

ACW 040/225/2		
RECEIVED		NO. 18
6 JUN 1980		
DESK OFFICER	PA	REGISTRY
		Action Taken

RECORD OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE HON N RIDLEY MP
AND AMBASSADOR W G BOWDLER AT THE STATE DEPARTMENT
ON 30 APRIL 1980

Present

The Hon N Ridley MP

Ambassador W G Bowdler
Assistant Secretary

Mr G W Harding

Mr J Bushnell
Deputy Assistant Secretary

Mr R J Carrick
British Embassy

Mr J Blacken
Director
Central America

Mr K D Temple
Private Secretary

Mr W R Warne
Director
Caribbean Countries

Falklands

1. In answer to Mr Bowdler's question, Mr Ridley said that his talks with the Argentines in New York about the Falkland Islands, which, he stressed, were talks rather than negotiations, had been a good two days in which the object had been to examine the Argentinian position and report to Mr Ridley's colleagues in London. It was clear that the Argentines had not changed and wanted to be able to say that the Islands had been returned to them - with the implication of previous ownership. Mr Ridley explained the economic and political facts of the Falkland Islands and life there, and noted that the Argentines had indicated that they believed they had only two foreign policy problems left, the Beagle Channel and the Falklands, and that the solution of these two would put Argentina in a clear and good position internationally.

2. Mr Ridley also explained the considerable political constraints upon HM Government over the Falkland Islands and said it was for decision in London whether it would be right to take on the political problems inherent in seeking a solution now, to play it long, or to dig in.

3. Mr Bowdler wondered whether a solution for the Falkland Islands along the lines of compensation and resettlement elsewhere was a starter. Mr Ridley thought that a better solution might be obtained along the lines of ceding the islands to the Argentines subject to leasing them back again for a very long time - but even that would involve a political explosion at home. What had to be assessed was the possibility of an alternative political explosion caused by a hard line approach by the Argentines.

4. Mr Bowdler asked for advice on what he might say on the subject to the Argentines whom he would be seeing the following day, and Mr Ridley suggested drawing them out by saying that the US were glad

/that

that exploratory talks had been thought possible and useful; that the possibility of negotiations between Argentina and Britain was discernible, subject to political concessions being made; that HMG might, it seemed, be prepared to make some concession, but that that meant that Argentina must also be prepared to move.

5. Mr Ridley commented that the Argentines were regrettably close to the Russians - particularly in economic relations. HMG did not like the idea of the USSR buying into Argentine fishing firms. Mr Bushnell commented that the US had approached the Argentines on this subject, that this had led to a split within the Argentine Government, and to an eventual decision to go ahead with the Russians. Mr Ridley thought more should be done to bring home the dangers of this sort of development to the Argentines, and Mr Bowdler said that the State Department were trying to assess what all this activity amounted to.

Cuban Refugees

6. Mr Bushnell noted that the Cubans were still supporting Argentinian terrorists and that this gave the Argentines a good deal of pain. The Argentines had told the Peruvians that they would take a small number of the Cubans from the Peruvian Embassy in Havana. There had been press speculation as to what a small number amounted to, but apparently no decision. Mr Ridley said the Argentines had told him that their experts had said that 8,000 of the over 10,000 Cubans who had been at the Peruvian Embassy were Cuban plants! This was clearly nonsense.

7. Mr Bowdler, noting that up to the previous night over 3,500 Cuban refugees had landed in Florida, commented that there was not much the US could do to stop the flow. Mr Bushnell added that the State Department were pressing for enforcing the fines on boat owners, and that the US had seized three boats. But there were 1,500 or so boats in Havana. Mr Bowdler explained that Cuban refugees had been taken into the US and Florida in particular for 20 years now. It was not practicable to alter the attitude of law enforcement officials who had been supervising this entry. 135,000 would-be refugees from Cuba had been left behind there in 1965. This affected both the US attitude to the flow now, and US policy towards refugees from all other Central American states. He thought there would be a backlash of US opinion against the influx of the refugees, and that Congress had so far been strangely silent. Mr Bushnell added that the impact in the southern Florida community of such large numbers would be severe on housing and unemployment, and that blacks in America would feel that for every Cuban allowed in, a Haitian should also be admitted.

8. Mr Ridley said that HMG had agreed to take some refugees from the Peruvian Embassy who could show some appropriate connection with Britain. Privately, he added, the maximum number would be 100. Mr Bowdler thought that if Britain could take 100 or a few more that would be helpful, and contrasted this with the French position of requiring any Cuban who wished to be admitted to France to have a family connection or to speak French. Mr Bushnell explained that the State Department were trying to internationalise this problem, which Castro had turned from a question of asylum involving a number of Central American countries to a bilateral US/Cuban one. The State Department wanted to try to reverse that. An international


/conference

THIS IS A COPY

CONFIDENTIAL

THE ORIGINAL HAS BEEN RETAINED
IN THE DEPARTMENT UNDER
SECTION 3 (4) OF THE
PUBLIC RECORDS ACT 1958

conference was one possible way forward. Would Britain participate? Mr Ridley, noting that Britain's immigration problem was one of the worst, said that it would be very difficult for us to take more refugees, but that we would participate in such a conference and seek propaganda gains against Cuba. He had asked Britain's remaining Caribbean territories to see if they could take some refugees. Belize had given an unforthcoming answer. Other answers were awaited. In answer to a question from Mr Bushnell, Mr Ridley said that there was little we could do in Guyana in this respect now that it was independent and particularly following suspension of British aid there. Mr Bushnell added that background information on the Cuban refugee problem was being supplied to the FCO via the US Embassy in London.



CONFIDENTIAL

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Series: FCO 7

Piece: 3805

Folio(s): ENCLOSURE TO ALW/040/325/2

(RECORD OF CONVERSATION 30/04/1980)

PARAGRAPHS 9-17

.....

.....

Document(s) retained under Section 3(4) of the Public Records Act

RETAINED BY DEPARTMENT

Jamaica

18. Mr Ridley said there was close agreement between British and American assessments of the present political position in Jamaica. Mr Warrne thought the election date could now slip to October because of the time needed for administrative preparations. Mr Ridley referred to a point in Mr Bowdler's recent message to him - that Manley would rather go out of office than let his own left wing take over. It was generally accepted that Seaga and the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) would win a fair election. The left wing of Manley's People's National Party (PNP) did not want an election because they expected to lose. The dangers of them creating serious trouble in the Island therefore seemed high. HMG had just had a request for spares for the Jamaica Defence Force and the police. Mr Ridley understood that a complementary request had also been made to the US. He believed that the spares should be provided promptly and at no cost to Jamaica. Mr Bowdler asked whether the JLP could handle anything which the PNP could throw at them. Mr Ridley thought that the answer was yes, but that street war in the ghettos and assassinations were not something for an army but for the police to deal with. Mr Bushnell referred to the recent incident in which some 30 PNP thugs with machine guns had shot up a JLP dance in retaliation for attacks against the PNP. The police had been armed only with pistols and had not therefore been able to respond effectively. Mr Bowdler mentioned congressional restraints on the US helping police forces but undertook to see what could be done about the request for spares.

19. In answer to Mr Bowdler's question about what could be done to move Jamaica towards early elections and reduce the risks of further violence, Mr Ridley said that he had told the Jamaican Deputy Prime Minister Watkinson in London recently, when he had been asking for credit, that when the Jamaican election had taken place and provided the result was satisfactory to both sides, HMG would come in on any economic plan that made good sense. It would not be wise to give the Jamaicans money which would allow them to play for further time and put off elections yet again.

20. Mr Warrne said that while there was as yet no confirmation, he thought the Libyans might deposit money in support of Jamaica in New York that day (30 April). There was discussion of the possibility for Venezuela to step in to allow oil to be delivered, and Mr Bowdler reported the Venezuelan view that "sufficient oxygen" should be administered to the Jamaicans to get them to early elections, but no more. Mr Ridley thought this argument had some strength and that it applied, for example, to the question of spare parts for the JDF and police force.

21. Possible ways of pressing Jamaica towards election, including a joint demarche, were discussed, and it was agreed that the British High Commissioner and American Ambassador in Kingston should consult together about approaches to the electoral commissioner, Mills, before the question of direct pressure on Manley could be settled.

THIS IS A COPY
THE ORIGINAL HAS BEEN RETAINED
IN THE DEPARTMENT UNDER
SECTION 3(4) OF THE
PUBLIC RECORDS ACT 1958

CONFIDENTIAL

22. Mr Warne thought that even with the promised Libyan money, Jamaica would be in default by the end of May. The US Embassy in Kingston thought that default might come by May or June, but Mr Bushnell thought that banks might go on looking the other way and that financial adjustments by Venezuela might help Jamaica to continue to muddle through. He thought the cumulative effect on employment, for example, was the raw material for trouble and disturbances in Jamaica.

Caribbean Security

23. It was agreed that 23 May in London would be the date for the next trilateral discussions with the Canadians on the above subject. Mr Bushnell would be present for the US, and would hope to learn from Mr Ridley at that time how his talks with Castillo Valdez about Belize had gone. Mr Warne reported that the Canadians would accept 23 May.

Central America

24. Mr Bowdler was very concerned about what the Sergeants were up to and what the Cubans might be up to with the Sergeants in Suriname. Recent reports brought the Sergeants' intentions into doubt. The US had been relying on the Dutch who had influence via their aid and military assistance, but the Dutch seemed to be inactive. The Cubans had had agents in Suriname since early on and the US was worried about a danger of another Grenada. Mr Bowdler thought the Dutch too relaxed about the Cuban threat, though it had to be said that the Cubans had not made any real advance in Suriname yet. The coup had been an accidental one following a labour dispute which had led to deaths. The Sergeants had had no defence and thought they had better take over the Government in order to protect their position. Their lawyers were very influential and had communist connections. Initially, the President had held together a difficult situation with a Parliament under duress meeting and deciding upon an amnesty. But now Parliament was not meeting and things were being run by the Council of Sergeants. Human rights were deteriorating. There were accusations of corruption, and problems of members of the previous government being jailed without proper process. The Sergeants platform was to get the country going. But they did not know how to go about it. Emigration, particularly to the Netherlands was very high and all this indicated a potential for a downward spiral. The Cubans were pressing hard, offering military aid and seeking an Embassy. The US had not done very much but had assigned a Defence Attaché to Paramaribo. The flow of aid from the Netherlands was huge. This would seem to offer leverage, but apparently there were Dutch political constraints. The Americans were thinking of raising this problem in a NATO forum rather than continuing to talk only bilaterally with the Dutch. The idea would be to bring pressure on the Dutch with their responsibilities to the Alliance in mind. The Americans were also considering the possibility of providing some Coastguard training for Suriname, though this might also send "the wrong signals elsewhere". The Venezuelans, with whom Mr Bowdler had talked, were also very concerned and were about to send an official to Paramaribo.

25. Mr Bowdler continued that the previous government of Suriname had not been keen to look towards the Caribbean. The present regime seemed to think they should play a larger role, and there was a potentially large market for Caricom in Suriname. Mr Harding noted that the subject had arisen in the NATO Latin American Experts Working Group, and in a similar group in the European Community. He thought the NATO forum had the teeth and was the right one. Mr Ridley thought the European community forum was also valuable.

26. Mr Bowdler said the Dutch Ambassador in Washington had raised with him the compositions of the Suriname National Military Council and the Cabinet. Both were weighted very heavily in favour of Creoles and almost ignored the almost equally large Indian community: a recipe for instability. Mr Harding raised the question of Suriname's neighbours and asked how recent developments in Paramaribo sat with Curaçao and Aruba. Mr Warne thought that the same sort of problem could in fact arise in the Netherlands Antilles. Suriname had for years been a conservative country and even the Guyanese were worried about the leftist orientation of the new Suriname regime, some of whose members had Marxist and Trotskyite histories and were sympathetic to the Cubans. Mr Bowdler said that the State Department did not want to exaggerate the problems or the threat, but asked if HMG could talk to the Dutch about their responsibilities. Mr Ridley said this would be looked at: HMG might have a rôle to play in brokering with the Dutch through the EC and NATO.

27. The meeting started at 5pm and ended at 7pm.

Distribution

MCD(2)

SAMd

NAD

Mr Harding

PS/Mr Ridley

Buenos Aires

Belmopan

Port Stanley

Guatemala City

Washington