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DESKBY 17ø845Z

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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 557 OF 17 JUNE 198ø

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MY TELNO 552: NEW HEBRIDES

DIJOU D SUMMONED ME TO SEE HIM YESTERDAY AFTERNOON AND KEPT ME FOR ONE AND A HALF HOURS. THE GOING WAS HARD ALL THE WAY BUT HE BECAME MORE REASONABLE TOWARDS THE END.

2. HE TOOK THE LINE THAT PRESIDENT GISCARD HAD SAID TO MRS THATCHER AT VENICE THAT FRANCE DISAPPROVED OF THE SENDING OF THE MARINES, EXPECTED THEM TO BE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE BRITISH RESIDENCY AND DEMANDED THAT THEY SHOULD NOT BE USED ON ANY DUTIES IN THE NEW HEBRIDES OTHER THAN WITH THE FULL CONSENT OF FRANCE. HE SAID HE WAS SPEAKING TO ME WITH THE AUTHORITY OF THE PRESIDENT AND THE FULL ACCORD OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER.

3. M. DIJOU D INDICATED THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO BLOCK OFF THURSDAY 19 JUNE FOR A MEETING WITH MR BLAKER, BUT HE WOULD REQUIRE CERTAIN ASSURANCES BEFORE EMBARKING ON A MEETING. HE STARTED BY SAYING THAT FRANCE WOULD REQUIRE A PUBLIC DECLARATION BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT THAT THE BRITISH FORCES WOULD NOT BE USED FOR ANY PURPOSE IN THE NEW HEBRIDES OTHER THAN WITH THE FULL CONSENT OF FRANCE.

4. I TOLD MONSIEUR DIJOU D THAT I COULD NOT CONCEIVE OF A STATEMENT BEING MADE BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ON THE LINES HE ASKED, AND CERTAINLY NOT A PUBLIC ONE. BRITAIN WAS IN NO WAY IN BREACH OF ITS TREATY OBLIGATIONS AND COULD NOT REASONABLY BE ASKED NOT TO DO SOMETHING WHICH SHE WAS NOT DOING. I SUGGESTED THAT IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO GIVE SOME SORT OF ASSURANCE THAT BRITAIN INTENDED TO ABIDE BY ITS TREATY OBLIGATIONS IN THE NEW HEBRIDES INSOFAR AS FRANCE DID. MONSIEUR DIJOU D SAID THAT IT WENT WITHOUT SAYING THAT FRANCE WOULD ABIDE BY ITS TREATY OBLIGATIONS. I REPLIED THAT THE SAME WENT FOR GREAT BRITAIN.

5. WE CAME BACK TO THIS QUESTION OF AN ASSURANCE AGAIN AND AGAIN, WITH MONSIEUR DIJOU D CONSTANTLY INSISTING THAT FRANCE HAD A JUST CASE AND BRITAIN HAD NONE. I POINTED OUT THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO DIFFICULTY AT ALL IN ESTABLISHING THE DOUBLE NEGATIVE, THAT IS TO SAY THAT BOTH COUNTRIES WOULD REFRAIN FROM BREAKING THEIR TREATY OBLIGATIONS. WHAT WAS NEEDED WAS POSITIVE AGREEMENT ON POLICY. IT WAS FROM POSITIVE AGREEMENT,

I.E. INTERMINISTERIAL DISCUSSION, THAT FRANCE WOULD FIND HERSELF OBTAINING THE CONFIDENCE AND ASSURANCE WHICH SHE SOUGHT.

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6. AT ONE POINT I TOLD MONSIEUR DIJOURD THAT HE REALLY MUST NOT KEEP ASKING US TO STOP BEATING OUR WIFE. HE SAID THAT THE TROUBLE WAS THAT FRANCE FELT PRECISELY LIKE A BEATEN WIFE. I SAID THAT BRITAIN HAD BEEN DOING NO BEATING SO IT MUST BE SELF-INFLICTED. AT ANOTHER POINT HE SAID THAT FRANCE HAD BEEN WITHIN TWO FINGERS OF BEING HUMILIATED. I REPLIED THAT THERE WAS NO POSSIBLE BRITISH INTEREST IN HUMILIATING FRANCE, WHICH WAS OUR ALLY AND PARTNER.

7. ABOUT HALF WAY THROUGH OUR TALK MONSIEUR DIJOURD UNBENT TO THE POINT OF USING THE WORD MISUNDERSTANDING TO DESCRIBE EVENTS OF THE PAST WEEK. I THANKED HIM FOR USING IT AND SAID THAT IT OPENED THE WAY TO PROGRESS. I INSISTED THROUGHOUT THAT THE DISCUSSION BETWEEN ROBERT, STEWART AND LINI IN VILA ON 11 JUNE HAD BEEN ABOUT A JOINT INTERVENTION AND NOT SIMPLY ABOUT A FRENCH ONE. MONSIEUR DIJOURD KEPT ON SAYING THAT MY VERSION OF EVENTS WAS FALSE AND I HAD TO POINT OUT TO HIM THAT HE DID NOT HAVE A MONOPOLY OF THE TRUTH. !

8. I GATHER THAT A RECOMMENDATION HAS BEEN MADE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER SHOULD SEND A MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT GISCARD. I AM INCLINED TO THINK THAT THIS WOULD NOT NECESSARILY BE HELPFUL AT THE PRESENT STAGE. MONSIEUR DIJOURD IS MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION AND WHAT I THINK IS NEEDED IS A RESPONSE TO HIM IN ORDER TO CLEAR THE WAY FOR TALKS ON THURSDAY OR ANY SUBSEQUENT DATE THAT MR BLAKER CAN MANAGE. I HAD THE IMPRESSION TOWARDS THE END OF OUR TALK THAT MONSIEUR DIJOURD WOULD ACCEPT SOME SORT OF RESPONSE CONVEYED THROUGH ME IF YOU THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE APPROPRIATE, BUT YOU MIGHT PREFER TO SEND A MESSAGE FROM MR BLAKER. I THINK, HOWEVER, THAT IT WOULD BE EASIER TO ACHIEVE THE RIGHT DEGREE OF AMBIGUITY IN AN ORAL RATHER THAN A WRITTEN COMMUNICATION. I SHALL SEND MONSIEUR DIJOURD'S CABINET TODAY THE TEXT OF YOUR STATEMENT IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS YESTERDAY, INCLUDING THE SENTENCE THAT YOU ARE SATISFIED THAT BRITAIN IS ACTING IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE 1914 PROTOCOL. IF YOU SO INSTRUCTED ME, I COULD BUILD ON THIS TO ASSURE MONSIEUR DIJOURD THAT BRITAIN CONTINUED TO HAVE EVERY INTENTION OF ABIDING BY THE 1914 PROTOCOL AND COUNTED ON FRANCE DOING THE SAME.

9. MONSIEUR DIJOURD WAS PERSISTENT IN POINTING OUT THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF GIVING THE NEW HEBRIDES INDEPENDENCE BY 30 JULY. I SAID THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WAS NOT SO PESSIMISTIC. HE CLAIMED THAT HE STILL HELD THE ACE, BEING THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD PERSUADE STEVENS TO COMPROMISE. I SAID THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER TO THINK OF A JOINT HAND RATHER THAN ACES.

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10. AS I WAS LEAVING I TOLD MONSIEUR MONTPEZAT THAT IT WAS NO USE HARPING ON ALLEGED OFFENCES BY BRITAIN. IF THIS CONTINUED I WOULD BE BOUND TO SAY THAT ON THE BRITISH SIDE WE THOUGHT THAT FRANCE HAD CHEATED OVER THE GENDARMES. HE WOULD SEE THAT THIS SORT OF TALK LED NOWHERE. THE MISTAKE ON FRANCE'S PART HAD BEEN TO TRY TO IMPOSE A VETO. THE SENSIBLE COURSE WAS TO WORK OUT A JOINT POLICY OF A POSITIVE KIND. MONTPEZAT AGREED WITH THIS BUT SAID THAT IT WAS GOING TO BE DIFFICULT. HE EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH ME FOR AN INFORMAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS.

11. I SHALL SEND SOME FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE TALK BY BAG. WE SHALL REPORT SEPARATELY BY TELEGRAM WHAT M. DIJOU D SAID TO THE PRESS YESTERDAY.
HIBBERT

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TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 558 OF 17 JUNE 1980.

NEW HEBRIDES: M. DIJOUR'S PRESS CONFERENCE OF 16 JUNE

1. THE DOMTOM CLAIM NOT TO HAVE A COMPLETE TEXT OF WHAT M. DIJOUR SAID TO THE PRESS ON 17 JUNE. THEY HAVE SAID THAT THE REPORT OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE CARRIED BY AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE IS ACCURATE IN ALL RESPECTS.

2. ACCORDING TO AFP, HE SAID "ANY UNILATERAL MILITARY ACTION IN THE NEW HEBRIDES ON THE PART OF ONE OF THE METROPOLITAN POWERS WOULD BE CONTRARY TO THE RULES OF THE CONDOMINIUM" AND ADDED THAT FRANCE WOULD REFUSE PERMISSION FOR THE ~~200~~ BRITISH "COMMANDOS" TO BE USED AS A FORCE OF REPRESSION. M. DIJOUR ADDED "I AM CONVINCED THAT GREAT BRITAIN WILL HESITATE TO LEND MILITARY SUPPORT TO WALTER LINI WHOSE ACTIVISM CAN ONLY HINDER THE EFFECTS OF THOSE WHO ARE WORKING TO RE-ESTABLISH PEACE AND HARMONY IN THE CONDOMINIUM". ACCORDING TO M. DIJOUR "SANTO ANNOUNCED ITS SECESSION TO DEMONSTRATE A DESIRE FOR AUTONOMY MUCH MORE THAN TO SEIZE INDEPENDENCE. HISTORY WEIGHS HEAVILY ON THESE ISLANDS WHERE THE CONDOMINIUM HAS CREATED AN ARCHIPELAGO BUT NOT A COUNTRY. FOR THE MODERES, EACH ISLAND, AFTER INDEPENDENCE, SHOULD REGAIN ITS LIBERTY AND A GOVERNMENT OF CUSTOM CHIEFS, WITHOUT RULING OUT THE CREATION BETWEEN THEM OF A SORT OF FEDERATION".

3. M. DIJOUR THOUGHT THAT WALTER LINI'S GOVERNMENT HAD COMMITTED ERRORS IN PRACTISING "A SYSTEMATIC INTOLERANCE" TOWARDS THE FRANCOPHONES AND THE CUSTOM CHIEFS IN EXCLUDING THEM FROM HIS GOVERNMENT AND IN "UNDERMINING" (MINORANT) THE INFLUENCE OF FRANCE. M. DIJOUR ADDED THAT THE POPULATION OF THE NEW HEBRIDES REMAINED DEEPLY SPLIT IN TWO AND THE UNTIMELY ARRIVAL OF BRITISH TROOPS HAD NOT CALMED PEOPLE'S MINDS. ACCORDING TO AFP, M. DIJOUR DENIED THE RIGHT OF THE NEW HEBRIDES PRIME MINISTER TO RESORT TO FORCE IF THE NEGOTIATION WHICH HIS TWO REPRESENTATIVES WERE TO UNDERTAKE ON SANTO ON 17 JUNE FAILED. "THIS RIGHT BELONGS SOLELY TO THE METROPOLITAN POWERS AND FRANCE IS OPPOSED TO IT." M. DIJOUR ADDED: "ONE MUST AVOID GIVING A DRAMATIC ASPECT TO THE OPPOSITION THAT HAS EMERGED IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES BETWEEN FRANCE AND GREAT BRITAIN". M. DIJOUR SAID HE WAS CONVINCED THAT A MEETING WITH HIS BRITISH COUNTERPART WOULD BRING ABOUT THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MANY REACTION "AMOUR PROPRE".

4. LE MONDE OF 17 JUNE REPORTS A PART OF M. DIJOU'D'S PRESS CONFERENCE WHICH DOES NOT APPEAR IN THE AFP ACCOUNT. ACCORDING TO LE MONDE, M. DIJOU'D SAID "IT OUGHT TO BE CLEAR THAT FRANCE, WHICH HAS THE JOINT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE MAINTAINING OF ORDER IN THE CONDOMINIUM, WILL REFUSE THE DEPLOYMENT OF BRITISH TROOPS EXCEPT FOR GUARDING THE OFFICES OF THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION. IT IS FOR THE NEW HEBRIDEANS TO FIND A SOLUTION TO THEIR PROBLEMS. IT WOULD BE UNREASONABLE TO ENVISAGE THE DEPLOYMENT OF SOLDIERS BELONGING TO ONE OF THE BEST UNITS OF THE BRITISH ARMY WHO HAVE ARRIVED WITH A CONSIDERABLE ARMOURY, AGAINST MELANESIANS ARMED FOR THE MOST PART WITH BOWS AND ARROWS AND WHOSE ONLY REQUEST IS FOR A LITTLE UNDERSTANDING".

5. MIFT CONTAINS A REPORT ON TODAY'S PRESS REACTIONS.
HIBBERT

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