



An A to Z of the FALKLANDS



Tam
Dalyell

£1



PREFACE

The first involvement of the Labour Party in West Lothian with the Falklands affair was a telephone call from Tam Dalyell, local MP, to the Secretary of the Constituency Party, Bill Gilby, on Saturday 3 April 1982. This was later described by Tam in his book **One Man's Falklands**. Having attended the emergency debate in the Commons that morning he had become deeply worried about the course events were taking. He requested priority for his Parliamentary report at the meeting of the General Committee the next day.

It was a historic meeting. The General Committee listened intently to Tam's detailed description of the Commons debate and of why the government's war policy was utterly wrong. A shrewd group of activists from all parts of the political spectrum, the GC was convinced that Tam was right and threw its full weight behind him. Their support has remained unchanged through boundary changes which abolished the old West Lothian constituency.

West Lothian Labour Party's publications operations became involved in the campaign a few weeks later. A fringe meeting on the Falklands was hurriedly arranged for the Scottish Conference in Perth and publicity was urgently needed. Within 24 hours a leaflet with bold graphics cannibalised from that day's papers was produced. The present pamphlet is the latest in a long run of material produced for the campaign.

An attempt to move a motion condemning the sending of the Task Force was defeated at the meeting of the Scottish Executive on 17 April but demonstrated how the issue crossed the usual left/right divisions in the Party. Left members of the executive supporting the motion were joined by a leading member of the EETPU.

But if support for the campaign was diverse, it failed at first to become massive. There are clear signs that this is changing. As the jingoism in the country and, it must be said, in the Party, fade and as the futility of Fortress Falklands becomes manifest, the campaign's call for sane negotiations with Argentina over sovereignty is gathering support. At the STUC Women's conference in November 1983, at the Labour Party Scottish conference last March and at the STUC in April, motions condemning the government's policy over the Falklands were passed with comfortable majorities. The next logical forum is the Party conference itself. The Scottish Labour Movement Falklands Campaign and LCC Scotland have cooperated with Tam Dalyell to produce this pamphlet as a contribution to the debate.

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WEST LOTHIAN LABOUR PARTY PUBLICATIONS
on behalf of

SCOTTISH LABOUR MOVEMENT FALKLANDS COMMITTEE & LCC SCOTLAND

- A is for Alfonsin
B is for Belgrano
C is for Cost
D is for Diana
E is for the EEC
F is for Franks
G is for Gavshon
H is for Haig
I is for Iglesias Rouco
J is for Jingoism & Junta
K is for Kelpers
L is for Lewin, Leach & Lombardo
M is for Military Control
N is for Nott
O is for Origins
P is for Pym, Parkinson & Peru
Q is for the Superficially Awkward Question
R is for Re-armament
S is for the Shadow Cabinet
T is for Thatcher
U is for Ulloa
V is for Veinticinco de Mayo
W is for Washington Post
X is for X-tinction
Y is for Yet
Z is for Zoology

A is for ALFONSIN

It is widely assumed that because President Alfonsin was one of the very few Argentines to vent public opposition to the invasion of the Falklands in 1982, that he will stick to his word not to use force. And, certainly **Alfonsin**, left to himself, would not contemplate military action against Britain. He has other priorities for his debt-ridden country.

But the infant Argentine democracy is fragile. **Alfonsin** has not had great success in coping with inflation and other economic hazards. In attempting to deal with the legacy of military rule, **Alfonsin** has made enemies. On the Left, there is anger that he has failed so far to bring Army and Navy Officers, guilty of appalling crimes against the Disappeared Ones to Justice. On the Right, there is bitter resentment that some Officers who were only "**doing their duty**" in the Dirty War should be lined up for disgrace and punishment. Inevitably, **Alfonsin** has many enemies.

Before the Argentine Elections which swept **Alfonsin** to power, it was widely reported in "Clarín" newspaper, the voice of the Argentine Military, that a Civilian Government could be "destabilised" within 18 months to three years of taking office. Those same Argentine military have, alas, not just "**gone away**". They are still there. Middle-rank and younger Officers, of macho dispositions, feel that they have been let down by their retired seniors during the **Falklands Conflict**, and are smarting at their humiliation in the eyes of the world and their fellow countrymen and countrywomen. Some of them do not hide that they would like a "**replay**" with the British. Such men can be irrational, reckless and dangerous.

Mrs Thatcher's refusal even to allow the subject of Sovereignty to be discussed plays into the hands of the type of men who are anathema to the Labour Movement. Now that the dispute between Argentina and Chile has been resolved, the Falklands-Malvinas could provide the popular excuse for a coup against the civilian government in Buenos Aires.

If you are sceptical about the notion of a coup, look not only at the recent history of South America, but turn to R for Re-Armament, and see the list of gadgetry that even **Alfonsin** has had to get to humour the military.

It is in the British National interest to help **Alfonsin** remain in power. It is in the interest of Socialists, the world over, not to help create conditions for a military coup in Argentina.

In practical terms this means not fudging the issue, and negotiating with **Alfonsin** on Sovereignty **NOW**.

B is for BELGRANO

The reason for harping on about the sinking of the **Belgrano** is not just that 368 lives were lost, and that the Falklands War escalated from 2nd. gear into fifth gear. If an honourable Peace Settlement had been achieved on May 2nd, there would have been no Sheffield, no **Antelope**, no **Atlantic Conveyor**, no **Coventry**, no Goose Green, no Bluff Cove. British, no less than Argentine lives would have been saved.

As long as Mrs Thatcher remains in No. 10 Downing Street, the circumstances surrounding the sinking of the **Belgrano** should be matters of immediate concern, no past history. She who gave the orders from Chequers around midday on Sunday May 2nd for the sinking of the **Belgrano** (which I am told she herself "witnessed" from Fleet HQ Operations Room) is also She who has her finger on nuclear weapons. How a person with such power in their hands reacts at a time of crisis, of potential humiliation, and possible defeat, is a matter of lasting concern for us all. In a wide sense, the **Belgrano** affair raises the most vital questions of the control of weapons, and use of the Rules of Engagement in an undeclared war. In this context, the scholar and Professor of Defence Studies in the University of Edinburgh, John Erickson, has talked in terms of piracy and murder.

Of course, war is extremely unpleasant, and many nasty things happen in war. That is why Denis Healey and a number of others of us, who asked questions about the sinking of the **Belgrano** on May 4th and 5th of ministers in the House of Commons, did not then complain too much. We imagined that the Government were correct in giving the impression that some submarine commander, perceiving threats to himself or the Task Force, felt that he had to act in self-defence.

I became concerned about the **Belgrano** when I read reports from reputable members of the Scottish Press Corps who were present in the first week of July 1982, when HMS **Conqueror** returned to Faslane, that the Commander, asked why he had sunk the **Belgrano** let the cat out of the bag and said he had done it "on orders from Northwood". This was fundamentally different from what people, press and parliament had been led to believe in May. Small inaccuracies can be part of larger inaccuracies - small lies can be part of larger lies. If it were done on orders from Northwood, what was the course of the **Conqueror** ? 280 degrees. West north west towards Argentina. Oh well, said the government, it could have been zig-zagging. Yes, possibly, but produce the log book! This has never yet been done.

The truth has gradually emerged that **Conqueror** had been following **Belgrano** for over 30 hours, and towards home for at least 11 hours: that Government statements that **Belgrano** was "converging" on the Task Force, have shown to be rubbish, that there were no communication difficulties, and that Mrs Thatcher knew perfectly well that a 44 year old cruiser, survivor of Pearl Harbour, was no immediate threat to the Task Force, when she ordered it to be torpedoed. In claiming that she had to sink the **Belgrano** because it was an immediate threat to the Task Force, Mrs Thatcher has been caught red-handed in an identifiable lie.

C is for COST

The greatest price paid for the Falklands is that paid by those, British and Argentine, who gave their lives, their relatives, and those who lost limbs or suffer from burns. Indeed, when on television "Broadside", I see Mrs Audrey Till, a widow of a Petty Officer on HMS **Sheffield**, give the stark facts of bringing up a one parent family, I become embarrassed to stress cash too much.

£3 million a day is the figure given by the Insight Team of the Sunday Times, a paper that is no friend to Falklands critics. Taking into account the cost of destroyer replacement at £150 million a time, and the mammoth increases in the defence budget, brought about by the Falklands commitment, the Sunday Times figures are probably an under-estimate.

Dr Paul Rogers, defence analyst at the Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford, has estimated that by the end of 1987, the Falklands will have cost Britain at least a staggering £6,000,000,000. Delegates to the Labour Party conference will be more than able to put forward suggestions as to how this kind of money could have been spent on housing, health service, education, or helping create jobs in British industry.

The trouble is that unless we can get negotiations - and that means on **sovereignty**, without which they will be seen as a sham - we will be going on paying such sums for the lifetime of the youngest among us. One quarter of the British navy, and half our most modern ships are tied up either in the South Atlantic, or plying to and from the Falklands.

It is no use defence planners dreaming that the Margaret Thatcher International Airport at Mount Pleasant will solve their problem. The runway is highly vulnerable not only to Argentine-based aircraft, but also to rockets approaching at over 4,000 mph over very short distances. The cost is officially given at £215 million. In fact, the Laing-Amey-Mowlem consortium have had to pay huge extra costs, that will be passed on, including the regular transport of men and materials from South Africa - something that raises very questionable problems of its own. They have even had to transport thousands of tons of special aggregate, mined in the Oxford and Bristol areas, because the local quartzite was not suitable for aggregate to make concrete, which could withstand the weight of Tristars landing. This nation has greater financial priorities than paying for the carting of rock from the northern hemisphere to the southern hemisphere. But then the British taxpayer had to pay for ship-loads of fresh water to be taken to the Falklands from Auckland, New Zealand (by Danish ship, the **Herta Maersk**) and from Lisbon and Southampton. Nobody in South America, let alone Argentina, is going to allow us to maintain the present British position in the Falklands on the cheap.

On, and on and on, we pay through the nose.

D is for DIANA

Cast your mind back to the 1983 General Election Campaign. On what one occasion was the Prime Minister confused, rattled, and embarrassed on Television?

It was on Nationwide on May 24th, a Tuesday Summer evening when most activists and candidates were canvassing or busily preparing for meetings, not watching the box. At 6.40 p.m. under the determined refereeing of Miss Sue Lawley, Mrs Thatcher was confronted by a West Country "**battle-axe**" from Cirencester, Mrs Diana Gould:

*Mrs Thatcher, why when you knew the **Belgrano** was outside the exclusion zone and was sailing away from the Falklands, did you order it to be sunk?*

Mrs Gould, who had in front of her the key Hansard answer giving the 280 degree course of the **Belgrano** when torpedoed coolly contradicted Mrs Thatcher who claimed the **Belgrano** was approaching the task force. What Mrs Gould so clearly illustrated was that whatever reasons for sinking the **Belgrano**, it was not those of an immediate threat to the Task Force, repeatedly claimed by Mrs Thatcher and her Ministers. Virtually everyone who watched instinctively felt that **Mrs Thatcher** was not telling the truth. As her own biographer, Bruce Arnold, in "**Margaret Thatcher a Study in Power**" puts it:

*Truth wrestled with fact in that **Nationwide** exchange on May 24 and truth triumphed. Margaret Thatcher told a lie. Just one. But a lie, nonetheless, visible, inescapable, related to an issue which should have been part of the campaign, but had hardly been mentioned. And all one's judgements shifted, or should have shifted momentarily, just then.*

Bruce Arnold's publishers, Hamish Hamilton, who have top-grade libel lawyers have not received a complaint from **Mrs Thatcher**, let alone writs from libel lawyers. Mrs Thatcher would be "**frit**" to try. As Arnold puts it:

*It was performance against reality, political skill against truth, fact against instinct. And it shook the edifice. Something deeper than the **Nationwide** hairdo, put in hot curlers at four o'clock that afternoon, was being demolished.*

So significant and rivetting was the dialogue which followed thought to be, that it merited a leading article in the Guardian "**A moment of weakness: fathoms deep**" and helped to persuade Neil Kinnock to issue a considered demand, during the General Election for a Public Inquiry into the **Sinking of the Belgrano**.

One central question is why the British press did not, during the General Election, do what would have seemed to be their elementary professional duty, and follow up the mutually contradictory answers that **Mrs Thatcher** had given Mrs Gould. After all, in August 1983, the media thought the interview important enough to repeat it in toto at their own review of the General Election during the Edinburgh International Festival TV Festival.

Had it been Michael Foot, or a Labour Prime Minister, who had been caught out, and exposed, as Mrs Gould exposed Mrs Thatcher, does anyone imagine that the press would not have had a field day?

E is for THE EEC

It is true that EEC governments gave immediate condemnation of the Argentinian invasion of the Falklands. It is not true that Helmut Schmidt or any other leader in Western Europe supposed that the sending of the battle fleet and a military response constituted any long term solution to the problem of the Falklands/Malvinas. People throughout the Community were either bewildered by 19th century gun-boat diplomacy, or amused, until the **Belgrano** went down with all those Milanese and Neapolitan names, and the shooting war began.

For all his protestations, President Mitterand, and his then Prime Minister, Pierre Mauroy, did nothing whatsoever in practical terms to help the British forces. For example, they made a great palaver of stopping a team from **Aérospatiale Dassault** from going to Argentina and helping the Argentines with the deployment of Exocets. Quite cynically, the team from the Bourges factory went back to their offices and got on the telephone to their colleague, the engineer M Herve Colin, in Bahia Blanca. Engineer speaking to engineer, it was not difficult in a seven-hour telephone conversation to explain to the technically competent M Colin how to marry a surface to surface Exocet to the wing of an aircraft. When the **Sheffield** was hit, congratulatory notices went up on the notice boards of French factories, rejoicing in the effectiveness of their Exocet product:

Angleterre 1
(Belgrano)

France 1
(Sheffield)

Equally, **Blohm and Voss** continued to supply parts from their Hamburg yards for Argentine ships, and pointed out that they could hardly be blamed by a country whose Rolls-Royce firm continued to complete contracts with Argentina for military engines! Yet, of course we know that armament manufacturers the world over cannot afford to get the reputation of letting their customers down at a time of emergency.

As to the future, the intransigent position adopted by Mrs Thatcher has no sympathy whatever in Europe, where they do not want their relations with Latin America bitched for the sake of a British Prime Minister that most of their leaders heartily dislike on personal and political grounds. **Le Monde**, the **Frankfurter Allgemeine** and the **Sud Deutsche Zeitung** have all carried devastating criticisms of the British attitude. In Italy, given that there are more Argentines of Italian than Spanish extraction, feelings are vehemently against Britain - not least because President Pertini was snubbed by Mrs Thatcher when he offered his services as a mediator in the Falklands dispute.

The Labour Party favours Spain and Portugal entering the EEC. Be under no illusion, the Spanish Socialists will press extremely hard for a more sensible British policy in Latin America, where our trade (i.e. Scotch whisky) has been badly hit, to the benefit of our EEC competitors.

F is for FRANKS

As I sat down to give my evidence to his Committee, Lord Franks said: "Most of your written evidence interests us greatly, Mr Dalyell, but we must exclude from our minds any impressions that you formed from events after 2nd April 1982." Even today, many Labour Party activists are under the false impression that Franks covered the period of the War. It did nothing of the kind. Still less did Franks cover the despatch of the Task Force or the sinking of the Belgrano.

Jim Callaghan lambasted the Franks Committee as a "whitewash". That's not fair. True, Franks used the word "exonerated" in a narrow sense, and this was seized upon by Mrs Thatcher and her press secretary, Bernard Ingham. In fact, a careful reading of Franks is damning for Mrs Thatcher. In particular, Mrs Thatcher has claimed that the Falklands crisis came to her "out of the blue" on Wednesday 31 March 1982 (to George Gale in the *Daily Express* and *Hansard* 26 October 1982). Yet, in Franks, paragraph 152,

on 3 March the British Ambassador in Buenos Aires had reported further comment in the Argentine press on the unilateral communique. When the Prime Minister saw this telegram she wrote on it 'we must make contingency plans.'

Those who demand contingency plans at the beginning of a month, who contact their Foreign Secretary and their Defence Secretary on 8 March about the deployment of Royal Naval ships, should not be allowed to get away with saying to the House of Commons that the crisis came "out of the blue"!

But, of course, careful reading of Franks was the last thing the PM wanted anyone to do. To understand how No 10 manipulated the presentation of the Franks Committee report, it is necessary to read Chapter Eight of *Sources Close to the Prime Minister* by Michael Cockerell, Peter Hennessy and David Walker (Macmillan).

When Mrs Thatcher finished reading the Franks Report, the Prime Minister was greatly relieved at its conclusions. She wanted to ensure that these would be what the press and broadcasters stressed. Mrs Thatcher decided that no embargoed copies of the report should be issued in advance to the press or journalists....the report would be issued at 3.30 pm on 18 January, at the same time as Mrs Thatcher unveiled it in the House of Commons....106 tightly written pages which even Ingham himself admitted later took him the best part of 13 hours to read and digest....editor of BBC Television News, Mr Peter Woon, said that he thought the government's arrangements for the release of the Franks Report were scandalous....on 18 January, Mrs Thatcher's plan to offer the Lobby helpful advice, in advance, on which were the important paragraphs of the Franks report. Mr Tam Dalyell, the Labour MP and near-obsessive opponent of the Falklands War, stood up in the House of Commons just after midnight, on a point of order, and revealed the plan for the Ingham briefing.....a lobby correspondent had broken the cardinal rule of his secret organisation and had told of Ingham's intentions. "The leak occurred", said Mr Dalyell, "because the journalist, not a member of the leftwing press, was professionally outraged by news management".....Mr Ingham, who had once worked as a press officer for Mr Roy Hattersley told him that after the briefing all he had been trying to do was help the Lobby journalists "find their way around Franks." Three weeks after the Prime Minister and her press secretary had achieved their considerable presentational success with the Franks Report, they decided to restore the embargo system. In the run up to the General Election, the Government wanted to re-establish the normal cosy relationship with the Lobby correspondents and to ensure maximum publicity for White Papers and Ministerial statements. All such material would be carefully prepared with a single purpose in mind: winning a second term of office."

G is for GAVSHON

I recommend any Labour Party member, interested in the **Belgrano** issue, to get from the library **The Sinking of the Belgrano** by Arthur Gavshon and Desmond Rice, a 220 page book published by the discerning London publishers, Secker & Warburg.

Arthur Gavshon is not some author on the make. He is over 60, with a distinguished career behind him as a diplomatic correspondent for Europe of Associated Press of America, and author of **The Last Days of Dag Hammarskjöld** and **Crisis in Africa**. He was so senior and important that he had immediate access to Harold Wilson and to Dick Crossman, as he did to Heath, Home and MacMillan. He is a man who alone has interviewed Presidents of the United States. He is known to contemporary heavyweight journalists as a stickler for accuracy and fact. His co-author, Desmond Rice, was President of the Royal Dutch Shell company in Argentina. Hear their concluding words:

*We take the view that Mrs Thatcher's war cabinet decided in principle on the use of force the day Argentina occupied the Falklands, and that only an unconditional surrender by the Junta could have prevented a killing war. The phase of phantom negotiations through April served only to fill the "diplomatic vacuum" until the Task Force could be brought to bear. It then went into action at once and the attack on the **General Belgrano** escalated the confrontation. If the assessment is correct that British leaders were never really seriously interested in negotiating, there would be little to choose in terms of opportunism between the hawks of London and those of Buenos Aires. We find it hard to avoid the suspicion that the crews of both ships, the **Conqueror** as well as the **General Belgrano**, were used in a cynical politico-military machination which most Britons would want to see exposed.*

H is for HAIG

Haig professes to be an admirer of Mrs Thatcher - though perhaps he is having second thoughts when it is brought home to him how her deviousness led to the failure of the Peace Mission, and his downfall as American Secretary of State.

After all the mistakes have been corrected in the Haig Memoirs - and it makes one shudder as to how so careless a man could ever have been Nixon's Chief of Staff, and NATO Supreme Commander - the author sticks to it that acceptance of the Peruvian peace proposals "had been gained in principle from both parties", that is, Britain and Argentina. How on earth would he come to think that unless it were firmly in his mind that it were so ?

Pressed on **Panorama** about the Peruvian peace proposals, Haig vouchsafed that the negotiators were down to "one or two words". How can an American Secretary of State say that, and Mrs Thatcher contend that she had no indications of the Peruvian peace proposals until three hours after the **Belgrano** sank ? Either Haig or Thatcher is lying. Since we have Lord Lewin's word for it, on **Panorama**, that Sir Anthony Acland, Permanent Secretary at the Foreign Office, was present at all important meetings, and that he was reporting on secure lines to Pym in Washington, it is fair to deduce that it is Thatcher, not Haig, who is lying.

Haig sweated his guts out to get peace, shuttling, with a history of heart attacks, between London and Buenos Aires. We now know that Thatcher was quite ready to alter the Rules of Engagement to sink any Argentinian ship from 30th April onwards - while Haig was still in a negotiating position for peace.

But this was only one of many British deceptions on the Americans. Was it not extraordinary that the government of the United States should not have been consulted before the decision to send the battle fleet to the Western Hemisphere ?

I'm not fan of Cruise or Trident missiles, to put it mildly. But, heavens alive, if you have an agreement with a country to act as their floating aircraft carrier, at Greenham, Lakenheath and elsewhere, don't you at least consult them before you decide to escalate war in the Americas by sinking the **Belgrano** ? Haig actually phoned Pym to impress upon him the importance of the Peruvian peace proposals after they had had lunch together at the British embassy in Washington on Sunday May 2nd. Pym could not actually take the call, he said "because I had a plane to catch." Actually, he could not reveal to Haig that London had decided to sink the **Belgrano**. Had he done so, Haig would have told him to come off it; had he not done so, he would understandably have been accused of gross deceit by knowing and not telling.

Tit for tat. Can we be surprised that the American State Department did not bother to tell the British government about their intentions of invading Commonwealth Grenada ?

I is for IGLESIAS ROUCO

Iglesias Rouco is probably the most respected columnist in Argentina, known too for his excellent information from government sources. Any reading of his newspaper articles, or of reports in *Clarín*, the journal of the Argentine military between January and March 1982 must have shown the British Embassy in Buenos Aires and military intelligence that there was indeed danger. Neither failed to do their job. Both the Foreign Office and intelligence community are bitterly resentful at the imputation thrown at them by Mrs Thatcher, with a flourish of her handbag, that they had somehow let Britain down. They did not. Mr Anthony Williams, the Ambassador, his First Secretary, Mr R S Heathcote, Colonel S Love and Captain J J Mitchell RN, the naval attache constantly reported. Nor did MI6 let us down. The former Minister of State at the Foreign Office told the House on 3 April 1982, that he had a disclosure to make - we had been reading Argentine telegrams for years. I can do no better than remind the Party of paragraph 129 of Franks:

*Rouco, a journalist regarded as usually well informed, predicted that the Argentine Government would shortly present the British Government with a series of conditions for the continuation of negotiations over the Malvinas and that, if they were not accepted, Argentina would immediately break off negotiations. He said that, according to reliable diplomatic sources, the conditions would be "firm and clear" and would set very precise time-limits for the solution of the different aspects of the problem and the final return of the Islands to Argentina. He linked this new initiative with development of Argentine policy towards the Beagle Channel, as part of "an ambitious diplomatic and strategic plan which would assure the country of a relevant role in the South Atlantic". Sr Rouco speculated that Argentina would receive support from the United States for any action leading to the recovery of the Islands, not excluding military action. According to the article, it was believed in both the United States and in Europe that, if the Argentine attempt to clarify the negotiations with London failed, Argentina would recover the Islands by force "this year....a military attempt to resolve the dispute cannot be ruled out when sovereignty is at stake". In a further article in *La Prensa* on 7 February 1982 Sr Rouco again predicted that the Argentine Foreign Ministry would present a series of deadlines to resolve the various aspects of the problem and a demand for British recognition of Argentine sovereignty over the Islands and of their intention to return them in accordance with United Nations resolutions. He believed that Buenos Aires was not prepared to go on talking indefinitely and that, if the British Government did not agree to bind themselves to a written timetable, would "apparently reserve the right to take other action, which might by no means exclude the recovery of the Islands by military means".*

Would the Tories have let a Labour government away with such an example of culpable negligence? Certainly not. But, actually it is worse than negligence. Warned by the Joint Intelligence Committee, Mrs Thatcher knew darned well what she was doing. She saw the opportunity to involve Britain in a "righteous cause" and rescue the fortunes of her ailing government.

J is for JINGOISM and JUNTA

Anybody who criticised the decision to despatch the battle fleet to the South Atlantic and lived in the south or west of Britain was very courageous. For those of us in the north, in Wales and in Scotland, it was relatively less difficult. Some areas of our country were more gung-ho than others. Very unpleasant emotions, some of which were to do with what Strachey called "The End of Empire" were unleashed.

Part of the difficulty was that few people imagined that for all the posturing at Portsmouth, and elsewhere, Britain was actually going to war over islands, 8,000 miles away, whose general whereabouts on the surface of the planet was but vaguely known to the British population.

The atmosphere was like that of a cup-tie. And before anything serious took place, could we not be sure that the Americans, the Organisation of American States, the UN, our European partners, would intercede to make all well - or that some Mr Micawber would turn up? The fleet would get no farther than the Western Approaches. All would be well.

But there was another factor about which Labour Party activists ought to be candid among ourselves. It was put around by senior and respected members of the party, not least Jim Callaghan, that Labour had lost the 1959 Election by appearing to be insufficiently patriotic at the time of Suez in 1956. Were we going to jeopardise the chance of a Labour Government and the ousting of Thatcher by going against the mood of the British people in a war that would never happen? Back the Task Force, and the Tories, the argument ran, would be left to stew in their own juice. Labour would reap the political harvest.

In reality, the backing given to the Task Force by the Opposition on 3 April 1982 meant that from that moment Thatcher could claim, rightly, that "Parliament had despatched the fleet." Only those of us who had objected at the time (I interrupted her speech on April 3) were immune from the taunt, "what were you doing mate, when it mattered?" It is a very unfair question, but it was mercilessly exploited by the Prime Minister. Where jingoism was resisted, and CLPs argued that in opposing the resort to arms, they were the true British patriots, acting in the real interests of Britain, the electoral results in 1983 were good.

As for Junta and Fascist, they are trigger words for Socialists, and understandably so. The fact is, however, that the Galtieri Junta was not nearly as bad as the preceding juntas, and the Argentine government had neither the power nor the intent of Mussolini or Hitler. The one thing that united Argentines, left, centre or right, civil or military, was the passionate belief that the Malvinas were theirs. Even the Nobel prize winner, Peres Esquivail, was shoulder to shoulder with the Junta on this, though he had been tortured by them. There was never any question of the Falkland islanders joining the Disappeared Ones, or getting their throats cut.

K is for KELPERS

The fighting in the Falklands was not about the long term interests of the 1800 Falkland Islanders. The facts of geography were perceived in April 1982 by people in West Falkland, who asked that the battle-fleet come no farther than Ascension Island. Port Howard will always be 18 minutes or less away from Argentina by Super-Etendard. The Task Force was sent, not for the Kelpers, but for reasons of British Domestic Politics, and the position of Mrs Thatcher in Downing Street.

A Devil's Advocate would observe, "Do we just abandon British people to the Argentines?" Concede that the Kelpers have rights. Those who wish above all else to be British, in my view, have the right to come here to Britain, as first class citizens under the Nationality Acts. Should they wish to come, Kelpers should be given this opportunity with generous compensation. What 1800 people do not have the right to demand is that $\frac{1}{4}$ of the British Navy and $\frac{1}{2}$ our most modern ships stay in the South Atlantic, or ply 8000 miles to and fro, for the life-time of the youngest among us. Besides, in all our urban areas, planning decisions have often forced people to leave their homes. Tails cannot for ever at vast expense be allowed to wag dogs.

Even now, I am told that many Kelpers would remain under Argentine Sovereignty. What is basically so different about the Falklands, other than historical accident in 1833, from the Welsh and Scottish communities of Southern Argentina in Patagonia? Before the Conflict, in the 1970s, rugby footballers went every year to play in the Valleys of South Wales, and take part as honoured guests in Eistedfods. Mr Pablo Llewellyn, (or for that matter Juan McCafferty of the Scots community) seemed to get on O.K.

Supposing the young people of Port Stanley are required to learn some Spanish. This might be no bad thing, if they are ill, and have to communicate with Spanish speaking doctors. Is it really satisfactory that forever the nearest sophisticated hospital for Kelpers should be that near RAF Brize Norton, far away in the Northern Hemisphere?

Far too much credence about the real views of the Falkland Islanders has been accorded to that strutting little Governor, Sir Rex Hunt, who was allowed to put a spoke in the wheel of the Berne Peace Talks in June 1984, and who has been a malign influence. Too much weight has been attached to the views of certain landowners, absentee or otherwise, and the Falklands Islands Company, who trade, profitably thank you very much, with the Argentines during the occupation. Policy should not be influenced by Coalite's Mr Needham or Comrade Eric Varley.

I am told that albeit privately and shyly, many, I do not claim all, genuine Kelpers recognise that sooner or later a *modus vivendi* must be reached with Argentine. Postponing the day does them no good turn.

L is for LEACH, LEWIN and LOMBARDO

It is no part of the case of the critics of the Falklands War to arraign servicemen. The courage and professional skill of British servicemen was displayed on many, many occasions. Where mistakes may have been made by individual commanders during operations, let us not dwell on them. I have, for instance, flatly refused to support Parliamentary colleagues from Wales who understandably wanted an enquiry into the tragedy of the Welsh Guards on **Sir Galahad** at Bluff Cove. It is, however, legitimate to glance at the behaviour of certain key figures in the central direction of the war.

Sir Henry Leach, Chief of the Naval Staff, appeared in full uniform, uninvited it seems, in the Palace of Westminster on the evening of Friday 2 April 1982, and somehow made a dramatic entrance to a crucial meeting in the Prime Minister's room in the House of Commons. It is understandable that the son of the captain of the **Prince of Wales**, sunk by the Japanese in the Malacca Straits, and a naval person, through and through, should want to find a golden opportunity to demonstrate the need not to scrap his beloved capital ships in his battle with the Treasury. What is questionable is whether Prime Ministers should allow admirals so much influence in situations where there was clearly no long-term military solutions to be had - especially when Leach appeared without the knowledge of Marshal of the RAF Sir Michael Beetham, who was Acting Chief of the Defence Staff, while Lewin was away in New Zealand. Beetham was against the despatch of the task force, which he deemed vulnerable to land-based Argentine air power.

After the Prime Minister, Lewin became the most important person in Britain. Yet he endorsed his C-in-C's (Sir John Fieldhouse) report, which contended, in words repeated in paragraph 110 of the White Paper, **The Falklands Campaign: the Lessons**, "on 2 May HMS **Conqueror** detected the Argentine cruiser **General Belgrano**, accompanied by two destroyers, sailing near to the total exclusion zone." Totally misleading. In May 1983 Commander Christopher Wreford Brown wrote:

We were tasked to look for and find the General Belgrano group. It was reported to consist of the cruiser and escorts. We located her on our passive sonar and sighted her visually early on the afternoon of May 1. We took up a position astern and followed her for over 30 hours.

Actually, we know that the Argentine surface group had been picked up before 1600 hours on Friday 30 April and had been a sitting-duck for **Conqueror** at a distance of 4000 yards, throughout the forenoon of Saturday 1 May. Did Lewin not know what his submarine was doing? If not, it makes one shudder for the control of his nuclear weapons!

Lombardo, wanting to be a great admiral like Lewin, said to BBC Panorama that he would have sunk the **Belgrano**. The question was hypothetical and wrong anyway. The right question, to which there would have been a different answer, was: "would you have sunk the **Belgrano**, had you had all the information that was available to Mrs Thatcher when she gave the order?"

M is for MILITARY CONTROL

In her letter of 19 September, 1984 to George Foulkes MP, Mrs Thatcher stated in Paragraph 11 that the Conqueror's Report on the **Belgrano's** position was received by Northwood at 3.40 p.m. on Sunday May 2nd, and that "the report was not made known to Ministers at the time." (if true), this means that the **Belgrano** had been sailing towards the Argentine Coast for 11 hours, (according to the leaked documents from the Ministry of Defence itself) before the torpedo was launched, and Ministers were not told!

What becomes of the claim that there was strict political control over the military? The **Belgrano** affair is important in itself - but it also opens a whole Pandora's Box of questions about what would happen in an emergency involving nuclear weapons of the Russians.

Remember that the Falklands was an undeclared war. That the sinking of the **Belgrano** and the potential loss of 1100 lives, with endless ramifications, should have been authorised on the basis of information, incomplete to the point of being misleading, would be a scandal, if it were the whole story. But we should beware of subtle attempts by the Prime Minister to palm off blame on the Navy, and to suggest that at worst there was a bit of a "cock-up".

In the coming weeks, and perhaps during the Ponting Trial, we may learn rather more of the crucial details of what actually happened. In the meantime, we may legitimately wonder what are the matters which Mrs Thatcher told Jimmy Young can "Never, Never" be made known. I share Neil Kinnock's scepticism, expressed on September 19th, after he had received Mrs Thatcher's letter, that information should still be withheld not only from the British people, but also from any Inquiry under a Judge of the Appeal Court.

Why should we have to wait for Thirty Years to allow a Judge to see the Log Book of the Conqueror, and the signals, contained in Hesseltine's Crown Jewels, to and from Conqueror, and the intercepted signals between the Argentine mainland and the **Belgrano**?

Secrecy is for the protection not of Britain, for the protection of Thatcher.

For instance, why was it necessary to change the Rules of Engagement on May 2nd at all, if as Mrs Thatcher claims in her letter to George Foulkes, attack was justified under the British message to the Argentine Government of 23rd April, 1982? As the front page of the Daily Telegraph of Thursday September 20th put it, "One apparent discrepancy is that the fifth paragraph claims that Argentina was warned at the outset that its ships could be attacked outside the total exclusion zone, but that on May 2 Admiral Woodward sought specific permission to enable the submarine Conqueror to attack the Cruiser outside the zone".

Why specific permission? There are a host of other discrepancies.

N is for NOTT

The exact role of that unusual man, (now Sir John) Nott, Secretary of State for Defence in April 1982, is, as yet, unfathomable. Certainly he exasperated his own colleagues - some of whom recall that he told them he had to go to his Cornish home and constituency, at the height of the crisis, to look after his daffodils. Apocryphal or not, it is clear that he regarded the Falklands as peripheral to the central defence of Britain, and East-West relations, and from late April 1982 mentally opted out of the central direction of Mrs Thatcher's War. If his memoirs are candid, they should be interesting.

Nott certainly disapproved of Mrs Thatcher trying to be an Iron Chancellor and an Iron Lady at one and the same time. However, under pressure he blurted out - and it is under pressure that politicians blurt things out - something that should have undermined Mrs Thatcher's entire credibility. Winding up that dreadful and momentous Parliamentary debate on that Saturday morning, April 3rd 1982, Nott snapped at his own right wing in general, and Julian Amery in particular. We were **NOT UNPREPARED** said the Defence Secretary. We had been preparing for weeks.

Nor in the light of later events can this have been simply a spur of the moment riposte by a Cabinet Minister under pressure. Look carefully at Paragraph 153 of the Franks Report:

153. On 8 March the Prime Minister also spoke to Mr Nott and asked him how quickly Royal Naval ships could be deployed to the Falkland Islands, if required. The Ministry of Defence replied on 12 March indicating which ships were then deployed in the West Indies, and on exercise in the Gulf of Mexico and off the eastern seaboard of the United States. The reply pointed out that passage time for a frigate deployed to the Falklands, which would require Royal Fleet Auxiliary support, would be in the order of 20 days.

By what stretch of the English language can Mrs Thatcher re-affirm what she had said to George Gale of the *Daily Express*, that the Falklands crisis had come "out of the blue" on Wednesday 31 March 1982, and stick to her version of events in answer to Parliamentary Question no 1 on 26 October 1982 ?

It is this kind of chicanery that leads me to the conclusion that Dennis Skinner MP is justified in claiming that "Thatcher lured the Argentines on to the punch".

O is for ORIGINS

In the early stages of the 1982 Conflict, long before a shot had been fired, Dr Peter Beck, Principal Lecturer in International History at Kingston-upon-Thames Polytechnic, the acknowledged authority on the legal history of the Falklands since 1833 agreed to write a learned article for the Sunday Times, at the request of Magnus Linklater, then Features Editor. Beck's scholarly article was accepted by Christopher Hird, a highly professional journalist, then Deputy Editor. But Beck's article challenged the notion, later espoused by Ministers such as Parkinson on "Traitorama" of May 10th, 1982, that British claims to the Falklands are "rock-solid". At the last minute, on the grounds that it was not in the national interest, Frank Giles, then Editor, extracted Beck's illuminating article, so pertinent for countrymen whose battle fleet had been despatched by their Prime Minister. Truth in a then great newspaper had taken second place to Jingoism.

The facts are awkward for the British case. In 1910, the Foreign Office asked Gaston de Bernhardt to report on the legal claim, and to their horror, his 17,000 word document came down on the side of the Argentine claim. In 1927, Jules Goebbel, American Historian, in his **"Struggle for the Falklands"** 470 pages of history and turgid law, came down on the side of Argentina. On 6th February, 1936, Gerald Fitzmaurice, senior Legal Adviser to the Foreign Office wrote, "Our case has certain weaknesses". The file covering the Marquis of Willingdon's mission, not to be made available to 1991 is headed **"Proposals to re-unite the Falklands with Argentina"** People who talk of "re-unification" cannot have had much confidence in the British claim. No wonder. 1833 was sheer piracy of a kind that no modern Socialist could possibly approve of.

Just one of the serious aspects of the deceptions practised on the British people by Government is the suppression of records. Many files and documents within files are being interpreted as "extremely sensitive", and hence as candidates for extended closure. Certain papers have been placed under a 50 year rule, while there are instances of 75 year, and even 100 year closures. The occasional gaps in the 1920s in Falklands files become more frequent during the 1930s, while the post 1940 period is characterised by an almost total closure of Falklands files relating to issues in dispute between Britain and Argentina. One of the British Cabinet's infrequent but key involvements in the Falklands Dispute, of 14th December, 1927, is covered by a Cabinet Minute closed for 75 years. And why do we have to wait until the youngest delegate at Conference will be grey-haired in 2030 AD to learn of the content of the crucial Colonial Office file on the Falklands and Dependencies for the year 1930?

Were such documents to see the light of day, it would then be apparent that Tory Ministers who claimed that the British case was "rock-solid" and that the Foreign Office had never had any doubts, had either been too lazy to find out, or, more likely had been informed by officials and were brazening it out for Tory political ends.

The suppression of awkward history by Tory Ministers in 1982 for their own end helps to make the case for a Freedom of Information Act in this country.

Labour should make it crystal clear that we intend to instruct the Public Record Office and Government Departments to open all their Falkland Files before April 2nd, 1982.

P is for PARKINSON, PYM, and PERU

FRED EMERY:

Haig had Francis Pym in his office that Sunday morning while you were at Chequers on the phone. Now was that mentioned at your meeting?

CECIL PARKINSON:

We knew that all sorts of people were.....people who wanted to see a peaceful solution which we wanted to see, of which the prime example is - was, President Belaunde, trying to take up where General Haig had left off but we couldn't...

If Parkinson knew about the Peruvian peace proposals and the efforts of Belaunde, are we really to believe that Thatcher did not know? Impossible. Parkinson lets the cat out of the bag and gives more substance to the view that Mrs Thatcher is lying when she writes to Denzil Davies that she had no indications of the Peruvian peace plan until 3 hours after the **Belgrano** was sunk.

PARKINSON to EMERY:

*I believe it was an essential to the success of the diplomatic initiatives that we maintained our military credibility and I think the sinking of the **Belgrano** was a necessary part of maintaining that credibility.*

Again, Parkinson lets Mrs Thatcher's cat out of the bag. Thatcher has repeatedly claimed that she had to order the sinking of the **Belgrano** because it was "an immediate threat to the Task Force."

EMERY to LEWIN:

When did she become an immediate threat?

LEWIN:

She did not become a threat because we sank her.

On August 26th 1984 Parkinson told the **Sunday Times** that by May 2nd, the day the **Belgrano** was sunk, the war cabinet did not consider the Peruvian peace plan was "a runner". Whether or not this is a correct judgement is not quite the point - the point is that it is evident that Thatcher is just lying when she says that the first indications of the Peruvian peace proposals did not reach London until 3 hours after the **Belgrano** was sunk.

Nor does Francis Pym emerge in a good light at all. During the 1983 General Election campaign, as Foreign Secretary, he wrote a long letter in the **Daily Mirror** telling us that there was no contact between London and Washington during May 2nd. That was when Pym wanted to remain a senior member of Mrs Thatcher's cabinet, after the General Election. **We now know that there was contact throughout the day.**

EMERY:

*After the War Cabinet gave the authorisation for the **Belgrano** to be sunk, Francis Pym says that he received notification in Washington that the rules of engagement had been changed. Would that be normal or wouldn't it have been.....?*

LEWIN:

Oh, I think absolutely normal. He's a member of the War Cabinet who wasn't present, his Permanent Under Secretary was and I would expect his Permanent Under Secretary to keep him informed...

Q is for THE SUPERFICIALLY AWKWARD QUESTION

By negotiating with Argentina, do we not insult the British War Dead? What will their relatives think? How do we explain a willingness to talk to Buenos Aires to Paras and Marines who came back so badly maimed?

Once blood has been spilled, emotions do make problems more difficult to resolve. And the truth is that some bereaved relatives do not wish to be disturbed in the opinion that their loved ones laid down lives to keep the Falklands British for 1,000 years. But other relatives see it differently. Professor Hugh Tinker has given eloquently powerful reasons for publishing David Tinker's diaries, written before he was killed on the **Glamorgan**. A score of others, such as Mrs Patricia Potter have written unsolicited letters:

Dear Mr Dalyell,

Thank you for your unswerving determination to keep up the pressure on Mrs Thatcher regarding the sinking of **General Belgrano**. My dear nephew Adrian Anstow (Fleet Air Arm) aged 20 was lost at sea when the **Atlantic Conveyor** was sunk by the Exocet missile on May 25. This was in direct retaliation for that dreadful act, which successfully put paid to the Peruvian peace plan.

It was apparently chaff on the **Invincible** which deflected the missile from its intended target. The **Conveyor** was a sitting duck, as were many of our ships. Sheer luck prevented our losses from being greater. Many of our lads had virtually no protection.

I expect that it must be hard to withstand the guffaws of "Honourable Members" when you broach your questions. Many people I am sure join me in gratitude to you for your persistence and doggedness to secure some answers.

The Falklands have become unfashionable now. Jingoism is hard to sustain over 2 years. Some of us can never forget those calamitous days. Adrian wrote letters which we received after his death, asking "When will politicians make up their minds? A lot of young men are going to die."

It is in his memory, a fine young man of the highest principles, that I write to you today. Please do not give in. You speak for him and us.

Yours Sincerely
Patricia Potter

The real insult to the British dead would be to allow us to drift into a second conflict.

If the argument is to be about British lives and British blood, there is another angle. We have kith and kin in Argentina. 17,000 passport holders. An Anglo-Argentine community of 100,000 or more. Last time, in 1982, not a finger was laid on them. Next time, were we to allow it to happen, British people in Argentina might not be quite so fortunate. Were there a second war, the English-speaking community who read the **Buenos Aires Herald**, might be at risk. Many of them came to fight for Britain against the Nazis. Should they have to pay a price for Mrs Thatcher's upkeep of her political image?

R is for RE-ARMAMENT

Whatever the intentions of **Alfonsín** and his Ministers, the armed forces are continuing to develop and enhance their ability to engage in offensive operations in the South Atlantic. Political prudence has forced the elected government, ever conscious of a potential military coup against itself, to allocate scarce funds for sophisticated arms. Besides, before they agreed to elections in 1983, the Argentine military had salted away over One Billion Dollars in Swiss Banks to cover supplies of military spares.

The Argentine Air Force has a net increase of over 30 planes compared to April 1982. Mirage IIIs have been swapped for Israeli-adapted Nesher Mirage Vs with loitering time capability over the Falklands. The USA now allows Argentine purchase, not only of spare parts for their Sky Hawks, but of the crucially effective Side-Winder Missile, without which Britain would not have won in 1982.

The Argentine Naval Air Service now has 4 times as many Exocets and aircraft capable of firing them, as it had in 1982. Just as significantly, it has purchased 6 Lockheed Electra aircraft for conversion into maritime reconnaissance and airborne early warning roles. British nuclear submarines like HMS Conqueror will be vulnerable from now on. Besides, the French have given Argentina the only Super Etendard flight simulator in South America. Mitterand has permitted the sale of a number of French-built amphibious craft.

The Argentine Navy now has all four of the Meko 360 destroyers built in West Germany. The "Admiralante Browne" and her sister ships have Rolls Royce engines, David Brown gear-boxes, and Decca Navigational Equipment, all made by us. As Shakespeare put it, "Now thrives the armourers". The brutal truth is that no arms manufacturer can afford to get the reputation of letting its customers down, whatever threat may thereby be posed for the troops. The first of 6 Type TR 17000 submarines will be delivered shortly; at least two of them, made in Hamburg, will be nuclear-powered.

There are reported to have been at least two-battalion strength amphibious exercises by Argentine marines in recent months. Moreover both A-4Q Skyhawk and Super Etendard strike aircraft have been undertaking close air support exercises with the marines on a day and night basis using live ammunition.

Both Dr Paul Rogers, Defence Analyst at Bradford University, and Member of Huddersfield CLP, and I can supply Party Members with infinitely more information about Argentine capability for a bee-sting attack against the Falklands.

The costs to Britain of providing our garrison with means to deal with a bee-sting attack are daunting. Yet, if we have British Troops in the Falklands, they must surely be entitled to the best equipment, (ie most expensive) with which to defend themselves? No Argentine Government will let us off the financial hook by granting us a cheap solution, without agreement on Sovereignty.

S is for SHADOW CABINET

Speaking at the PLP on 4th July, 1984 on behalf of the Shadow Cabinet, Neil Kinnock included the following:

"I have to tell comrades that it is the view of the Shadow Cabinet that a debate on the issue raised by this Motion would not be an appropriate use of Opposition time in the foreseeable future and that, with the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs due to report in the near future, options should be kept open.

My view of the conduct of the Government at the time of the sinking of the General Belgrano and since has been obvious for a long time. To be precise it has been obvious since 1 June 1983 - during the General Election. I said then "the Falklands may not be, and should not be, an election issue. The judgement and credibility of the Prime Minister is. Since she and her Government have drawn credit from their conduct of the Falklands conflict they should be eager to demonstrate, through a public inquiry into the sinking of the Belgrano, that their orders were not given before the prospects of negotiated peace on acceptable terms was absolutely exhausted. Without such a thorough and impartial investigation the feeling will continue to exist that the Belgrano was sunk before the means of securing a bloodless defeat had been fully exploited.

The question therefore is not whether we hold the view that the Government has obscured important detail and evaded vital questions or whether there should be an inquiry.

I want to close by making direct reference to what Mik said because I think it sums up the position. In his speech Mik told us that "the general question of the Falklands and the future of policy is not separated from the question of the sinking of the General Belgrano". I think he is absolutely right. And I believe that there will be a time when all the issues of the Fortress Falklands - the diversion of forces, the vast expense and much else - will be a matter for important debate. I also believe that the questions of our relationships with the Republic of Argentina will be part of that debate and there will be widespread demand for a change in those relationships.

In the course of that debate it is obvious that the question of the sinking of the General Belgrano and all that resulted from it will be vital ingredients. All I ask is that we choose the right time for such a debate for it will most certainly take place."

T is for THATCHER

The Falklands was HER war.
She alone has benefited.

U is for ULLOA

Dr Manuel Ulloa, a man of formidable presence and intelligence, has been Chairman of the Development Committee of the World Bank and was Prime Minister of Peru at the time of the Falklands Conflict. I sat in his house in the Avenue Calderon in the Mira Flores District of Lima, in the company of Guillermo Makin, of Cambridge University, and listened to Dr Ulloa say how in detail he had devoted himself to the Peruvian Peace Proposals, making this and that alteration in his own hand, or on his own typewriter, in the light of phone calls. For example, first of all, there were to be US and Peruvian troops: the Americans were not acceptable to the Argentines, and the Peruvians were not acceptable to the British, so it had to be a question of Mexicans, Canadians and West Germans.

Ulloa asked in a puzzled way how we imagined it would be worth his time negotiating like this if one of the major parties concerned, namely the British, did not know what he was doing! For this man, whose daily paper was the Wall Street Journal, there was no language difficulty whatsoever.

I sat for 75 minutes in the office in the Presidential Palace in Lima of President Fernando Belaunde Terry, who explained to me how his family were old friends of the family of the wife of Charles Wallace, the British Ambassador in Lima at the time, and he was very close to the British Embassy. Mrs Thatcher must have known what we were doing.

I talked to Dr Oscar Mauortua, head of the President's Private Office, who told me how the whole Government of Peru had come to a standstill the week-end of 1st/2nd May, so concerned were they that War should be coming from outside to Latin America for the first time in the 20th Century. He was a student at Pembroke College, Oxford, and there was no language difficulties. There could be no misunderstanding but that Mrs Thatcher was informed throughout.

(I should make it clear to the Party that I am in no way indebted to Latin Americans, and paid a £519 academic fare to Lima and back in October 1983 myself, so as not to be accused of being anyone's creature).

We have the public testimony of Dr Arias Stella, Prime Minister of Peru at the time:

DR JAVIER ARIAS STELLA: I was in my office, more or less, at midday on Saturday about twelve thirty one pm - that was the moment that Mr President was also getting in touch with the State Department. And since that moment, Mr Haig there has had a lot of experience in the negotiation procedures weeks before, start to work directly with President Belaunde on a formula, some sort of proposal.

FRED EMERY: Did you, as Foreign Minister, on Saturday have any contact with the British Government?

ARIAS STELLA: I kept informed of every step of our attempts both to the Ambassador from Argentina and to the Ambassador from Great Britain.

FRED EMERY: You told Mr Wallace, the British Ambassador in Peru?

ARIAS STELLA: I kept him informed what we were doing and we have very close contact, we were very good friends - we ARE very good friends - and I keep him informed by telephone.

V is for VEINTICINCO DE MAYO

Formerly HMS **Venerable**, built at Cammell Laird at Birkenhead in 1945, "**25th of May**" was the name of the Argentine carrier. On board was operational commander, Rear Admiral Walter Allara. It was he who sent the orders to the **Belgrano** at 20.07 on Saturday 1 May, confirmed at 01.19 on Sunday 2 May by the naval commander in Buenos Aires, ordering return to the Argentine coast near Staaten Island. These orders were intercepted by the Nimrods with their AD470 high frequency Marconi transceiver equipment, flashed back to Ascension Island, from where they were sent to GCHQ at Cheltenham, where they were decoded. Mrs Thatcher was told about them shortly after she woke up at Chequers on Sunday 2 May.

From the documents sent to me because civil servants were incensed at the deliberate deceptions by ministers being perpetrated against Parliament in general and the Foreign Affairs Select Committee of the House of Commons in particular, it now transpires that if HMS **Splendid** had been able to find the "**25th of May**" on Friday 30 April, the nuclear submarine would have had orders to sink her. When that order was agreed by the War Cabinet earlier that day, Alexander Haig was still in the process of peace negotiations. It just shows that what Mrs Thatcher wanted was "War at all costs".

Now it is said by Isobel Hilton of the **Sunday Times** that the alteration to the Rules of Engagement and the willingness to sink any ship means that the **Belgrano** cannot have been sunk to scupper the Peruvian peace proposals. Not so. The decision to sink the **Belgrano** was the Prime Minister's personal decision, and not taken under the blanket Rules of Engagement. Rather, the conclusion to be drawn is that the fears of Jim Slater and his colleagues in the National Union of Seamen are all too real. If governments play ducks and drakes with the Rules of Engagement, what is to be the effect on the safety of ships' crews throughout the world? The National Union of Seamen have every cause for alarm.. Their members on the **Atlantic Conveyor** and other ships were told that there would be no question of their going into a zone of hostilities, when they originally set sail in April 1982.

In the last few months the "**25th of May**" has undergone modernisation and alterations, which makes her a far more formidable proposition than in April and May 1982. American Skyhawks in future will have no difficulty in take-off and landing in all weathers. Many of the young officers in the Argentine navy feel that their service has been disgraced in the eyes of their fellow-countrymen and are not averse to proving themselves in a re-play of the Falklands war.

It is ironic that the British tax-payer will have to provide more and more £millions to protect our boys against the up-dated workmanship of Cammell Laird, while back home youth unemployment in the Liverpool-Birkenhead area soars among the grandchildren of those who built the Argentine ship, for want of money in peaceful public investment.

W is for WASHINGTON POST

Yes. And "Belgrano Debate" was the First Leader in the **Washington Post** of 4 September 1984, reprinted the next day in the **International Herald Tribune**:

Yes, a Belgrano Debate

In almost every international crisis in which force is threatened, there comes a teeter point, a moment when the situation looks menacing but still may be saved. The parties know this and play their strategies accordingly. The trick is to go up to but not over what John Foster Dulles aptly called the brink. If the result is attained without actual use of force, it is called a political solution; if not it is called a war.

So it was in the Falklands crisis in the spring of 1982. Argentina had seized the British-claimed islands, but a resolution without the further direct application of force still seemed possible. Although a British task force had arrived on the scene to bring pressure to bear, various diplomatic initiatives, including Secretary of State Alexander Haig's shuttle and an effort by Peru, were in the works. But then the British sank the Argentine cruiser General Belgrano, with the loss of 368 lives. Diplomacy was overtaken. War determined the outcome.

The sinking of the Belgrano has been a matter of contention since the war, but recently the controversy has taken on fresh intensity. Newly leaked documents of the what-did-she-know-and-when-did-she-know-it kind suggest — suggest to some, that is; they do not prove — some shocking things about the policy of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative govern-

ment: that the Belgrano was attacked despite advice that an attack would violate international law, that the ship, far from being the threat to the fleet that the government claimed, was steaming away from the fleet and was in any event outside the 200-mile exclusionary circle the British had drawn around the Falklands; that Mrs. Thatcher ordered the fleet to attack precisely in order to spoil the diplomacy then under way — she wanted war.

(We should add that a further allegation in the new package — an allegation we find impossible to credit — is that Britain contemplated a nuclear attack on an Argentine city.)

Historians might say the Belgrano question is of the sort best left to historians for definitive answer. But the question is being hotly, and necessarily, debated in Britain now. Mrs. Thatcher is being accused in the press of an unspeakable offense: choosing war over peace and, then and now, trying to cover it up. The matter will likely move to Parliament.

The gravity of these charges means they cannot be left hanging. In the nuclear age especially, nothing is more important than the matter of how countries involved in disputes go up to, and sometimes past, the teeter point. Everything depends on it.

— THE WASHINGTON POST

X is for XTINCTION

I have known since the Falklands conflict was in progress that nuclear weapons were being carried by the Task Force. Indeed, as Keith Speed, the navy minister sacked by Mrs Thatcher, said on BBC Newsnight, "I would be most surprised if Royal Navy ships had not been carrying nuclear weapons."

The National Union of Seamen have evidence that the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, which left Gibraltar on Exercise Springtrain on 29 March 1982 was carrying nuclear weapons. And David Tinker wrote in his diaries that he was most surprised to go aboard the **Fort Austin** and see dummy nuclear weapons - doubtless for practice in transferring nuclear depth charges to and from helicopters.

To his credit, Professor Sir Ronald Mason, then Chief Scientist at the Ministry of Defence, did his utmost in the first week of April 1982 to make sure that nuclear weapons on ships leaving the channel ports were put ashore. He was partially successful - but only partially. A large arsenal of nuclear weapons did leave. If there was no intention ever to use them, in any circumstances whatsoever, why were they not offloaded at Gibraltar?

There is no doubt whatsoever that some nuclear weapons lie at the bottom of the South Atlantic, entombed in ships such as HMS **Coventry**. That brave man, Petty Officer Michael Harrison won his Queen's Gallantry Award, not as the press would have us believe, for going down and searching for codes, which would have been destroyed by salt water, but for nuclear weapons emitting heaven knows what in the form of radio nucleides.

More serious still is the use of nuclear powered submarines, such as HMS **Conqueror**, and the role of the R class submarines. I am aware of the denial by Admirals Lewin and Leach that they ever contemplated a nuclear attack. What they were careful not to deny was that one of their R class, Polaris-carrying submarines went to Ascension Island and indeed 21 degrees west, 12 degrees south, out of range of the Soviet Union, and within range of Argentina. What on earth was it doing there, if, in every circumstance, including that of humiliation and defeat, nuclear weapons were not to be used?

An R class submarine at Ascension Island would be 1,000 miles or more out of range of the nearest Soviet territory. If the admirals are right in claiming that they never altered the patrol pattern of submarines, all sorts of questions must be asked about the routes or routine patrols of the British deterrent. We have claimed credit time and again for being the first country to say that we would never offer a nuclear threat, let alone a nuclear attack to a non-nuclear country. (Foreign Office Papers, January 1982).

Though I like to believe that most naval commanders would simply have disobeyed any order to use nuclear weapons - (difficult if they were sealed orders) - the fact is that such a spine-chilling possibility had crossed the mind of David Tinker. He wrote in his posthumously-published diaries, " _ suggested that we should drop a Big White Job on Buenos Aires. Thank God he's not in command!"

Y is for YET

The ever-careful Swiss are simply not going to arrange talks between Britain and Argentina in Berne unless there is a good chance of success. I cannot believe other than that the Swiss were pretty sure of success when they set up talks for 18 and 19 July. I suspect the talks foundered on the word Yet in relation to discussions on sovereignty, withdrawn to the dismay of the Foreign Office negotiators, at the behest of the Prime Minister.

Contrary to what was published in the quality British press, talks proceeded according to expectation, were not broken off, and lasted the expected 2 days. Argentina required all along that a mechanism should be set up to allow future negotiations on sovereignty and only agreed to meet in Berne once Britain had softened its position and accepted that talks with an open agenda should take place in which the mechanism would be discussed. The talks were to be confidential and the accepted formula was that Britain would say "we are not prepared to enter into discussions on sovereignty" interpreted in the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs as meaning that talks were not to exclude discussions on the mechanism that would allow sovereignty to be placed on the future agenda. The Argentinians were clearly under the impression that Britain would discuss sovereignty, the root of the problem, but not "yet".

In the very middle of the talks, who should make a public pronouncement but Sir Rex Hunt, the Governor, who to the dismay of the many sensible and caring Foreign Office officials has been allowed to be a law unto himself. Hunt chose this delicate moment to announce a drilling contract by the First Land, Oil and Gas Co. and then opined to the world that the issue of sovereignty was excluded from discussion. On 23 July I asked the FCO "whether it was on his authority that Sir Rex Hunt issued a statement in Port Stanley that any discussion of sovereignty over the Falklands is excluded from the Berne talks" and received an answer from the junior minister, Ray Whitney MP, "Yes". Hunt's wrecking statements were like a red rag to an Argentine bull. Yet ministers have had to endorse them.

Sources in Berne held that given the worldwide publicity that resulted from the talks, "things cannot long remain as they are now". They believed that "here we are confronted with aspects of Mrs Thatcher's personality which is at variance with the Foreign Office." **Dead right.** It is fashionable in some quarters to sneer at "effete" Foreign Office officials but the blunt fact is that most of the men and women in today's Foreign Office are there by merit, are able, and have Britain's best interests at heart. They have a wiser and better perception of Britain's real interests in the South Atlantic than Mrs Thatcher, who prattles on about the Falklands being British for 1,000 years. Time is not on our side.

Z is for ZOOLOGY

The Falkland Islands have great strategic importance - for gentoo penguins and a host of other seabirds. In a nuclear age they have no strategic importance for European powers or Superpowers. By setting up Fortress Falklands, we have shattered the fragile way of life of the island community, many of whom were there in the first place because they liked solitude. The full danger to habitat has yet to be assessed. All I can say is that I and others have been shown photographs of the entrails of slaughtered penguins, hitherto pathetically innocent in their dealings with humankind.

The least sympathetic regular question that I have had at CLP meetings runs along the lines - "well, is not the real reason for Fortress Falklands that we have to maintain a British presence in the South Atlantic to make sure that we get our slice of the oil, and our slice of the riches of the Antarctic?"

No one knows for certain if there is oil in commercially viable quantities in the Malvinas Trench and, if so, how much. For those of us who know the North Sea rigs, what is certain is that no one could win any oil from the Roaring Forties or the Furious Fifties unless there was co-operation from the coastal states of South America. And when we talk of economic development of the Falklands and their prosperity as a community, let us remember that they are doing very well compared to hundreds of thousands of families in Britain who have less benefit, and less chance of a job than they might otherwise have, on account of the soaring defence budget.

Nor does a military presence in the Falklands have any helpful bearing on our position in relation to the Antarctic. That position depends entirely on our relationships with our co-signatories to the Antarctic Treaty who include the Soviet Union, Argentina, and Chile. In no way are they going to permit us to use the Antarctic Treaty to allow Britain off the hook on which we have impaled ourselves in the Falklands.

Some potentially sensible ideas have been put forward for the establishment of international nature and wilderness reserves on the Falklands but this is no way of fudging the crunch issue of Argentine sovereignty. Of course, there should be fishing limits, though the islanders have never shown any disposition to fish commercially. But these limits should be established in the interests of world fish conservation, and cannot be geared to arguments about territorial waters.

Yet, the lack of urgency shown by government in these problems and those of the islanders underlines yet again that the Falklands war was not about the interests of the Falklanders or the Islands, but about British domestic politics in 1982.



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