

CONFIDENTIAL

DESKBY WASHINGTON 202000Z

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FM FCO 201000Z DECEMBER 84

TO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON

TELEGRAM NUMBER 2170 OF 20 DEC

INFO IMMEDIATE HONG KONG (FOR SECRETARY OF STATE'S AND PM'S PARTIES)
MY TELNO GUIDANCE 135 : POST CLOSURES

1. THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR WAS IN TOUCH WITH SIR W HARDING TWICE ON 14 DEC ABOUT THE CLOSURE OF OUR EMBASSY IN SANTO DOMINGO. PRICE HAD BEEN TIPPED OFF BY THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC'S AMBASSADOR IN LONDON WHO IS THE DEAN OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND WHO HAS BEEN LOBBYING VIGOROUSLY AGAINST OUR DECISION. PRICE HAD CONSULTED MOTLEY WHO HAD SAID THAT THE CLOSURE OF THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN SUCH A SIGNIFICANT CARIBBEAN COUNTRY WOULD NOT BE AT ALL WELCOME TO THE US GOVERNMENT, WHO HOPED RATHER TO SEE THE BRITISH PRESENCE IN THE AREA IN GENERAL INTENSIFY. HE HOPED WE COULD BE PERSUADED TO CHANGE OUR MINDS.
2. HARDING EXPLAINED THE PES BACKGROUND TO OUR DECISION TO CLOSE TEN POSTS (PLEASE SEE MY TUR), ADDING THAT SANTO DOMINGO HAD BEEN CHOSEN BECAUSE WE HAD TRIED TO MAINTAIN GEOGRAPHICAL BALANCE AND IT SEEMED THE MOST PAINLESS SACRIFICE IN THE LATIN AMERICAN REGION. BRITISH EXPORTS TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC WERE ONLY ABOUT POUNDS 10 MILLION, THERE WAS NO SUBSTANTIAL BRITISH INVESTMENT OR BUSINESS COMMUNITY IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. TO LIMIT ANY DAMAGE, THE AMBASSADOR IN CARACAS WOULD BE ACCREDITED TO SANTO DOMINGO.
3. PRICE TELEPHONED AGAIN TO SAY THAT HE HAD BEEN ASKED FORMALLY BY MOTLEY TO EMPHASISE (A) THE IMPORTANCE THE AMERICANS ATTACH TO OUR CONTINUED REPRESENTATION IN THIS IMPORTANT CARIBBEAN COUNTRY AND (B) THE DESIRABILITY OF POSTPONING AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE CLOSURE IN ORDER TO GIVE FURTHER TIME FOR REFLECTION.
4. MEANWHILE THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC HAVE SAID THAT THEY ARE CONSIDERING CLOSING THEIR EMBASSY IN LONDON IN RETALIATION.

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5. HARDING SPOKE TO PRICE AGAIN ON 17 DEC TO WARN HIM ABOUT THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE POST CLOSURE. PRICE DOUBTED WHETHER THE US GOVERNMENT WOULD PURSUE THE MATTER FURTHER. IT THEREFORE SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT THE SUBJECT WILL BE RAISED WITH THE PRIME MINISTER WHILE SHE IS IN WASHINGTON. BUT IT CANNOT BE RULED OUT AND THE SUBJECT COULD WELL BE MENTIONED AT OFFICIAL LEVEL IN THE MARGINS.

6. WE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL THEREFORE IF THE PRIME MINISTER'S PARTY COULD BE GIVEN A SHORT SUPPLEMENTARY BRIEF WITH A DEFENSIVE LINE TO TAKE ON THE LINES OF PARA 2 ABOVE. IT SHOULD BE PREFACED BY A SENTENCE EXPLAINING THAT THE CLOSURE DOES NOT REFLECT ANY LESSENING OF THE BRITISH COMMITMENT TO STABILITY IN THE CARIBBEAN. IT IS PART OF A WORLDWIDE PACKAGE.

7. THE LINE TO TAKE MIGHT CONCLUDE BY SAYING THAT THE SECRETARY OF STATE HAS SENT A PERSONAL MESSAGE TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC FOREIGN MINISTER ASSURING HIM THAT WE WISH TO MAINTAIN OUR TRADITIONAL TIES THROUGH OUR AMBASSADOR IN CARACAS AND WE HOPE THAT THE DOMINICANS WILL MAINTAIN THEIR EMBASSY IN LONDON.

HOWE



cc: HMA

Mr Powell

POST CLOSURES

Line to Take(a) General

Necessary economies. Determined to keep firm grip on public spending.

(b) Santo Domingo

1. Decision to close in Santo Domingo does not reflect any lessening of the British commitment to stability in the Caribbean.

2. We are closing ten posts but only one in Central or Southern America. No substantial British investment or business community in the Dominican Republic. HM Ambassador in Caracas will be accredited to Santo Domingo.

3. The Secretary of State has sent a personal message to the Dominican Foreign Minister.

(c) MBFR

1. No risk that HM Ambassador in Vienna (Michael Alexander) becoming concurrently Head of the UK MBFR delegation will damage our input to the MBFR exercise. On the contrary.

2. Delegation otherwise unchanged.

Background

1. Posts to be closed are: Antwerp, Blantyre, Cagliari, Gothenburg, Halifax, Salonika, Santo Domingo, Vientiane, Vigo and Zagreb. HM Ambassador in Vienna is also in future to head the MBFR delegation there.

2. The US Administration have complained about Santo Domingo, and MBFR.

3. On Santo Domingo, Ambassador Price has said in London that the Administration would rather we stayed, and indeed intensified our effort there.

4. On MBFR, the State Department have said that they fear that others may follow our example, and that NATO's performance might as a result be impaired.

5. Highly unlikely that either issue will come up at Camp David. But the Prime Minister ought perhaps to be in the picture.

J O Kerr

21 December 1984