

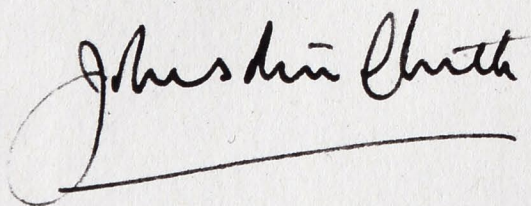
NOTE FOR FILE:

J Ringguth tried to contact Roy Amlot or Tim Langdale in response to MOD's letter of 29 March 1985. Both Roy Amlot and Tim Langdale are on holiday for between 2 and 3 weeks.

J Ringguth confirmed with the DPP that they were never asked either formally or informally by the defence for Mr Heseltine or Mr Stanley to be called. What Roy Amlot may or may not have said in an aside to the defence was not known.

In view of the fact that we did not know what defence counsel may have said to Roy Amlot about calling Mr Heseltine we thought it wise that the middle sentence of the second paragraph of the draft be deleted.

J Ringguth rang Mr B H Collins and explained the position. Though the middle sentence was accurate so far as it went, I suggested that it could lead to more questions. It was agreed that the draft would go forward without that sentence in it.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "J S Ringguth", with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

J S RINGGUTH
1 April 1985

From: Miss P M Aldred Secretariat (Overseas)(Commitments)



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Main Building Whitehall London SW1A 2HB

Telephone 01-218 3930 (Direct Dialling)

01-218 9000 (Switchboard)

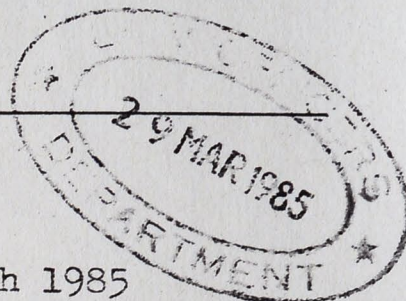
13/17/196.

John Ringguth Esq
Attorney General's Chambers
Law Officer's Department
Royal Court of Justice
Strand

Your reference

Our reference

Date 29 March 1985



Dear Mr Ringguth,

TRIAL OF MR C S PONTING - LETTER FROM MR TAM DALYELL MP

I attach a letter from Mr Tam Dalyell MP, enclosing one from Mr [redacted], asking about the allegation in the Guardian Diary of 20 February that Mr Roy Amlott apologised to Mr Ponting's lawyers that neither Mr Heseltine or Mr Stanley would be appearing as witnesses saying "I'm afraid we could not persuade them to appear".

2. You will be aware that Mr Dalyell raised the issue of why no Ministers appeared in court during the debate on 18 February and Mr Heseltine replied (Hansard Vol 73, Col 343). The draft is based on this reply and also points out that it was open to the Defence Counsel, as with the Prosecution, to summon whatever witnesses they chose.

3. Mr Stanley has asked that the Attorney General should clear the draft reply and I should be grateful for comments by lunchtime on Tuesday 2 April. It would also be very helpful to know if you are aware of anything which could shed light on the Guardian Diary's story.

Yours sincerely,

Brian H. Collins (218-2060)

for Miss P.M. Aldred.

DRAFT REPLY TO MR TAM DALYELL MP

Thank you for your letter of 8 March enclosing one from Mr _____ concerning the allegation in the Guardian Diary of 20 February 1985 that Mr Roy Amlo^{tt} had apologised to Mr Ponting's lawyers for the absence of MOD Ministers.

As I told you in answer to your interruption to my speech on 18 February, MOD Ministers were not responsible for the conduct of the trial of Mr Ponting. ~~It was open to both those acting for the Defence as well as the Prosecution, to summon whatever witnesses they felt appropriate to the case.~~ Nobody asked either myself or John Stanley to appear and there is absolutely no truth in the suggestion that the Counsel for the Prosecution had been unable to persuade us to appear.

With regard to Mr _____ comments about the reasons for the sinking of the Belgrano, I can only reiterate that the Government on 2 May 1982 had clear and unequivocal indications that the Task Force was under threat from a strong and coordinated pincer movement by the major units of the Argentine Navy, including both the cruiser 'General Belgrano' and the aircraft carrier '25 de Mayo'. To discuss this further would still risk irreparable damage to national security and I am simply not prepared to take that risk.

I hope you will show this reply to Mr _____ and that you will both accept my word.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

8th March, 1985

Rt Hon Michael Heseltine, MP
Secretary of State for Defence,
Whitehall,
LONDON.

Dear Michael,

I enclose a letter that I have received 'unprompted'
from Mr _____ in your bld county of Devon.

Is it true that Roy Amlott apologised to Mr Ponting's
lawyers for the non-attendance of yourself and John Stanley ?
Did Mr Amlott try to persuade ~~me~~ you or John Stanley to appear ?

Naturally, I have read carefully your reply to my interruption
on 18th February column 743.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

Tam Dalyell, MP

Dear Mr Dalzell,

The enclosed is a cutting which if you had not noticed I thought you should be aware of.

Having listened to the debate all day I felt the Minister spend a long time telling us nothing, so feel he should not get away with it on the point stated. You will, no doubt will be to establish the correctness

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of this article.

I think the sinking of the *Belgrano* was purely for propaganda reasons.

Having failed to locate the aircraft carrier the only thing an officer was left with was that ship. It had to be sunk quickly or it too would have got away.

Having been employed during 1943/44 on night bombing of Germany I learnt that propaganda is a very useful weapon.

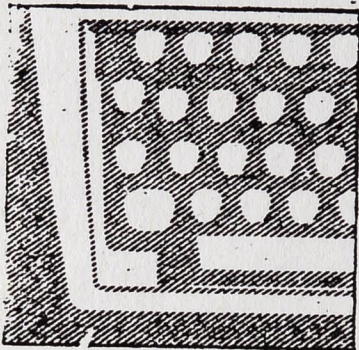
I wish you all success in your efforts to obtain the truth from

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people quite happy to hide
the kind a woman's skirts.
You will notice this letter
is heavily taped just
for devilment

Yours Faithfully

GUARDIAN
O. 20 / 2 / 85



DIARY

THE waters that have closed over the General Belgrano do not grow any less muddy. Regard Mr Heseltine's explanation of why he did not appear as a witness during the trial of Mr Ponting: "If it had been considered necessary or desirable by those conducting the case to have called me to the court I should, of course, have been prepared to go. They did not ask me to go or consult me about whether they should ask me to go, and I was not called."

Compare and contrast with the prosecuting counsel, Mr Roy Amlott, who was overheard apologising to Mr Ponting's lawyers on the first day of the trial for the fact that neither Mr Heseltine nor Mr John Stanley would be appearing as witnesses: "I'm afraid we could not persuade them to appear."