

BIND SHELF

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# New Statesman

## The Belgrano Papers

the documents in full

Thatcher's plan for total war

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NSS

CONFIDENTIAL



HOUSE OF COMMONS FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE: 30

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**PLUS: Smack and sensationalism • Blackpool: the last resort • Miners and the TUC • Edinburgh Festival • NS poetry award**

# All out war

**The *New Statesman* is publishing for the first time the full text of the Belgrano Papers leaked to Tam Dalyell MP. Duncan Campbell and John Rentoul reveal the truth about the sinking of the *Belgrano***

THE REAL SECRETS behind the sinking of the Argentine cruiser *General Belgrano* have emerged from government documents and information obtained by the *New Statesman*. They show that the truth is far more damaging to Mrs Thatcher than anyone has yet realised — and explain why the government has mounted a two year long cover-up and lied at length about the attack on the *Belgrano*.

Crusading MP Tam Dalyell has repeatedly alleged that Mrs Thatcher deliberately ordered the *Belgrano* sunk, with the loss of 368 lives, in a successful attempt to scupper the Falklands peace plan proposed at the time by Peru. But the truth is that the 'war cabinet', largely dominated by military advice, had days before opted for an all-out attack against Argentine forces. They were then warned that their plan was probably illegal. Even as US Secretary of State Haig was still negotiating a peace settlement in Washington — in good faith — Mrs Thatcher ordered the sinking of the Argentine aircraft carrier, *Veinticinco de Mayo*, with 1500 men aboard.

Official Cabinet, Defence Ministry and Foreign Office documents state that:

- Two days before the *Belgrano* was sunk, Mrs Thatcher and the 'war cabinet' ordered an attack on the Argentine aircraft carrier and flagship. But nuclear submarine HMS *Splendid* failed to find the aircraft carrier in time. This attack was ordered while US Secretary of State Alexander Haig was still working on his peace plan;

- Foreign Secretary Pym and Attorney General Havers both warned the Prime Minister that to attack the aircraft carrier without warning was likely to be contrary to the United Nations treaty, and illegal under international law. The same arguments later applied to sinking the *Belgrano*. Their advice was disregarded.

- Britain contemplated using Polaris nuclear missiles against Argentina. A Polaris submarine was sent to the South Atlantic to be ready for action 'if need be'.

Each of these hitherto secret aspects of the South Atlantic war underscore the relentless determination of the Prime Minister, urged on by Royal Navy staff in particular, to seek a rapid and violent military resolution of the Falklands conflict.

The 'war cabinet', officially known as the Overseas and Defence Committee (South Atlantic), or OD(SA), consisted of Mrs Thatcher, Conservative chairman Cecil Parkinson, Defence Secretary John Nott, Foreign Secretary Francis Pym, Chief of the Defence Staff Admiral Sir Terence Lewin, and

Leader of the House William Whitelaw. All of them attended the critical meeting in London on the morning of 30 April. Because of the legal issues involved the meeting was also attended by Attorney General Sir Michael Havers, who is officially the Cabinet's legal adviser.

When the OD(SA) group decided to sink the *Veinticinco de Mayo*, both Francis Pym and Michael Havers fervently dissented. Their dissent is recorded in a minute signed by both men, and dated 1 May 1982. It warns the Prime Minister that to attack the Argentine warship outside the exclusion zone was likely to be illegal. Pym signed the minute just before boarding a plane for Washington.

Sinking without warning any Argentine ship outside the exclusion zone was likely to be illegal because Britain was never at war with Argentina. British military action was justified under the terms of Article 51 of the United Nations Treaty. This grants every state the inherent right of self defence. But the right to use military action is thereby very strictly limited to actions in clear self defence — attacking Argentine vessels outside the exclusion zone when they had not attacked the task force would not be permitted.

The government prepared to justify the planned attack by reference to an announcement the week before that they would

## 1. Cheating the Select Committee

(This minute advised Defence Secretary Michael Heseltine and other ministers how to respond to a request from the House of Commons Select Committee on Foreign Affairs for information about changes in the Rules of Engagement. It was written in early July 1984, and leaked to Mr Dalyell in mid-July. He sent his copies to Select Committee, who decided to return them to the Ministry of Defence.)

**'CONFIDENTIAL'**

### HOUSE OF COMMONS FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE: SOUTH ATLANTIC ROE

1. Following evidence from Mr Francis Pym on the sinking of the *General Belgrano*, the Foreign Affairs Committee asked Lady Young to provide a note listing the changes made to the Rule of Engagement during Operation Corporate. I attach copies of the relevant extracts from the transcripts of the evidence and the note from the Clerk to the Committee.

2. We have discussed the form of our response with the Defence Commitments Staff, DS5 and DNW who had particular responsibility for ROEs during Operation Corporate. We have also borne in mind the statements made to date by Ministers on the subject of the *Belgrano*. Our advice is that we should not provide the Committee with a note listing all the changes. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly the ROE themselves are classified, and are drawn from the Fleet Operating and Tactical Instructions which is a classified document. The Committee have indicated that they would prefer the note to be unclassified. Secondly some of the ROE are... *illegible*... their effectiveness if they were... *illegible*... openly by the FAC. Thirdly, the production of a full list of all changes would be an extremely time consuming exercise, not only because of the difficulty of assembling this information from departmental records, but also because the ROE would have to be paraphrased at some length since their format would be almost incomprehensible to the layman. In addition a full list of changes would provide more information than Ministers have been prepared to reveal so far about the *Belgrano* affair. For

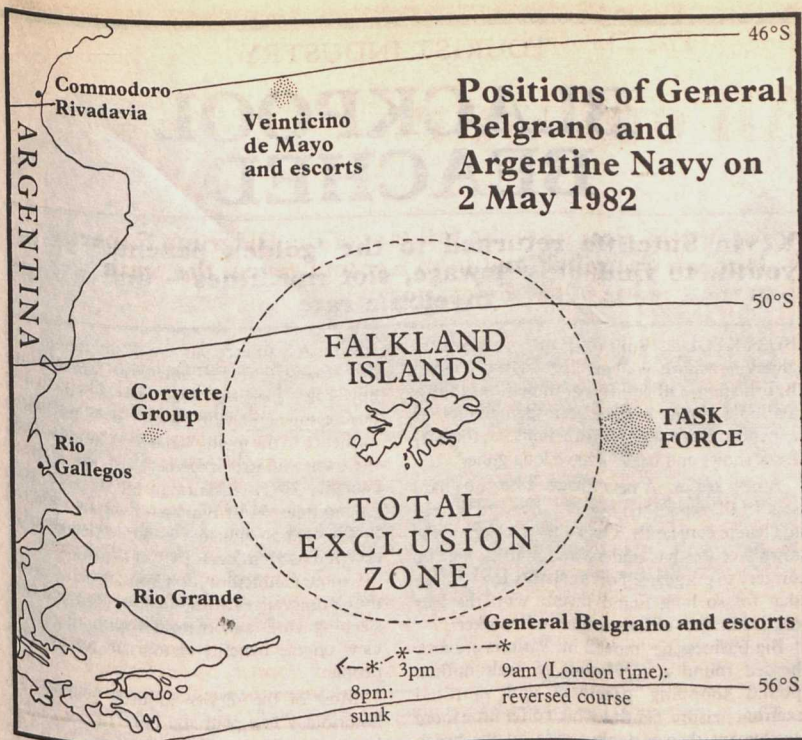
instance, the list of changes in the period 2 April-7 May would show that the engagement of the Argentine aircraft carrier 25 DEMAYO outside the Total Exclusion Zone was permitted from 30 April, and that the change on 2 May was not restricted to BELGRANO but included all Argentine warships over a large area. It would also reveal that whilst the public warnings and ROE changes for the MEZ and TEZ<sup>2</sup> were simultaneous there was a delay until 7 May before the appropriate warning was issued for the 2 May change.

3. I therefore recommend that we should avoid these difficulties by providing the Committee with a more general narrative, explaining broadly when changes were made to ROE, but emphasising that changes were a continual and routine process, thus confirming the thrust of Mr Pym's evidence. I attach a draft on these lines. Since it does not actually specify any ROEs it would pose no problems from a security point of view. It is consistent with previous public statements by Ministers and others, including Admiral Woodward, about the change of ROE which led to the sinking of the *Belgrano*. The draft deliberately avoids any reference to the underlying system of ROEs or the mechanism for their approval, since neither aspect was touched on by Mr Spearing... *illegible*... prior to her<sup>2</sup> departure for Brazil on Wednesday 11 July. If the Minister(AF)<sup>3</sup> is content to clear the attached draft by that stage then Lady Young will submit it together with the other notes. If clearance by Tuesday evening 10 July is not possible it will be necessary for MOD to submit the note direct to the FAC; you will see that the Clerk to the Committee has in any case asked for receipt of material by 13 July. The FCO are quite content for MOD to submit direct if necessary.

**'CONFIDENTIAL'**

(signed)  
J M LEGGE  
Head of DS11  
MB9326 3276MB

1. Maritime Exclusion Zone (declared 7 April 1982, referring to ships only) and Total Exclusion Zone (declared on 30 April, referring to ships and aircraft).
2. Lady Young, the Foreign Office minister.
3. Minister for the Armed Forces, John Stanley.



attack any Argentine ship or aircraft if it 'posed a threat' to the task force. As is well known, the *Belgrano* was sunk while sailing back to Argentina, away from the Falkland Islands. There was in fact no substantive and direct threat to the task force from the Argentine surface ships.

The secrets behind the *Belgrano* sinking have emerged, ironically, after Pym himself gave evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on Foreign Affairs in June this year. He revealed that there had been 'many changes' in the Rules of Engagement; the Select Committee then asked the Defence Ministry for more information. This led to the creation of some of the documents which have now leaked.

ONE WELL-PLACED political source has already revealed to Tam Dalyell that a Polaris submarine was sent to the South Atlantic. Dalyell was informed that the submarine went as far south as Ascension; the likely target for a threatened or demonstration nuclear attack was said to be Cordoba, northern Argentina. The nuclear threat might have been used if any of the task force's capital ships — one of the carriers, or the troop ship *Canberra* — had been destroyed in a missile attack. The Polaris deployment was said to have been ordered in the wake of the sinking of HMS *Sheffield*, after ministers had to confront the possibility that Argentine air superiority and Exocet missiles could mean the military defeat of the British task force, and the rapid political extinction of the Thatcher government.

The *New Statesman* has been able to confirm that a Polaris submarine was indeed deployed to this position. Details of the deployment are given in a series of highly classified telegrams sent to the British Embassy in Washington. While these and other telegrams were exchanged, the Cabinet Office circulated another document assessing the likely cost in

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human lives for each military option in the Falklands war.

In this ministerial briefing, the war planners laid out the likely costs in British lives and money of different military options. The course of action selected — which did not of course involve the use of the nuclear weapons — was expected to produce a British casualty toll of 500-1000 dead — as against the 255 actually killed.

We have attempted to contact Mr Pym and Sir Michael Havers for their comments on these revelations. Both men are on holiday, and could not be reached. The Prime Minister's office and Defence Ministry have refused to make any comment.

The immense significance of the action now revealed is that the orders to attack the *Veinticino de Mayo* were given the day before Foreign Secretary Francis Pym flew to Washington to continue peace discussions with the Americans. Having decided on 30 April to back military desires for a quick and bloody solution, the War Cabinet were apparently nonetheless content to leave the Americans in ignorance of what was about to happen in the South Atlantic. ▽



Michael Havers (left) and Francis Pym: didn't want sinkings

## 2. The letter Heseltine never sent

(The letter was drafted by Ministry of Defence officials as a response to a letter that Tam Dalyell had written to Michael Heseltine in March 1984 (followed by a reminder on 1 May). We have inserted Dalyell's questions in italics. Dalyell only received the first page of the letter, leaving questions after number 6 unanswered.)

Tam Dalyell MP  
House of Commons

(undated)

(Dear Tam,)

Thank you for your letter of 1 May about the sinking of the General Belgrano. As you know, the Prime Minister has already written to Denzil Davies setting out the background to the sinking of the Belgrano and the reasons why that decision was taken. Perhaps I could reply to your more detailed questions about the events as you have set them out.

1. (At what time on 30 April did HMS *Conqueror* first detect the *Belgrano* on its sonar?)  
As the Prime Minister has pointed out, HMS *Conqueror* did not detect the General Belgrano on its sonar on 30 April 1982; it made contact with an accompanying oiler auxiliary.

2&3. (At what time did HMS *Conqueror* come into visual contact on 2 May 1982, and what was the course and speed of the *Belgrano* at the time? At what time on 2 May did HMS *Conqueror* first observe the *RAS* (Refueling At Sea) of the *Belgrano*, and what was its course, speed and position at the time?)

Again as the Prime Minister has already said, the first visual contact with the *Belgrano* was at 2pm London time on 1 May. At the time *Belgrano* was conducting a RAS with the oiler. The position at 3pm London time was 54.07S 064.24W — Course 125, Speed 8 knots.

4. (What was the course followed by the *Belgrano* throughout the period it was being followed by HMS *Conqueror*?)

There is no continuous log of the *Belgrano*'s movements but its position is known at certain times:

London time	Position	Course	Speed (knots)
2 May			
5am	55.20S 060.14W	090	13
9am	55.20S 057.22W	reversed course	—
3pm	55.16S 060.18W	270	14
8pm	55.27S 061.25W	280	11

5. (What was its speed when it was attacked?)  
11 knots.

6. (Why were Mark 8 torpedoes used in preference to Mark 24s? Can both of these weapons be set for proximity detonation?)

This was an operational decision taken by the CO of HMS *Conqueror*. He chose the Mk 8 torpedo because he considered it to have a better chance of penetrating the cruiser's armour and... (end of first page of leaked draft).

7. (At what time was the order to sink the *Belgrano* sent from Northwood on 2 May? Were any signals sent or received by HMS *Conqueror* between the issuing of that order and its execution?)

8. (When did HMS *Splendid* first detect the Argentine aircraft carrier on 1 May? For how long did it maintain contact and what was the course and speed of the aircraft carrier during this time?)

9. (Was the aircraft carrier under surveillance by aircraft or satellite at any time between 30 April and 2 May? If so, what information concerning course, speed and signal exchanges was obtained during this period?)

The attempt to attack the *Veinticinco de Mayo* took place *before* any Argentine units attempted to attack the British task force, confirming that subsequent government references to a so-called 'pincer attack' — closing on the task force from opposite directions — are irrelevant. The first and only Argentine Navy attacks on the task force were provoked by British raids on Port Stanley on 1 May. The leaked documents also show that the Royal Navy was authorised, on the day of the *Belgrano* sinking, to attack *any* Argentine ship; the order was not limited to warships allegedly preparing to attack the task force.

This is the timetable for the critical events of April and May 1982.

**30 April:** Task force is approaching the Falklands from the east, and the nuclear submarines HMS *Conqueror* and HMS *Splendid* search for the *Belgrano* and the *Veinticinco de Mayo*. The Total Exclusion Zone is defined and announced — but the government decides to go on to a full scale attack, without telling Washington or announcing to Argentina that they intend offensive military action outside the Falklands exclusion zone. Cabinet authorises HMS *Splendid* to sink the *Veinticinco de Mayo*, and orders Vulcan bomber raid on Port Stanley, mounted from Ascension Island.

**1 May:** (Morning) Vulcan and Harrier bombing raids start on Port Stanley. Cluster bombs used by the aircraft cause heavy loss of life but are not intended to destroy the runway, as publicly claimed. HMS *Conqueror* confirms by visual sighting that it has found the *Belgrano*. British military commanders ask for permission to sink any or all Argentine Navy units — not just the *Veinticinco de Mayo*.

(Afternoon) Francis Pym flies to Washington to meet Haig. Before he goes, he signs the minute warning Mrs Thatcher that their planned action may be illegal. Argentine Navy order the *Veinticinco de Mayo* and another task group to attack the British Task Force. Royal Navy frigates bombard Port Stanley, using weapons intended to cause maximum casualties.

(Evening) All Argentine Navy units ordered to break off and withdraw to port. The contents of the signal are, it is clear, known to the government and the task force.

**2 May:** (Morning) *Belgrano* reverses course at 9am London time. British attacks on Port Stanley continue.

(Lunchtime) War cabinet meeting at Chequers orders attacks on *all* Argentine ships, wherever located.

(Evening) *Belgrano* sunk at 8pm; 368 killed.

THE FIRST document published here, classified 'Confidential', describes most of the key events involved in changing the 'Rules of Engagement'. It also explains why the government has so determinedly covered-up the *Belgrano* affair. Rules of Engagement (ROE) are orders to naval commanders and others about when, how, and in what conditions they are permitted to attack enemy units. Because of the particular difficulties of staying in moment-to-moment contact with a fast changing battle, and submarines in particular, the ROE are intended to define the limits within which military action is politically permitted or desired. During the Falklands War, the major changes in the ROE were entirely the responsibility of Mrs Thatcher and her advisers.

Continued on page 14

## TOURIST INDUSTRY

# BLACKPOOL BEACHED

**Kevin Sutcliffe returned to the 'golden beaches' of his youth, to find only sewage, slot machines — and a high myeloma rate**

BLACKPOOL, 'Built for Fun', proclaims the glossy brochure you get free at the Tourist Information Office. It continues boastfully: 'Millions of pounds have been spent to provide a sparkling array of new attractions . . . the tatty freak shows and bazaars have long gone.'

A new season. A new image. The same hard sell. In Blackpool the face of fun has to be seen to change constantly. Over the past decade the town's centre has undergone radical cosmetic surgery to purge itself of the shanty town image that for so long found favour with the vast captive market of Lancashire mill workers.

Big business has moved in. Visitors are now herded round a succession of multi-million pound shopping precincts and sanitised seafront 'leisure' centres which offer little more excitement than a donkey ride on the beach once did, but at considerably more expense.

The buildings may have changed, but as the six million people who visit the resort every year, spending upwards of £213 million and employing a quarter of the town's 151,000 inhabitants, quickly find out, Blackpool is run by the same entrepreneurial values espoused by the town's founding fathers. 'A good week in Blackpool is one when it pisses it down,' confides a money-collector in a garish promenade arcade. 'It keeps the punters off the beach and forces them to come in here and spend money.'

For Blackpudlians, the end of The Illuminations, 'The Greatest Free Show on Earth', (paid for by a £300,000 rates levy) signifies in the town's annual half yearly closure in early October. Then the unemployment rate shoots up to 17 per cent. Then, too, locals, who rarely use the town centre in summer because of the crowds, are deprived of a wide range of seasonal facilities.

'The priority here is for the tourist industry', asserts Ivan Taylor, leader of the Labour opposition on Blackpool Borough Council. 'Local residents are treated bloody awfully by their council. Our amenities for housing, transport, cleansing and the provision for the young are pathetic.'

And there is little sign of a change in the near future. Ivan Taylor is one of only a handful of Labour representatives in a town that has never elected a Labour administration to power. Consolidating Blackpool's political insulation are the Conservative-dominated borough councils of Wyre in the north, which covers Fleetwood, and Fylde in the south centring on Lytham St Annes. Its local paper is the rampantly pro-Tory *West Lancashire Evening Gazette*, which has a virtual monopoly along the coast. Its two parliamentary seats both return Tories with safe majorities.

It is a combination which, over the years, has

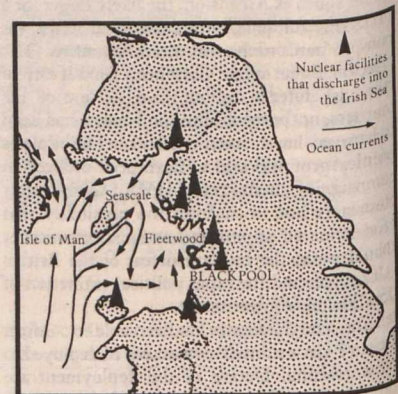
engendered a fierce parochial adherence to the dictates of private enterprise among the upwardly aspiring guest house and small businessowners who wield a considerable influence in the town. Some like Colin Hanson, the owner of a rock factory, also serve on the council. He is Chairman of the Tourism Committee: 'Most Blackpudlians are involved in the tourist industry to some degree, they accept it as an integral part of the town.'

Labour Councillor John Pouncy believes that the Conservatives maintain power 'on a massive sleeping vote' and disagrees with the official view on the benefits of tourism for working people:

'Most of the service industry workers are notoriously low paid and only 12 per cent of locals earn wages from tourism. It is the hoteliers, shop keepers and big business that gain, while locals have to pay higher rates, food prices etc . . . and find that many of the facilities are located for the convenience of the tourists.'

But in business circles, the tourism industry dominates and Blackpool council is quick to dispel any fears that may affect its smooth running. One rumour that has persisted over many years is that the Irish Sea off Blackpool is badly polluted by the town's sewage. You will find few residents who swim off their beaches and a growing number forbid their children even to play on the beach, disbelieving the council's assurance that the treated sewage is harmless.

'Is it any wonder?' asks John Pouncy, whose children are forbidden to use the beaches. 'At low tide Blackpool has seven "golden miles" of sludge, mud and filth. At high water you can see — and smell — the effluent being discharged at the north of the town.'



Nuclear facilities (running from north to south) situated at: Chapel Cross (Scotland), Calder Hall, Sellafeld, Heysham, Spring fields, Capenhurst and Wylfa (Wales)

branch of the Customs officers' union put it, 'must be killing himself laughing.'

Secondly, let us demand in unequivocal terms that the police do their job. Why is it that virtually everyone in a community who is concerned with drugs knows precisely who the dealers are, where they live and their times of business yet the police do nothing? As Walter Easey of the Camden Police Subcommittee — himself an ex-Hong Kong drugs officer — put it: 'To arrest a dealer is as easy as arresting an unregistered hot dog seller. They both have, of necessity, to be public and in the market place'.

To make this demand does not involve agreeing with draconian penalties for small-time dealers. As these individuals are also invariably the heavy users this would be both unjust and counterproductive.

Lastly, on the level of control, the panic creates the demand that more money be thrown at the problem in the hope that paid experts will make it disappear. Yet the clinic system has been shown to be a disaster. In Stimson and Oppenheim's painstaking follow-up study of the clinics, 38 per cent of opiate addicts had given up after ten years and most of these because of the changed circumstances of their lives. The same proportion remained attending the clinic and regularly receiving prescriptions: fixated by their notion of suffering from an illness.

Despite this, the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs both in their 1982 *Treatment and Rehabilitation* and in the report *Prevention*, released recently, continue — against pressure from a minority group within their ranks — to emphasise the medical model and the central role of the professional in the treatment of addiction.

If addiction is a loss of free choice, it is because the addict is trapped in a seemingly inescapable predicament. In Vietnam almost one half of the GIs used heroin, and 20 per cent felt themselves to be addicted. But a rigorous follow-up showed that only 7 per cent continued to use while only 1 per cent felt themselves to be addicted. The heroin users had returned home from an environment they loathed. Our street addicts remain trapped in their circumstances.

As has been shown in a wide variety of situations — from the community activist of Dublin to the Black Muslims in Detroit — the effective control of heroin use demands an intervention at a social and political level. It must present young people with the hope that they can change their circumstances and involve them in that process of change. Local political activists would do better encouraging communities where heroin dealing and use is high to organise — with police and doctors playing their limited and specific role — rather than compounding the helplessness of addicts and their relatives by shutting them away in clinics.

The Conservatives are not genuinely interested in problems of crime as it affects working-class people. There is no shortage of grassroots support in the fight against heroin both from parents and the kids themselves. Labour must have a realistic policy in the drugs field which, while firmly rejecting panic measures, relates to the genuine concern within working-class communities over the threat of hard drug use. □

*Continued from page 10*

The second document published this week — a draft letter prepared for Defence Secretary Heseltine — gives precise details of the movements of the *Belgrano* (see p.9). A third document sent to Mr Dalyell was not official but an anonymous typed letter suggesting that Dalyell ask specific questions about the Rules of Engagement. It is not known whether that letter is linked to the documents leaked to the MP.

Confirmation of the change in the Rules of Engagement and the attack on the aircraft carrier is contained in the personal diary of one of HMS *Conqueror's* officers, a copy of which was passed to and used by the BBC programme *Panorama* in May this year. The diaries have since been confirmed as authentic. The passages quoted here were not then noted or broadcast, as no-one then realised the significance of the references to the aircraft carrier.

On 30 April, after noting that faint sonar traces, probably from the *Belgrano* and its escorts, had been detected, the HMS *Conqueror* officer wrote:

The calm before the storm! In the evening we received a signal stating that HM government has decided to 'use more military force' and has authorised the destruction of the Argentinian CVA (ie, aircraft carrier) VEINTICINCO DE MAYO — it would be great if she went down on the 25th of May!!

In fact she is in SPLENDID's area and so it looks as though the S-Boat (ie, *Swiftsure* class submarine) will have her.

On 1 May the *Conqueror* officer gave extensive details of the following of the *Belgrano*, and added a reference to the aircraft carrier which clearly indicated that he knew the other submarine was trying to sink it.

No news of the CVA yet so we presume it is still floating.

If during the next few weeks the government now admits the attempted attack on the *Veinticinco de Mayo*, they will argue — as they have done with the *Belgrano* — that the carrier had become a threat to the task force. This will be untrue; it was only on 1 May, a day later, and after aircraft and ships bombarded Port Stanley airfield, that Argentina ordered the aircraft carrier and another group of ships (not the *Belgrano* group) to attack the task force. But these orders were rescinded less than five hours later, and all ships which had been ordered to attack then returned safely to port, where they remained for the duration of the war.

The documents provide final proof that Mrs Thatcher and her ministers have lied repeatedly to parliament and the public about the course of the Falklands war:

**LIE 1:** In the House of Commons on 4 May 1982, Defence Secretary John Nott stated that 'The heavily armed surface group (i.e., the *Belgrano* and her escorts) was closing on elements of our task force'. On the famous May 1983 BBC *Nationwide* confrontation with Mrs Diana Gould, Mrs Thatcher told viewers that 'It (the *Belgrano*) was not sailing away from the Falklands... it was a danger to our ships'.

**FACT:** The leaked minute confirms in detail how the *Belgrano* was known to have reversed course, hours before the sinking, and was sailing directly westwards, away from the Falklands. □

**LIE 2:** On the same occasion, Nott said that '(on) 2 May, at 8pm London time, one of our submarines detected... the *General Belgrano*...'

**FACT:** The ships known to be accompanying the *Belgrano* had first been detected two days earlier, and the *Belgrano* was tracked visually and on sonar for over 30 hours.

**LIE 3:** At a press conference on 3 May, and again in the House of Commons the next day, John Nott said that 'it was our policy to use minimum force'.

**FACT:** This was the opposite of the truth. A major and unprovoked offensive had been ordered on 30 April, and maximum force authorised on 2 April.

**LIE 4:** Admiral Woodward, ministers, and Mrs Thatcher — most recently in a letter to Denzil Davies MP — have repeatedly referred to the change in the Rules of Engagement as being intended to 'enable *Conqueror* to attack *Belgrano*'.

**FACT:** The changes in the Rules of Engagement went far wider than this statement is intended to imply.

**LIE 5:** Cecil Parkinson, on *Panorama* in April 1984 referring to Francis Pym's absence from the second rule-changing meeting on 2 May 1982, said 'I have no reason to believe... that he didn't agree with that decision (to attack the *Belgrano* or any Argentine Navy ship outside the exclusion zone)'.

**FACT:** Parkinson, who had been present at the earlier OD(SA) meeting on 30 April had every reason to suppose that Pym would not have agreed. Parkinson knew exactly what Pym's and Havers's objections to the planned sinking of the *Veinticinco de Mayo* had been; the same arguments applied with equal force to other ships.

Another significant point to emerge from the leaked documents is the key role of Defence Minister Mr John Stanley in orchestrating the *Belgrano* cover-up on behalf of Mrs Thatcher. The third document sent to Tam Dalyell MP in April correctly identifies Stanley, rather than Defence Secretary Michael Heseltine, as the Defence Ministry figure who has been determined to suppress information about the orders to attack the *Belgrano* and *Veinticinco de Mayo*.

The attack on *Veinticinco de Mayo* was launched before the US peace plan had come to an end, and the US announced immediate economic sanctions against Argentina. This, according to Dr Paul Rogers of Bradford University who has extensively analysed the course of the Falklands war, was the 'crucial piece of the economic blockade'; with the US backing Japan, the EEC and the Commonwealth, the sanctions would now bite.

On 30 April 1982, Mrs Thatcher had a unique opportunity to capitalise on international support for a peaceful settlement. But she wasn't interested; as the *Belgrano Papers* make abundantly clear, Mrs Thatcher was quick indeed to unleash the dogs of war, or as *Conqueror's* officer genteelly put it, 'use more military force'. The use of nuclear weapons against Argentina was not excluded; indeed, it then became a viable option with the arrival of the first *Polaris* submarine. Dr Rogers comments that:

When the government just days later told parliament and the world that they were using minimum force, they meant the opposite. They had just opted for total war. □