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FM JEDDAH 080900Z MAY

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELNO 364 OF 8TH MAY 1950

REPEATED ROUTINE TO WASHINGTON, CAIRO, KUWAIT, BAHRAIN,
DOHA, ABU DHABI, DUBAI, MUSCAT.

Read in full

ANGLO-SAUDI RELATIONS

1. IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO REVIEW THE SITUATION ONE WEEK AFTER THE AMBASSADOR'S DEPARTURE. IN GENERAL, THERE HAVE BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS ON THE DIPLOMATIC FRONT, BUT COMMERCIAL RELATIONS REMAIN UNCERTAIN. ON THE PERSONAL LEVEL, STORIES OF DIFFICULTIES IN OBTAINING VISAS SEEM TO BE PART OF A GENERAL TIGHTENING OF REGULATIONS AFFECTING ALL EXPATRIATES.

2. DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS. OUR RELATIONS WITH THE MFA CONTINUE NORMAL. I HAD NO DIFFICULTY IN SEEING THE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER AT SHORT NOTICE ON 5 MAY (MY TELNO 360). GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS SEEM STILL TO BE VISITING LONDON ON BUSINESS: THE LATEST APPLICANT IS DEPUTY MINISTER AWAJI OF THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR. THERE IS EVEN SOME HOPE OF PROGRESS ON THE ARNOT CASE (MY TELNO DISTRESS 145). WE HAVE ALSO LEARNT FROM PRINCE TURKI AL FAISAL, HEAD OF THE GENERAL INTELLIGENCE ORGANISATION, THAT THE PRIME MINISTER'S LETTER TO PRINCE FAHD WAS WELL RECEIVED AND THAT A REPLY IS LIKELY, THOUGH IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THIS WILL GO THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS OR MORE DIRECTLY. PRESS INTEREST IN THE FILM HAS CEASED: ACCORDING TO ONE OF OUR WESTERN DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION.

3. ECONOMIC RELATIONS. THERE ARE NO SIGNS THAT OIL SUPPLIES OR FINANCIAL PLACINGS HAVE BEEN EFFECTED BY THE PRESENT SITUATION. ON COMMERCIAL BUSINESS, HOWEVER, THERE HAVE BEEN SOME SIGNS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST BRITISH FIRMS, NOTABLY IN CONTRACTS CONNECTED WITH THE ROYAL COMMISSION'S OFFICE AT YENBU AND ITS US CONSULTANTS PARSONS. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHO HAS ORDERED THIS DISCRIMINATION. THE BEST SUMMARY OF THE POSITION IS PROBABLY IN THE INTERVIEW WHICH THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE GAVE TO EDWARD MORTIMER OF THE TIMES IE THAT ALTHOUGH NO OFFICIAL DECISION TO BOYCOTT BRITISH GOODS AND SERVICES HAD BEEN TAKEN, THE PRESENT ATMOSPHERE IS NOT CONDUCTIVE TO DOING BUSINESS WITH BRITISH FIRMS. ON THE OTHER HAND, ARAMCO HAVE SPECIFICALLY CONFIRMED TO US AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL THAT THEY HAVE RECEIVED NO INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM TO CHANGE THEIR ATTITUDE TO BRITISH FIRMS OR EMPLOYEES: AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR SEEMS AS HAPPY AS EVER TO DO BUSINESS WITH THE BRITISH PROVIDING THE TERMS ARE RIGHT.

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4. DEFENCE SALES ETC. THE POSITION REMAINS UNCHANGED FROM THAT RECORDED IN OUR TELNO 351.

5. THE POSITION OF BRITISH SUBJECTS. THERE ARE NO REPORTS OF HARRASSMENT OF BRITISH SUBJECTS IN THE KINGDOM. CONSULAR WORK CONTINUES UNHINDERED. THERE HAS BEEN SOME DROP IN THE NUMBER OF VISA APPLICANTS FROM SAUDIS BUT THERE MAY BE OTHER EXPLANATIONS THAN THE POLITICAL FOR THIS. SOME BRITISH SUBJECTS HAVE COMPLAINED OF SLOW VISA/RESIDENCE PERMIT SERVICE FROM THE SAUDI EMBASSY IN LONDON AND PASSPORT OFFICES HERE. HOWEVER, THESE COMPLAINTS ARE SHARED BY MANY OTHER FOREIGN NATIONALS WORKING IN OR SEEKING TO VISIT SAUDI ARABIA AND SEEM TO BE CONNECTED WITH A REORGANISATION OF SAUDI IMMIGRATION PROCEDURES AND THEIR STRICT APPLICATION.

6. CONCLUSION. THE HUE AND CRY HAS SUBSIDED. RELATIONS APART FROM SOME COMMERCIAL DIFFICULTIES APPEAR NORMAL. BUT THIS MAY BE DECEPTIVE. THE SAUDIS HAVE GIVEN US TWO INDICATIONS OF HOW RELATIONS MIGHT BE RESTORED TO NORMAL: MY DISCUSSION WITH MANSOURI LAST WEEK (OUR TELNO 349) AND PRINCE TURKI'S COMMENTS ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S LETTER (PARA 2 ABOVE). I THINK THE BALL LIES IN OUR COURT AND THAT THE SAUDIS ARE EXPECTING SOME GUESTURE FROM US. IF, AS SEEMS PROBABLE, PRINCE FAHD REPLIES TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S LETTER, NO DOUBT WE SHALL GET FURTHER GUIDANCE ON WHAT IS REQUIRED OF US. IN THE MEANTIME, I NOTE WITH INTEREST THE REFERENCE IN PARA 2 OF YOUR TELNO DISTRESS 86 TO "OUR EFFORTS TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE TO ANGLO-SAUDI RELATIONS" BEING "GIVEN THE CHANCE TO TAKE EFFECT". DOES THIS REFER TO SOME SPECIFIC IDEAS OR IS IT MERELY A GENERALISED WISH?
GRAY

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