I was myself interviewed by Rear Admiral Lang of the Directorate of Naval Security in November 1984. It therefore seemed very strange to myself and others when the Director of Public Prosecutions sent Chief Superintendent Hardy to St Lucia in February 1985 to interview me yet again about the logbooks and my diary. That is to say it was strange until I realised how convenient it would be for your Government if, at the very time that the jury in the Ponting trial was considering its verdict, the Serious Crimes Squad was in the Caribbean 'investigating missing log books' and interviewing a former Naval Officer. The effect on the general public of these combined events was not to be under-estimated - for, on the one hand, the disloyal Mr Ponting was at trial in London whilst on the other side of the world the disloyal former Naval Officer was helping police in their enquiries regarding

the supposedly missing logbooks. You knew, however, that the logbooks were not 'stolen' or 'missing' because, like me, you were aware of the events of August 1982 when HMS CONQUEROR had returned from the Falklands conflict.

I still said nothing, and simply continued to protest my innocence. You knew that I was innocent of any log book theft - though probably the police did not, although Mr Hardy did say that he found the entire matter rather odd and 'never believed for one minute' that I had taken any logbook.

Quite understandably, I believe, I commenced libel actions against the newspapers who had accused me of taking classified information from CONQUEROR: the Observer, the Mail on Sunday and the Sun. Very conveniently, the Mail on Sunday even printed a headline stating "CONQUEROR LOGS SEIZED" - on the very day that the Ponting jury was to have reached its verdict. This, as you know, was more than a coincidence. Had Ponting been found guilty, the effect on the general public of simultaneously discovering yet another 'disloyal' Government servant on the other side of the world would have been considerable. It would have added credence to a guilty verdict. Unfortunately, the one thing in the Ponting case which could not be manipulated was an honest jury - and the jury, of course, went and acquitted him.

Over the past 2½ years I have been hounded by journalists, my family has been hounded by journalists, my status in St Lucia has been questioned with the ensuing, adverse effects on my job, former colleagues in the Navy (believing that I may have taken CONQUEROR's logbooks) have stopped all communication with me, I have been embarrassed in public and in private, I have spent every penny of my money on fighting newspapers who wrongfully accused me of theft of classified documents, and I am now struggling to find £ 40,000 as security for the defendant newspapers' legal costs. The last straw is now apparent in the form of various certificates issued by the Rt. Hon George Younger in which objections are raised regarding use of parts of my diary in these litigations.

The defendant newspapers wish to refer, in their defence, to extracts in my diary in which I have admitted to petty pilfering of minor items such as unclassified charts of the Bay of Biscay, blank stationery books and the like. They wish to refer to these extracts to demonstrate that, on my own admission, I am a thief. I, in turn, wish them to be able to refer to such extracts for I believe that they can hardly be construed in the same vein as theft of classified log books or documents. I also believe that there is probably no Serviceman alive, of whatever rank, who has not at some time or other taken for his personal use a minor item of Service property, be it a blank stationery book or a pencil.

I have no wish to refer at any stage during these litigations to classified extracts from the diary, to nuclear submarine operating capabilities, aspects of communications, performance of the nuclear reactor, equipment and weapon performance or tactical procedures as referred to by Mr Younger in his statements. I have no wish to produce the entire diary, to refer to intelligence available to British forces during the Falklands conflict or to any other material which could prejudice national security. I do believe, however, that reference

to innocuous passages referring to my personal activities can hardly be interpreted as resulting in 'unquantifiable damage' as suggested by Mr Younger and his certificates objecting to the use of any part of my diary in my litigations is nothing short of an attempt to pervert the course of justice.

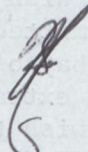
Mrs Thatcher - I can only summarise by stating that you must know, by the very nature of what I have never spoken about, that I have remained loyal and observed my obligations under the Official Secrets Act to the Royal Navy. In my naivete I may have made errors, as you have in your life. I ask you, therefore, to re-consider the "blanket" restrictions that have been placed on reference to my diary and to allow certain, unclassified passages to be used in my litigations so that I can find justice through the British Courts and clear my name of something for which I have been wrongfully accused, as you well know.

I should be grateful if you would give this matter your consideration at the earliest opportunity, remembering that having spent the past 2½ years fighting for what I believe to be just and right, I am not willing to allow these litigations to be struck out without more of a fight.

It may be that you will refer this letter to the Treasury Solicitor's Department or to Mr Younger's own department, from whom I might expect to receive an impersonal reply veiled by jargon, legalese and references to national security. I am not interested in such a reply. I should simply like to know from you that I may be allowed to continue with my litigations, referring if need be to unclassified extracts from my diary (which extracts could be first submitted to Mr Younger's department for approval) and to do so without immoral interference from your Government.

I know that this is a busy time for you and I wish you luck in the forthcoming elections - but I also hope that you are able to give me an early reply as there are vitally important court hearings taking place in July at which my solicitors should like to refer to your decision.

Yours Sincerely



Narendra Sethia

cc. Neale Turk Solicitors