

CAB/EDNB 009/15

OO EDINBURGH

GRS 870

CONFIDENTIAL
DESKBY 141600Z
FM MOSCOW 141.40Z MAY 82
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 279 OF 14/579
INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK, UKDEL NATO.

MY TELNO: 275 FALKLANDS

1. I CALLED ON SUSLOV, HEAD OF SECOND EUROPEAN DEPARTMENT, AT HIS REQUEST AT 1700 HOURS LOCAL TODAY. HE MADE AN ORAL STATEMENT, HANDING OVER A TEXT OF WHICH THE FOLLOWING IS AN INFORMAL TRANSLATION:

QUOTES IN CONNEXION WITH THE COMMUNICATION, TRANSMITTED BY THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN MOSCOW ON 12 MAY 1982, THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR CONSIDERS IT ESSENTIAL TO STATE THE FOLLOWING.

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO EXTEND THE ZONE OF MILITARY ACTIONS IN THE ATLANTIC OCEAN, ARBITRARILY ANNOUNCING THE CLOSURE OF EXTENSIVE AREAS OF OPEN SEA TO THE MARITIME AND AIR TRAFFIC OF OTHER COUNTRIES. THESE ACTIONS ARE IN CLEAR CONTRAVENTION OF THE 1958 CONVENTION ON THE OPEN SEA AND, ACCORDINGLY, ARE CONSIDERED BY THE SOVIET SIDE TO BE ILLEGAL.

MOREOVER, EXTENDING ITS MILITARY ACTIONS IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC, THE BRITISH SIDE, EVIDENTLY, BY WAY OF DIPLOMATIC COVER HAVE SEVERAL TIMES COMMUNICATED "WARNINGS" TO US WHICH ARE WHOLLY INAPPROPRIATE AND HAVE THE AIM OF CREATING A FABRICATION ABOUT SOME KIND OF SOVIET "INVOLVEMENT" IN THE ANGLO-ARGENTINE CONFLICT OVER THE FALKLANDS (MALVINAS) ISLANDS. WHEREAS THE FACTS DEMONSTRATE THAT THE SOVIET SIDE DOES NOT GIVE THE LEAST PRETEXT FOR SUCH INVENTIONS, AND THIS IS WELL-KNOWN IN LONDON.

IN CONNEXION WITH THIS, I AM INSTRUCTED TO STATE THAT, THE "WARNINGS" AND "REQUESTS" OF THE BRITISH SIDE REFERRED TO ABOVE ARE ENTIRELY UNACCEPTABLE AND CANNOT BE CONSIDERED BY US OTHER THAN PROVOCATIVE AND NOT PROMOTING THE MAINTENANCE OF A NORMAL CLIMATE IN SOVIET/BRITISH RELATIONS. UNQUOTE S.

2. I SAID THAT I WOULD REPORT THIS TO MY AUTHORITIES FROM WHOM ANY SUBSTANTIVE REPLY WOULD COME. MEANWHILE, I WISHED TO MAKE A NUMBER OF COMMENTS ON MY OWN AUTHORITY. SO FAR AS THE LEGAL BASIS FOR CLOSING CERTAIN SEA AREAS WAS CONCERNED, PRECEDENTS EXISTED AS THE SOVIET WIDE KNEW WELL. SEA AREAS HAD IN THE PAST BEEN CLOSED FOR GOOD REASONS. THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES HAD NO DOUBT ABOUT THE LEGALITY OF THEIR ACTIONS. AS TO MY COMMUNICATION OF 12 MAY, THIS HAD NOT NOTIFIED THE CLOSURE OF A SEA AREA. IT HAD BEEN A WARNING THAT IN A DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS SITUATION THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WISHED TO DO ALL POSSIBLE TO AVOID AN INCIDENT. IT HAD BEEN MADE IN THIS SPIRIT ALONE. BECAUSE OF THE SURPRISING ELEMENTS IN THE SOVIET STATEMENT I CONSIDERED IT NECESSARY TO RE-STATE THE BASIC FACTS OF THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC. BRITISH TROOPS ON BRITISH TERRITORY HAD EXPERIENCED AN UNPROVOKED AND ARMED ASSAULT BY ARGENTINE FORCES, BRITISH TERRITORY HAD BEEN UNLAWFULLY OCCUPIED AS A RESULT, AND IN DEFIANCE OF A MANDATORY SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION ARGENTINA CONTINUED TO OCCUPY THE FALKLAND ISLANDS. BRITISH FORCES WERE NOW EXERCISING THEIR INHERENT RIGHT TO SELF-DEFENCE IN RESPONSE TO CONTINUED ARMED ACTIONS AGAINST THEM BY ARGENTINA. WE EARNESTLY WISHED TO SEE AN END TO THESE ACTIONS AND A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE DISPUTE. BUT, UNTIL THEN, THERE WAS A RISK OF FURTHER ARMED ACTION BY ARGENTINA AGAINST BRITISH FORCES ENGAGED IN LEGAL ACTIVITY. ARGENTINA WAS THEREFORE THE CAUSE OF A DANGEROUS SITUATION TO WHICH THE UK HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO RESPOND. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WANTED THIS RESPONSE TO BE CONTAINED AND NOT TO GIVE RISE TO INCIDENTS. THE MESSAGE WHICH I HANDED OVER ON 12 MAY HAD BEEN SENT IN A GENUINELY CONSTRUCTIVE SPIRIT. IT DEMONSTRATED THAT COMMON SENSE, THE NEED FOR WHICH ON BOTH SIDES SUSLOV HAD HIMSELF UNDERLINED. THE LANGUAGE OF MY MESSAGE HAD CONTAINED NO INSINUATIONS ABOUT SOVIET POLICY. IT WAS WITH SURPRISE AND REGRET THAT I NOTED THE LANGUAGE OF THE SOVIET COMMUNICATIONS.

3. SUSLOV SAID THAT HE HAD NO FURTHER COMMENT TO MAKE.

4. I REMARKED, BY WAY OF ILLUSTRATING A MORE CONSTRUCTIVE SOVIET REACTION THAT I HAD HEARD OF THE MESSAGE FROM THE COUNSELLOR IN THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN LONDON TO THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES ON 4 MAY ABOUT SOVIET FISHING VESSELS GOING TO THE RESCUE OF SHIPWRECKED ARGENTINE SOLDIERS. THIS SEEMED AN EXAMPLE OF THE SENSIBLE APPROACH WHICH WOULD HELP TO AVOID INCIDENTS.
KEEBLE

NNNN