



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

21 October 1983

Prime Minister

- ① Content for Sir N. Henderson to write the article?
- ② Would you like to see the text?

Dear John,

A-J.C. 24/10

The Prime Minister will wish to be aware of the intention of Sir Nicholas Henderson to write an article about the Falklands crisis, which would be published in the Economist.

The initiative came from Sir N Henderson in July. He told us that his idea was to write about the bearing of the sinking of the Belgrano on the negotiations that were current at the time, as seen through the eyes of the United States authorities. Sir N Henderson said he particularly wished to help us to scotch the myths that were developing about the Belgrano. Our view at that stage, when speculation about the Belgrano was continuing, was that we would have no objection to his writing such a piece, provided we could see it first.

In September, Sir N Henderson showed us a draft article. He had expanded the scope to a point where it was unrecognisable from the basis earlier agreed with us: he addressed at much greater length than the Belgrano episode the whole question of the United States' help to us, both material and diplomatic. We pointed out the political drawbacks of reviving this issue. These reservations have been echoed by senior officials in the State Department whom we have consulted. But Sir N Henderson has been encouraged by Mr Haig and Mr Weinberger to draw attention to the United States' help for us, which, Sir N Henderson insists, has not been properly understood in Britain. Most recently he has quoted Mr Deaver as seeing advantage in the publication of an account of the US contribution. (None of the three has seen any text.)

While we were debating with Sir N Henderson the case for publishing material about the United States' role, controversy over the Belgrano died down and Sir Robin Day's revelation about Mr Foot's private views encouraged us to think that the Labour Party would not be inclined to revive the issue. We therefore suggested to him that, while we would welcome a piece in support of our account when the issue did surface again, we would prefer him not to publish an article whose principal effect would be to restimulate discussion. *~~~~~* that Mr Tam Dalyell has travelled to Peru and may be received by

/President

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

~ Passage deleted and retained under Section 3(4) of the Official Secrets Act 1989. 17 January 2013



President Belaunde. A further, Dalyell-inspired, round of Belgrano controversy thus appears inevitable. It may, therefore, be that we can put Sir N Henderson's perseverance to good effect.

At our suggestion, Sir N Henderson is currently revising his article, in order to shorten his coverage of the United States' role and to excise altogether his more provocative passages on the subject. We have asked him to concentrate on the Belgrano, as well as to ensure that his account is fully consistent with those already given by Ministers in Parliament and in the Press. He has just given us a revised text, designed to meet these aims, which we shall study very carefully. It would meanwhile be helpful to know whether the Prime Minister sees objection to Sir N Henderson going ahead on these lines. He is evidently under considerable pressure from the Economist. Andrew Wright has suggested that, if in the end no article is forthcoming, the implication must be that we are not sure of our ground on the Belgrano. We do not of course wish to have our arms twisted in this way, but given the Dalyell factor, the Foreign Secretary thinks that the balance of advantage does now lie in allowing Sir N Henderson to go ahead on the terms described, preferably delaying publication until Mr Dalyell has made his next public move. We will of course clear the text in detail here before publication, and would be happy to show it to you also if you so wish.

Yours ever

J E Holmes

(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

CONFIDENTIAL



file

Br

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

7 November 1983

Thank you for your letter of 4 November with which you enclosed a draft article by Sir Nicholas Henderson about the Belgrano.

The Prime Minister considers that if at all possible the reference in the article to the rules of engagement should be deleted and I should be grateful if you could seek to achieve this. Mrs. Thatcher also agrees that Mr. Francis Pym should be given the opportunity to comment on the article and indeed I understand that this has now been arranged.

A. J. COLES

Brian Fall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

CONFIDENTIAL

AP

PRIME MINISTER

Belgrano: Article by Sir N. Henderson

I attach a FCO letter together with a passage from an article which Sir Nicholas Henderson has written for The Economist dealing with the Belgrano.

The article may be published next week and is clearly relevant to Mr. Dalyell's latest moves.

There are passages in the article which I do not like. I doubt whether it is right to reveal Rules of Engagement (see page 4). I also think that he reveals a good deal more than he should about his conversations with the Americans and others during the Falklands campaign.

But I gather from the FCO that it may not be very easy to secure changes. I suspect, though I do not know, that The Economist already have an advance text. Nevertheless I think we should try to get the reference to Rules of Engagement deleted. And if there is anything else to which you particularly take exception, I am sure that we could persuade Sir Nicholas to change it.

A.S.C.

I agree

And, I think Francis must see it

4 November 1983

because it reveals private conversations.

not.

CONFIDENTIAL



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

4 November 1983

Dear John,

Sir N Henderson

Thank you for your letter of 24 October.

We have gone over very carefully with Sir N Henderson the account in his draft article of the events of 1-3 May 1982. I enclose a copy of this. He is aware of Mr Tam Dalyell's remarks to the press here and in Peru suggesting that he is likely at any moment to make a major new move in his campaign about the Belgrano. Sir N Henderson envisages giving his material to the Economist next week. In the light of Mr Dalyell's declared intentions, we see no need to stand in the way of this timing.

As to the rest of the article, John Holmes told you in his letter of 21 October that we had been pointing out to Sir N Henderson the political drawbacks of reviving the question of United States' assistance to us during the Falklands crisis. He has agreed to delete all coverage of American materiel assistance. He is re-writing the passages about American diplomacy in the light of the difficulties in our relations with Washington over Grenada. In this altered context, in which Sir N Henderson's comments will be about present-day events as well as those which occurred when he was still Ambassador in Washington, it is less feasible - and less necessary - to go over the non-Belgrano passages with Sir N Henderson in detail, when he has written them. We believe that, instead we should concentrate on continuing to do all we can to ensure that his treatment of the Belgrano episode is satisfactory. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary thinks that this section, as it stands, should be helpful to us when published. But he points out that he is not himself familiar with the story at first hand. In the circumstances, he thinks the Prime Minister will want to form her own view. He also believes that Mr Pym should

/be

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL



be given the opportunity to comment on the text, and we shall be in touch with Sir N Henderson about this.

Answer

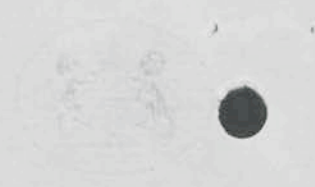
A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'B J P Fall', written in a cursive style.

(B J P Fall)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL

Argentina: Relaciones Pt 35



SIR NICHOLAS HENDERSON'S ARTICLE: PASSAGE ON BELGRANO MYTHS

The U.S. decision of 30 April to support Britain was a turning-point in our fortunes. But it did not put an end to negotiations or to America's part in them. On the contrary, the U.S. Government's desire to bring off a peaceful settlement grew with the likelihood of bloodshed in the South Atlantic.

On the afternoon of Saturday May 1st Pym arrived in Washington for the second weekend running. There was static in the air and the Press everywhere. Some decisive development, whether diplomatic or military, was widely expected. Pym said publicly that the previous week he had come to Washington to visit a negotiator, this week to visit an ally, a remark that made some members of the U.S. Administration wince. To me in private Pym spoke about the very tough mood at home reflected in the debate that had just taken place in the House of Commons. Pym was certainly conscious of the fact that the moment was now approaching when the lines between military and diplomatic action, hitherto wide apart, were beginning to converge and then cross, compounding the high pitch of drama that each had reached. Port Stanley had been bombed by Vulcans that day; other attacks had been made on the Islands by Harriers of which one had been lost.

On Sunday May 2nd at 1900 hours GMT, 2000 hours London time and 1500 hours Washington time, the cruiser Belgrano was hit by the submarine Conqueror following a decision reached by the war cabinet meeting at Chequers around mid day.

/I should

I should emphasize here that it is not true, despite frequent allegations, that the Argentinians had had no warning of our readiness to take military action outside the Maritime Exclusion Zone. On the 23rd April HMG had announced their preparedness to attack any Argentine ship or aircraft wherever it was if it posed a threat to British Forces in the South Atlantic. This was a highly important warning. It was conveyed immediately to the Argentine Government, circulated to the Security Council and released publicly. From that time any Argentinian warship, submarine or military aircraft (including air transports used for reconnaissance) could expect to be attacked on the high seas. The Argentinians have said subsequently that they were taken unawares by the attack. One can only say that this is not surprising given the endemic unawareness of the junta and their confidence that the British would never react militarily to the invasion of the Islands. During the morning (Washington time) the same day - not over breakfast, as some have alleged - Haig met Pym for a tete-a-tete that lasted two hours. He relayed President Reagan's conviction that U.K. Forces were 'doing the work of the free world', but then balanced this with an ardent plea that we could and should avoid a large-scale battle because it would be unnecessary and risky. He said that he hoped that certain proposals, which had originated in a Peruvian initiative, and which were very similar to those he himself had advanced earlier, would be more acceptable in B.A. if they were put forward by a South American government and briefly outlined the proposals to him. (See Annex 'A' for the 7-point plan as it came

/to be

called.)

In reply, as he has said publicly, Pym made it clear to Haig that while he was very ready to consider any new proposal, what Haig had outlined was in essence not very different from his own scheme which had just been totally rejected by Argentina. Pym therefore wondered whether, if and when the details had been worked out, the Argentines were likely to take a different view this time. Pym added that he would of course need to discuss any new proposal with his colleagues in London on his return. Haig fully agreed that more time and more detailed work were needed.

Pym and Haig saw each other again over lunch at the British Embassy, and spoke again on the telephone before Pym flew to New York in the afternoon. It was only at this point that Pym *was* was in a position to telegraph a report to London: that telegram was despatched at 1815 Washington time, or 2315 London time.

Several critics have asked why, before giving their authority for the Conqueror to attack Belgrano, British Ministers did not get into touch with Pym in Washington to make sure that nothing was going on there that might affect their decision. Tam Dalyell has described London's failure to check with Pym as 'mind-boggling'. The first comment to make is, of course, that at the time when Ministers were considering the subject at Chequers nothing had happened in Washington to suggest that any new peace initiative was afoot or that anything more meaningful was likely than the numerous proposals that had been made in previous weeks to which the Argentinians had always responded negatively.

Even if, assuming it would have been possible, British Ministers had been told that discussions had been going on between Washington, Lima and Buenos Aires about the possibility of some new ideas for peace to be put forward with Peruvian blessing, I did not think that they would on that account have refrained from a decision they thought necessary for the security of British forces. After all they had had three weeks of Argentinian diplomatic prevarication. It was widely thought that if negotiations were ever going to lead to anything this would only be as a result, not of conciliatory noises, but of direct and heavy military pressure.

To come to a verdict on this subject, it is necessary to bear in mind the military scene as it looked to London at the end of April and beginning of May. The Task Force had not succeeded - and there was no prospect of it doing so - in neutralising the Argentinian Air Force. The Argentinian fleet had not been bottled up. Their active submarines posed a continuous threat to British forces, particularly to the SSNS. The Argentinians were finding it possible to supply the Islands regularly by sea. The dangers resulting from the lack of adequate air reconnaissance and air defence for the British fleet were all too apparent. How could Ministers in that atmosphere have desisted from authorising any measure that they thought necessary for the security of their forces? It is worth interpolating here that although under the Rules of Engagement Conqueror had to obtain authority before attacking Belgrano, this would not have been so had it been detected by the Argentinians, in which event it had the right to attack without permission.

Is it
right to
reveal
ROE's?
A.S.C. 4
11

/It is not

It is not really my business here to deal with the argument about whether or not the Belgrano posed a military threat, but, given the key part that this incident is said to have played in the diplomatic scene, I cannot refrain from registering my view that the Belgrano and its two escorting destroyers, equipped with exocets, must inherently have been a danger. Apart from their own weapons, they provided useful air guidance for Argentinian air attacks on British forces. Their own position and direction at the time of the attack were irrelevant. Following the Belgrano sinking the Argentinian fleet never came out again which considerably reduced the threat to British forces. Certainly, the Belgrano appeared menacing to Admiral Woodward, This is how he has described it subsequently: 'Early on the morning of the 2nd May all the indications were that the Veinticinco de Mayo, the Argentine carrier, and a group of escorts, had slipped past my forward SSn barrier to the north, while the ^{Cruiser} carrier General Belgrano and her escorts were attempting to complete the pincer movement from the south while outside the Total Exclusion Zone.' * Some critics seem to think that there was something not quite fair in attacking a ship outside the Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ). But the purpose of the TEZ and of the earlier Maritime Exclusion Zone was to try to enforce a blockade of the Islands. They were not intended, and could not after the 23rd April Declaration have been taken to have ^{been} /intended to limit the inherent right to self-defence of the British Forces.

It is surely something of a calumny on the Argentine forces to allege, as had been done, that they were entirely pacific until we sank the Belgrano. The reality is that a large force of /Argentinian

* Woodward and Moore; Ibid

Argentinian Mirages did their best to sink the Glamorgan a day before the attack on the Belgrano, and the Argentine authorities had also ordered their frigates to attack Hermes. We also knew of an Argentinian plan for a co-ordinated attack on the Task Force to be conducted by aircraft from the mainland from carrier based aircraft and from surface ships equipped with Exocets.

From the discussions I have had subsequently I do not believe that any of those who were responsible for the decision to attack Belgrano hesitated about it at the time or have had any regrets about it since, except of course for the loss of life inseparable from war. I certainly do not think that they need have any doubts on the score of the impact of their decision on the negotiations because, as I shall come on to explain, the Argentinians continued to manifest as much, or as little, interest in negotiations after as before the Belgrano attack.

As recorded above, just before he left Washington on that afternoon of Sunday May 2nd for New York, Pym received a telephone call from Haig conveying some empressement about the importance of the Peruvian proposals. Pym then asked me to speak to Haig to emphasise - and these are the words I used - that it was 'too sudden for us to be negotiating new proposals. Pym does not want to be rushed. He has not consulted London about them'. I reported this ^{by} telegram to London less than an hour after the despatch of the first telegram.

At about 2000 hours Washington time, I was having dinner at home when Haig telephoned. He told me of the attack on Belgrano.

/It was

It was the first I had heard of it. He went on to speculate very calmly about the effect of this incident on the Argentinians. He was not sure about it. He thought I had better come down and have a talk with him as soon as possible the following day.

In New York Pym was seeing Perez de Cuellar that evening. The Secretary-General gave him a set of ideas for a negotiated settlement which he also communicated to the Argentinians. These ideas covered the usual ground : troop withdrawals, lifting of sanctions and Exclusion Zone, transitional arrangements, and diplomatic negotiations for a long-term settlement. It is pertinent to note that the Argentine Ambassador to the U.N. continued to discuss these points with the Secretary-General daily from the 2nd to the 19th May (as did Anthony Parsons) so there can be no question of the Belgrano having ditched diplomacy in New York.

Meanwhile, let us see what had been going on in Lima. Much has been alleged about the progress there, in which the Argentinians were engaged, before the decision to sink Belgrano was made at Chequers. The British representative in Lima is said to have been involved in what were regarded as promising talks for a diplomatic solution. Details have even been published in several British papers and quoted in the House of Commons describing the 'red leather' in which the Treaty had been bound ready for signature. The truth is less colourful. On Saturday 1st May the British Ambassador to Lima, Mr C W Wallace, saw the Peruvian Foreign Minister Dr Arias Stella on instructions from London to give an account of the situation in the South Atlantic. Dr Arias Stella asked if there was any way in which

/Peru

Peru could help to break the diplomatic deadlock. He made no specific suggestion, that is to say no new plan or any fresh initiative, nor did he give any hint at all that a Peruvian initiative might be in an advanced state of preparation.

The following day President Belaunde gave a press conference at 1800 hours Lima time (mid-night London time) - ie four hours after the Belgrano had been sunk, although the Peruvians did not yet know this. He stated, without giving details, that Haig had phoned him the previous night (1st May) to put to him a 7-point plan. There was as yet no agreement on it but the Argentinians were considering it and he hoped to be able to make an announcement about it later that night or the following day. Half-an-hour later the Peruvian Foreign Minister summoned the British Ambassador to say that the previous day he had, on Belaunde's instructions, telephoned the Argentine Foreign Minister Costa Mendez to urge him to accept the new formula. This had been discussed by Belaunde and Haig and modified as a result of these talks into a 7-point formula. Dr Arias Stella claimed that the formula had the approval of Costa Mendez, that Galtieri had told Belaunde that he was well disposed towards it but that he had his 'senate'* to consult and convince. The junta were meeting then to consider the terms and their reply was expected hourly. Dr Arias Stella added that he had reason to believe that Haig's proposals had been conveyed with the knowledge and consent of the British Foreign Minister.

Arias Stella told Wallace the following day that the previous evening - i.e. the evening of the 2nd May Lima time - the junta

*presumably his euphemism for the senior officers surrounding him.

had rejected the Peruvian proposal as a result of the torpedoing of the Argentine cruiser. But Arias Stella went on to say that the Argentinians had not entirely closed the door.

In my first meeting with Haig on May 3rd, he told me that Belaunde had complained bitterly about the torpedoing which he said had wrecked the chance of peace. He was as sore with the U.S.A. as he was with the U.K.

Haig told me of his worry that the Argentinians might return to the Rio Treaty Organisation confident that they could get support for sanctions against Britain. The U.S.A. would veto it but it would divide the hemisphere between north and south. It was being put about in B.A. that the Belgrano had been hit as a result of intelligence passed by U.S. satellites and with the help of U.S.A. special weapons. Haig feared that if further military action was taken by the British, American opinion and that of the west generally might become less favourable towards the U.K. People might say that Britain was over-reacting.

I told Haig of the attempts the Argentinians had made to sink our ships before the Belgrano had been attacked. It could not, therefore, be said that the Argentinians had been behaving peacefully. Haig said that it was difficult to know whether hitting the Argentinians was the only thing that would bring them to negotiate or whether it made them more inflexible, on which I made the obvious retort that for three weeks we had made no attack upon them and they had shown no flexibility.

/Haig

Haig asked me to put to Mrs Thatcher that she should come forward with some declaration expressing readiness to stop hostilities at a certain time provided the Argentinians said they would do the same and undertake to withdraw.

I said that the Argentinians had had plenty of time to negotiate and what we could not do at this stage was to let up on the military pressure unless there was a categorical assurance that the Argentinians were going to stop military action and leave the islands.

S E C R E T

2 de VC



Argentinian
relations
pt. 35

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

24 October 1983

Sir Nicholas Henderson

John Holmes wrote to me on 21 October about the intention of Sir Nicholas Henderson to write an article for The Economist about the Falklands crisis.

The Prime Minister has no objection to Sir Nicholas proceeding on these lines. We note that you will be clearing the text in detail. We should like an opportunity to see it.

BK |

A. J. COLES

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

S E C R E T

Rh