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FM BUENOS AIRES 03/1853Z APR 82
TO FLASH FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 150 OF 03 APRIL 1982
INFO IMMEDIATE BERNE

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BREAK OF RELATIONS

1. THE SWISS AMBASSADOR AND I MET KELLER SARMIENTO, HEAD OF WESTERN EUROPEAN DEPARTMENT MFA, THIS MORNING IN THE SWISS EMBASSY WHEN I WAS HANDED A NOTE IN REPLY TO THE NOTIFICATION GIVEN TO THE ARGENTINE CHARGE IN LONDON YESTERDAY, 2 APRIL. THE NOTE REQUIRES ME AND MY STAFF TO LEAVE ARGENTINA AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND NOT LATER THAN MIDDAY ON 9 APRIL. THE NOTE CONFIRMS THAT THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT AGREES THAT THE SWISS GOVERNMENT SHOULD TAKE CHARGE OF OUR DIPLOMATIC INTERESTS IN ARGENTINEA AND INFORMS US THAT THE BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENT WILL ACT FOR THE ARGENTINES IN LONDON. THERE IS NO OBJECTION TO OUR ESTABLISHING A BRITISH INTERESTS SECTION OF APPROPRIATE SIZE SUPERVISED BY TWO DIPLOMATS FROM THE SWISS EMBASSY HERE.

2. KELLER SARMIENTO CLARIFIED THE FOLLOWING FURTHER POINTS:-

(1) THE ARGENTINES WOULD NOT OBJECT IF SUBJECT TO RECIPROCITY WIVES OR CHILDREN OF DEPARTING PERSONNEL WISHED TO STAY ON TO SUPERVISE PACKING OF EFFECTS.

(2) THERE WOULD BE NO OBJECTION TO OUR RETAINING FOUR SUPPORT STAFF IN ADDITION TO THE FOUR DIPLOMATS.

(3) EXISTING OFFICE PREMISES COULD BE USED (WE ARE ALREADY FLYING THE SWISS FLAG AT THE EMBASSY OFFICES AND RESIDENCE WITH AN APPROPRIATE TEMPORARY DOOR PLATE).

(4) KELLER SARMIENTO PROMISED TO CONFIRM THAT THE THREE PRESENT BRITISH COUNCIL STAFF WITH DIPLOMATIC STATUS COULD REMAIN IN ADDITION TO THE FOUR DIPLOMATS.

3. IN RETURN HE ASKED FOR CLARIFICATION OF FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC SANCTIONS OF WHICH HE HAD BEEN NOTIFIED FROM LONDON, PARTICULARLY THAT PERSONAL ACCOUNTS HAD BEEN BLOCKED. HE SOUGHT ASSURANCES CONCERNING ARGENTINE BUILDINGS AND PROPERTY IN LONDON ON WHICH I ADVISED HIM TO ASK THE BRAZILIANS. HE SAID THAT THE ARGENTINE VIEW WAS THAT THE BREAK OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS DID NOT INVOLVE A BREAK IN CONSULAR RELATIONS AND WISHED TO KEEP OPEN THEIR CONSULAR OFFICE IN LIVERPOOL. HE ALSO WISHED LOCALLY ENGAGED COMMERCIAL SECTION STAFF TO REMAIN IN LONDON. DKELLER SARMIENTO ALSO EXPRESSED A WISH TO RETAIN ARGENTINE STAFF AT THEIR NAVAL OFFICE IN LONDON. I DOUBTED WHETHER THIS WOULD BE POSSIBLE BUT SUGGESTED HE TOOK IT UP THROUGH THE BRAZILIANS.

4. THE SWISS AMBASSADOR SOUGHT CLARIFICATION FROM KELLER SARMIENTO ON THE FOLLOWING POINTS:-

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(1) THAT COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE BRITISH EMBASSY DIRECT TO LONDON MIGHT CONTINUE. KELLER SARMIENTO AGREED SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION THAT THESE COULD BE MAINTAINED UNTIL MY DEPARTURE. THEREAFTER ALL COMMUNICATIONS WOULD GO THROUGH THE SWISS EMBASSY.

(2) TRAVEL DOCUMENTS WOULD BE SUPPLIED BY THE ARGENTINES FOR DEPARTING STAFF EITHER BY ROAD TO URUGUAY OR BY AIR, TOGETHER WITH CUSTOMS LAISSEZ PASSER FOR THEIR HOUSEHOLD EFFECTS AND CARS.

(3) DEPARTING MEMBERS OF MY STAFF COULD BE APPOINTED CASUAL SWISS COURIERS TO CONVEY CERTAIN CLASSIFIED ITEMS FROM HERE TO MONTEVIDEO FOR ONWARD DESPATCH TO LONDON. OUR BAGS WOULD BE OVER-POUCHED IN SWISS BAGS.

(4) THERE MIGHT BE A FEW BAS PEOPLE AWAITING COLLECTION BY SHIP FROM THE GEORGIAS AND THE MFA SHOULD TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEM.

(5) KELLER SARMIENTO SAW NO REASON FOR ANY IMMEDIATE CHANGE IN THE WHITE CARD TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN THE ISLANDS AND ARGENTINA.

5. IT WAS CLEAR FROM OUR DISCUSSION THAT THE ARGENTINES ARE TOTALLY INEXPERIENCED IN DEALING WITH A UNILATERAL BREAK IN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND THE CONSEQUENT ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERESTS SECTIONS. WE TOO LACK EXPERTISE IN THIS FIELD AS DO OUR SWISS COLLEAGUES. BUT SWISS EXPERTS ARE ON THE WAY, ONE ARRIVING BY MONDAY AND THE MODALITIES MAY THEN BECOME CLEARER. MEANWHILE MY SWISS COLLEAGUE WILL BE TAKING UP THE ABOVE POINTS WITH YOU IN LONDON VIA BERNE AND I SHOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD PROTECT THIS NOT AUTHORISED ADVANCE NOTICE OF THE PROBLEMS.

6. OUR DISCUSSION, PARTICULARLY ON COMMUNICATIONS IN WHICH IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE SWISS EXPECT ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO PASS THROUGH THEM AFTER MY DEPARTURE PROMPTS ME TO QUESTION WHETHER MY INITIAL SUGGESTIONS FOR THE STAFFING OF OUR INTERESTS SECTION ARE NOW APPROPRIATE. IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT CYPHER STAFF WILL NOT BE NEEDED (NOR PRESUMABLY CYPHER EQUIPMENT WHICH SHOULD CLEARLY BE GOT OUT FAST). IT SEEMS RIGHT TO HLEAVE A SENIOR MEMBER OF STAFF AND TWO ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF BEHIND AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING BUT YOU WILL WISH TO CONSIDER WHETHER THEY WILL NEED A FIRST SECRETARY IN SUPPORT.

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