



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

1 May 1984

Thank you very much indeed for your interesting letter of 11 April.

We have examined carefully your views on Nicaragua in your second paragraph. You would not expect me to set out our conclusions in this letter, but the general feeling is that the contingency which concerns you is rather less likely than you suggest.

On the broader subject of the Caribbean, we are, as you suggest, already in close touch with the United States about security in the area. We have also taken a number of steps to assist the states concerned to improve security. For example, we encouraged the Eastern Caribbean states in the formation of a Regional Security System in 1982, and have since supported it by the provision of advice and training. A British naval officer, who is on loan to the Barbados Coast Guard, has been appointed Regional Coast Guard Co-ordinator. An infantry training team spent two months with the Regional Security System in 1983 and a second team visited Barbados and Dominica earlier this year. Further such assistance will be given. We currently spend about £1 million a year on military training for all the Caribbean countries. We also helped fund the Regional Police Training School in Barbados. 187 policemen from Caribbean countries have also been trained in Britain at British Government expense in the last five years.

You will be aware of our contribution to the security of Belize. You may also know that a study of the security of small states was launched by last year's Conference of Commonwealth Heads of Government.

We shall certainly try to use this involvement in the way you suggest - i.e. to strengthen our knowledge of U.S. thinking.

I should be very glad to have a further word about this if you wish.

A.L. COLES

NR

Sir Philip de Zulueta.

CCPC



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Mr Gales o/v

26 April 1984

John Tsch...

Your letter of 16 April sought our comments on Sir Philip de Zulueta's letter to you of 11 April about the US, Nicaragua and the Caribbean.

Some recent developments in Central America are indeed disquieting. You will recall, for example, that the Prime Minister, in answer to a question in the House of Commons on 10 April, said that we had made it very clear to the US Government that we are against mining the ports in Nicaragua because of the danger to international traffic on the high seas. But we consider it improbable that President Reagan would authorise an invasion of Nicaragua.

Opinion polls show that any such move would be very unpopular with the electorate, and recent Congressional reactions to the Administration's policy towards Nicaragua will not have been lost on the President. The Kissinger Commission report examined in detail the possible ways of dealing with the basic threat posed by Nicaragua. It urged that direct US military action - which would have major human and political costs - should be regarded only as a course of last resort and only where there were clear dangers to US security.

We are already in touch with the US about security in the Caribbean and they welcome our continuing commitment to the area. In the Eastern Caribbean we encouraged Antigua, St Kitts, St. Lucia, St Vincent, Dominica and Barbados in the formation of a Regional Security System in 1982 and have supported it since by the provision of advice and training. A British naval officer, who is on loan to the Barbados Coast Guard, has been appointed Regional Coast Guard Coordinator. An infantry training team spent two months with the RSS in 1983 and a second team visited Barbados and Dominica in February and March of this year. Further such assistance will be given. We currently spend about £1 million per year on military training for all the Caribbean countries under the Military Assistance Scheme (UKMTAS). We also help fund the Regional Police Training School in Barbados. 187 policemen from Caribbean countries have also been trained in Britain at British Government expense in the last five years. Assistance to the police (excluding the special provisions for Grenada) comes to well over £600,000 per year.

/In Belize



In Belize we maintain a garrison which has successfully protected the country since independence against external threat, while helping to train the Belize Defence Force. This is a contribution to peace and stability in the region which the Americans have recognised as uniquely valuable.

The wider question of the security of small states is currently under study by the Commonwealth Secretary-General. We intend shortly to put our views to him as a contribution towards this.

I am copying this letter to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office) and Richard Mottram (MOD).

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R B Bone', written in a cursive style.

(R B Bone)  
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq  
10 Downing Street

NICARAGUA

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cc: SIR P. CRADOCK

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

16 April, 1984

Nicaragua

I enclose a copy of a letter which I have received from Sir Philip de Zulueta. You will note that he obtained the impression from a recent visit to Washington that it was "highly possible that the US will invade Nicaragua before the Elections".

He proceeds to suggest that we are not making proper use of "our Caribbean card" with the Americans and proposes that we should hold discussions with the Americans about security in the Caribbean.

I should be grateful for comments by 1 May.

I am copying this letter to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office) and Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

A. J. COLES

P. F. Ricketts, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

CONFIDENTIAL

3, WESTMINSTER GARDENS,  
MARSHAM STREET,  
LONDON, SW1P 4JA

TEL. 01-828 2448

11th April, 1984.

A.J. Coles, Esq.,  
10 Downing Street,  
LONDON, S.W.1.

*Dear John,*

I have just had a very interesting visit to Washington for the Trilateral Commission. We had some quite interesting discussions and considered a paper called "Democracy Must Work" which David Owen, Zbigniew Brzezinski and a Japanese had prepared. The main point perhaps was a suggested "trade-off" between an increased European Defence Budget and a reduced U.S. deficit. While quite ingenious I am not clear how practical this would be. Anyway I will send you the document when it is finalised as it might be of some interest to the Prime Minister before the Summit. You will have to do a precis!

What, however, did concern me much more in the U.S. was the Administration's attitude towards Nicaragua. From what both the Secretary of State and Henry Kissinger (to say nothing of the President) said it really seemed to me highly possible that the U.S. will invade Nicaragua before the Elections. Of course the hostile reaction of Congress may limit the President's action and it could be that he is merely preparing the ground for an attack on the Democratic Congress as unpatriotic and this attack has already begun. On the other hand the domestic popularity of his Grenada operation seems to have made the President feel that something similar in Nicaragua could cause him to win in a landslide in November. Obviously a more bellicose U.S. attitude in Central America faces H.M.G. with considerable embarrassments.

A.J. Coles, Esq.,  
10 Downing Street, S.W.1.

11th April, 1984.

This leads me to the point of our activity in the Caribbean. I have felt for many years that we are not using our Caribbean card with the Americans properly. As we gave, not to say forced, independence on the Caribbean countries they certainly do not fear us as threatening their independence but the same cannot be said of the U.S. I think, therefore, that we are in a position to be welcomed with military and other assistance more easily than the Americans. In addition the U.S. seems to regard the whole Caribbean/Central American area as being closely connected strategically which is no doubt the case. With me in Washington was Julian Ridsdale who had breakfast with the President and has, I am sure, told the Prime Minister about Mr. Reagan's continued irritation concerning the British attitude on Grenada. To me this somewhat reinforces my view that the President would like to repeat his domestic successes over Grenada elsewhere.

But in any case it does seem to me that it would be wise for us to propose discussions with the U.S. about security in the Caribbean with, of course, particular emphasis on our ex Colonies. Perhaps this is already being done but if we could get involved in such talks and are prepared if necessary to spend a little money in the area, we might at least get on the inside track with the U.S. Administration on this subject and perhaps avoid difficulties over a more vigorous U.S. policy in Central America. This may be a silly idea but I can see there are likely to be problems with the U.S. over the next few months on this subject. Perhaps we could have a drink one day to discuss this thought.

*Yours ever,  
Philip de Z.*