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TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELNO 619 OF 7TH SEPTEMBER 1981.

BBC TV TEAM.

1. THE BBC TELEVISION FILM CREW OF FOUR WERE ORDERED TO LEAVE POLAND BY 8.00AM WARSAW TIME TODAY. THEIR VISAS WERE DUE TO EXPIRE LATER TODAY BUT THEY WERE EXPECTING AN EXTENSION TO ENABLE THEM TO COMPLETE COVERAGE OF THE FIRST STAGE OF THE SOLIDARITY CONGRESS.
2. SEBASTIAN, BBC RESIDENT CORRESPONDENT, CALLED ME FROM GDANSK ON SUNDAY EVENING TO EXPLAIN THAT THE TEAM HAD WANTED AN INDUSTRIAL SHOT AS BACKGROUND FOR A PIECE ON GDANSK AND TOOK A SHORT FILM OF THE GDANSK OIL REFINERY AT SUNSET ON SATURDAY 5 SEPTEMBER. AS THEY WERE PACKING UP THE POLICE DETAINED THEM AND IMPOUNDED THEIR EQUIPMENT. THEY WERE NOT ACCOMPANIED BY ANY POLISH SPEAKERS AND ONLY UNDERSTOOD SOMETHING ABOUT "INDUSTRIAL ESPIONAGE". THEY WERE SUBSEQUENTLY ALLOWED TO RETURN TO THEIR HOTEL AND INSTRUCTED TO REPORT TO THE POLICE AT MIDDAY ON SUNDAY. WHEN THEY DID SO THEY WERE TOLD THEIR VISAS HAD BEEN CANCELLED AND REPLACED WITH VISAS ENTITLING THEM TO REMAIN IN POLAND UNTIL 8AM MONDAY 7 SEPTEMBER. THEIR EQUIPMENT WAS RETURNED EXCEPT FOR THE FILM CASSETTE WHICH THEY WERE TOLD HAD BEEN SENT TO WARSAW FOR DEVELOPING.
3. SEBASTIAN ASKED WHETHER THE EMBASSY COULD HELP. I TOLD HIM IT WOULD HAVE BEEN EASIER HAD I HAD EARLIER ADVICE. I SPOKE TO THE MFA DUTY OFFICER AT ABOUT 7.30 PM ASKING FOR A STAY TO THE ORDER FOR AT LEAST 24 OR 48 HOURS TO ENABLE THE TEAM TO COMPLETE THEIR WORK. HE RETURNED MY CALL THREE HOURS LATER AND SAID THE AUTHORITIES WERE ADAMANT THAT THE ORDER MUST STAND AND THE TEAM MUST LEAVE BY 8AM.

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4. ALTHOUGH I STRESSED TO THE MFA THE ADVERSE EFFECT UPON BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION AT THIS EXPULSION AND SEBASTIAN LATER TOLD ME THAT OTHER VISITING FILM TEAMS HAD OBTAINED SIMILAR SHOTS, IT IS DIFFICULT TO AVOID THE IMPRESSION THAT THE TEAM COULD HAVE CHOSEN A LESS SENSITIVE SUBJECT. AFTER POZOGA'S RECENT PUBLIC ACCUSATIONS ABOUT ESPIONAGE ACTIVITY BY WESTERN EMBASSIES I BELIEVE THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR MAY HAVE BEEN ON THE LOOK OUT FOR A SCAPE-GOAT. THE INCIDENT ALSO REFLECTS THE GENERALLY TOUGHER ATTITUDE BEING ADOPTED BY THE AUTHORITIES. I AM AFRAID THAT THE TEAM PLAYED STRAIGHT INTO THEIR HANDS.

JOY

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