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FROM FCO 051600Z MAY 82

TO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON

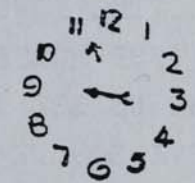
TELEGRAM NUMBER 920 OF 5 MAY

INFO IMMEDIATE BRASILIA, MONTEVIDEO,  
PRIORITY UKMIS GENEVA, BERNE

*E.R.*

-5 MAY 1982

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REPATRIATION OF POWS

1. AS YOU KNOW THE 151 POWS TAKEN ON SOUTH GEORGIA, TOGETHER WITH 39 CIVILIANS (THESE INCLUDE TWO CHILEANS, TWO URUGUAYANS AND ONE SPANIARD), ARE NOW ON THEIR WAY BY SHIP TO ASCENSION ISLAND. THEY ARE LIKELY TO ARRIVE AROUND 11 MAY. ONWARD TRAVEL FROM ASCENSION TO ARGENTINA PRESENTS US WITH A NUMBER OF PRACTICAL PROBLEMS. WE HAVE LOOKED CLOSELY AT THE VARIOUS POSSIBILITIES AND HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THE BEST ANSWER WOULD BE TO SEEK US ASSISTANCE IN THE SHAPE OF A CIVILIAN AIRCRAFT TO TRANSPORT THE PARTY EITHER TO BRAZIL (AS THE PROTECTING POWER) OR URUGUAY. A THIRD POSSIBILITY WOULD BE A DIRECT FLIGHT TO ARGENTINA, BUT WE SEE SOME DIFFICULTIES IN THIS. WE WOULD BE HAPPY TO LEAVE IT TO THE AMERICANS TO DECIDE ON THE PRECISE ROUTE. ONE OF THE MAJOR CONSIDERATIONS IS THE PROBLEM OF SECURITY ON ASCENSION ISLAND: ACCESS BY AIRCRAFT FROM A THIRD COUNTRY WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE, WHEREAS THE USE OF AN AMERICAN PLANE CAUSES NO DIFFICULTIES. GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD DISCUSS THIS URGENTLY WITH THE AMERICANS AND LET US HAVE THEIR REACTION. WE HAVE NOT SPOKEN ABOUT THESE POSSIBILITIES EITHER TO THE BRAZILIANS OR THE URUGUAYANS. THE ICRC ARE HOWEVER AWARE OF OUR PLANS AND SEE NO DIFFICULTY FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW. (THEY WILL HAVE REPRESENTATIVES AT ASCENSION AND WE MAY INVITE ONE OF THEM TO ACCOMPANY THE GROUP).

2. IF POSSIBLE WE WOULD LIKE ALL PASSENGERS TO BE ACCOMMODATED ON ONE FLIGHT, LEAVING ASCENSION AT NIGHT (FOR SECURITY REASONS) ON 11/12 OR 12/13 MAY.

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WE ARE ANXIOUS TO ARRANGE REPATRIATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE  
AND ANY DELAY BEYOND THESE DATES WOULD CAUSE PRACTICAL PROBLEMS.

3. (FOR BRASILIA). IF YOU THINK IT HELPFUL YOU MAY INFORM  
THE BRAZILIANS OF THESE PLANS, IN VIEW OF THEIR ROLE AS  
PROTECTING POWER.

4. (FOR MONTEVIDEO). THE URUGUAYANS MAY BE ANXIOUS TO HELP.  
IF THE US SEE ADVANTAGE IN REPATRIATING THE PARTY THROUGH  
MONTEVIDEO, WE ASSUME THAT THEY WILL MAKE THE NECESSARY  
ARRANGEMENTS DIRECT WITH THE URUGUAY AUTHORITIES.

PYM