



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

5 August 1985

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This should be copied to MOD
P 6/8

Dear Mr. Dalyell

Thank you for your letter of 29 July.

You will recall that the Government's position on this matter was fully set out in the Debate in the House of Commons on 18 February 1985 when the House voted by 351 votes to nil that

"This House recognises that the sinking of the General Belgrano was a necessary and legitimate action in the Falklands campaign; and agrees that the protection of our Armed Forces must be the prime consideration in determining how far matters involving national security and the conduct of military operations can be disclosed."

We shall of course be responding in the normal way to the recent report of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee but I certainly do not propose to comment on the newspaper article to which you refer.

Yours sincerely
Raymond Stiller

Tam Dalyell, Esq., M.P.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

29/7/85

Dw (MSD) PM

Dear Prime Minister,

You will certainly have had drawn to your attention the article on Page 9 of to-day's Guardian by Clive Ponting.

Could I ask you just three questions ?

1. Why did you ignore a minute on International Law on April 30th 1982 from your then Foreign Secretary and your Attorney ? Is this not a denial of Cabinet Government as we know it in Britain ?

2. Was there not an obligation on a Prime Minister at least to ask searching questions about the consequences of any order to escalate an (undeclared) war ? Was there really no discussion as to how the Argentines might respond to an attack on a major ship ? (I dealt at some length with this matter during my contribution to the Defence Debate, but no Minister has defended you either during the debate or by letter afterwards !)

3. What do you say to Ponting's statement - " But it is interesting that the Government line has changed. In her letter to the Shadow Cabinet last year Mrs Thatcher said that the "first indications " of the plan came three hours after the sinking. The latest answers now refer to " authoritative indications " being received at this time. This in terms of Whitehall drafting is almost an admission that there were earlier non-authoritative 'indication! ?

Yours sincerely
Ian Daryell