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FM JEDDA 231130Z APR

TO IMMEDIATE FCO TELNO 324 OF 23 APR

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MYTELNO 321: TV FILM

1. SAUDI WAS MANIFESTLY GRIEVED. AT ONE POINT HE SAID, GOING OFF THE RECORD, THAT HE PERSONALLY HAD STRIVED FROM THE FIRST TO FIND A WAY OF AVOIDING SO SAD AN OUTCOME. BUT WE HAD OFFERED HIM NOTHING. THE DUTCH HAD DONE THEIR VERY BEST. IF THEY HAD FAILED IT WAS BECAUSE OF ALL THE PUBLICITY IN BRITAIN. IN SWEDEN THE GOVERNMENT HAD FOUND A WAY. I PROTESTED THAT IT WAS NOT THE SWEDISH GOVERNMENT BUT A GROUP OF BUSINESSMEN WHO HAD TAKEN ACTION: IN ANY CASE THE SIZE AND NATURE OF THE OPERATION WERE ON IMMENSELY SMALLER SCALE THAN A SIMILAR ATTEMPT WOULD HAVE BEEN IN BRITAIN, WHERE THE FILM HAD ORIGINATED. HE SAID THE SWEDISH GOVERNMENT HAD PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE. WHEN HE HAD ASKED ME TO OUR LAST MEETING WHAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAD DONE ALL I HAD BEEN ABLE TO PRODUCE WAS TWO OR THREE EDITORIALS.

3. I SAID THAT SINCE THEN I HAD HEARD OF SIR PHILIP *de ZULUETA'S* ATTEMPT TO INTERVENE. HE SAID DE ZULUETA HAD INTERVENED AT THE SAUDI'S REQUEST. IN PARLIAMENT LORD CARRINGTON HAD BEEN ATTACKED FOR APOLOGISING AND HAD EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD NOT APOLOGISED. HOW WAS THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT TO EXPLAIN THAT TO ITS PEOPLE? TO MY COMPLAINT THAT HE WAS BLAMING HMG FOR THE WORDS OF PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS HE SAID THAT THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT HAD SUPPORTED THE FILM. HOW WAS HE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN HMG AND PARLIAMENT? I SAID THAT HE MUST: HE KNEW THAT PARLIAMENT CONSISTED OF GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION. HE REPLIED THAT EVEN MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT PARTY HAD FAILED TO ATTACK THE FILM. ONLY ONE MP HAD ATTACKED IT AND HE HAD DONE SO AT SAUDI REQUEST. I COULD MAKE NO COMMENT SINCE I HAVE SEEN NO ACCOUNT OF THE DEBATE.

4. IN REPLY TO MY QUESTION HE SAID THAT HE COULD NOT ESTIMATE HOW LONG WE SHOULD STAY WITHOUT AMBASSADORS: BUT HE HOPED IT WOULD NOT BE LONG. HE HOPED I WOULD NOT BE IMMEDIATELY REASSIGNED: IT WAS HIS PERSONAL WISH THAT I COULD BE WELCOMED BACK. THE SAUDI'S HAD BEEN HOPING, WITH THE ADVENT OF MRS THATCHER'S GOVERNMENT, FOLLOWED BY LORD CARRINGTON'S VISIT, THAT OUR COOPERATION COULD EXPAND AND DEVELOP. ALL THAT WAS AT RISK NOW. I POINTED OUT THAT WE HAD HUNDREDS OF JOINT OPERATIONS, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, IN PROCESS: WERE THEY ALL TO STOP? HE DID NOT KNOW BUT SAID THAT THE IMPACT OF THIS AFFAIR WOULD BE WIDELY FELT. I ASKED ABOUT THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS. HE SAID IT COULD NOT (NOT) COME. A REPLY TO THE QUEEN'S INVITATION TO KING KHALED WAS READY: IT WAS "A VERY NICE LETTER".

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5. I POINTED OUT THAT THE SAUDI PRESS HAD NOT BEEN ENTIRELY BLAMELESS. WE HAD BEEN BITTERLY ATTACKED FOR BEING ANTI-ISLAM, BUT MUSLIMS HAD THEIR MOSQUES AND THEIR FREEDOM TO WORSHIP IN BRITAIN, WHEREAS IN SAUDI ARABIA NON-MUSLEMS HAD NO SUCH PRIVILEGES. THAT SHOULD BE PUT TO OUR CREDIT: FREEDOM WAS ALL EMBRACING. HE NODDED BUT MADE NO COMMENT.

6. FINALLY HE MADE SOME KINDLY REFERENCES TO ME PERSONALLY AND SAID I COULD TAKE AS LONG AS I LIKED TO PREPARE MY DEPARTURE. I SHALL BE BACK IN JEDDA TONIGHT.

7. COMMENT. LAST NIGHT IN JEDDA A JUNIOR PRINCE, A FIRST COUSIN OF FAHD AND THE ~~REST~~, CAME TO MY HOUSE. HE HAD UNFORTUNATELY BEEN AWAY UNTIL ~~THE~~ PREVIOUS DAY. HE WAS CRITICAL OF SAUDI HANDLING OF THE AFFAIR AND THOUGHT THAT PRINCE MOHAMMED, GRANDFATHER OF THE EXECUTED GIRL, WAS CALLING THE TUNE. HE SAID THAT WHEN HE HAD ASKED PRINCE SULTAN WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN SULTAN HAD REPLIED "MAY GOD GUIDE US". THIS AND SAUDS OWN REMARKS (PARA 1 ABOVE) CONFIRM MY VIEW THAT THE WISER* PRINCE~~Y~~HEADS HAVE REACHED THIS DECISION WITH EXTREME RELUCTANCE AND UNDER PRESSURE FROM THE OLD MEN, AMONG WHO I FEAR THE KING MUST BE INCLUDED.

8. I SUBMIT THAT IT IS THIS RELUCTANCE THAT WE MUST BUILD ON, MAKING NO RECRIMINATIONS BUT EXPRESSING HOPE FOR THE FUTURE. WHAT WE CAN ACTUALLY DO CAN BE DISCUSSED WHEN I COME ^{*HOME} SUBJECT TO YOUR VIEWS I DO NOT PROPOSE TO HURRY.

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