

Spain
2

SECRET

GRS 70
DESKBY 041330Z
SECRET
FM MADRID 041218Z OCT 82
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 510 OF 4 OCTOBER
AND TO IMMEDIATE MOD(DI3) GOVERNOR GIBRALTAR(PERSONAL)

MY TELNOS 508 AND 509:

COUP PLOT: GIBRALTAR.

1. THE EVENTS DESCRIBED IN TURS ARE PROOF OF THE INCREASED LEVEL OF TENSION IN THE COUNTRY DURING THIS PRE-ELECTORAL PERIOD (MY TELNOS 473 AND 500). THERE IS NOTHING TO INDICATE THAT THE PLOTTERS INTENDED ANY ACTION AGAINST GIBRALTAR. BUT IT REINFORCES THE VIEW I HAVE EXPRESSED PREVIOUSLY THAT WE CANNOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY AT ANY TIME OF UNAUTHORISED MILITARY ACTION UP TO REGIONAL COMMAND LEVEL.

PARSONS

STANDARD
SED
DEFENCE D
CABINET OFFICE

ADDITIONAL DISTN
GIBRALTAR

SECRET

MADFO 008/04

OO FCO DESKBY 041730Z

OO MOD (D13 WEST) DESKBY 041730Z

OO GOVERNOR GIBRALTAR(PERSONAL) DESKBY 041730Z

OO UKDEL NATO

PP UKMIS NEW YORK

PP WASHINGTON

GRS 410

CONFIDENTIAL

DESKBY 041730Z

FM MADRID 041545Z OCT 82

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 500 OF 4 OCTOBER

AND TO IMMEDIATE MOD(D13 WEST) GOVERNOR GIBRALTAR(PERSONAL)

INFO IMMEDIATE UKDEL NATO

INFO PRIORITY UKMIS NEW YORK WASHINGTON

MIPT: MILITARY PLOT.

ADVANCE COPY

IMMEDIATE

X10

Hd / Sec.
Hd / Defence D.
Hd / AUS D.
Hd / News D.

PS - 2

PS / Mr. Hurst.

PS / Lord BELSTEAD.

PS / Mr. S. Mr. Goodison.

CAB. OFF.
MOD. DP12.
No. 10. D. S.

1. WITH DETAILS OF THIS PLOT STILL EMERGING, IT IS TOO EARLY TO PRODUCE A FINAL ASSESSMENT. THERE HAVE BEEN NO FURTHER ARRESTS SINCE THOSE OF THE THREE OFFICERS ON 2 OCTOBER, ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN SOME PRESS SPECULATION ABOUT A FOURTH MAN. PREPARATIONS MAY HAVE BEEN AT AN EARLY STAGE WITH ONLY A SMALL GROUP INVOLVED.

2. THE THREE OFFICERS ARRESTED WERE RELATIVELY JUNIOR IN TERMS OF SPAIN'S MILITARY STRUCTURE. IN ADDITION, NONE OF THEM HELD COMMANDS IN THE KEY UNITS WHOSE SUPPORT WOULD BE ESSENTIAL FOR A TAKEOVER OF MADRID EG THE BRUNETE DIVISION. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT ANY OF THE PRESENT ARMY HIGH COMMAND WERE INVOLVED: ACCORDING TO THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, THE PLOTTER'S DOCUMENTS INCLUDED PLANS TO TAKEOVER ARMY HEADQUARTERS, AS WELL AS THE CAPTAIN-GENERAL'S HEADQUARTERS IN MADRID, AND TO APPOINT THEIR OWN MEN TO KEY POSITIONS.

2. IN RECENT WEEKS CONTACTS HAVE EXPRESSED UNEASE ABOUT THE ATTITUDE OF FACTIONS WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES TOWARDS THE PROSPECT OF A SOCIALIST VICTORY IN THE ELECTIONS ON 28 OCTOBER. THE PLOTTERS' REPORTED INTENTION OF ACTING ON 27 OCTOBER WAS OBVIOUSLY DESIGNED TO PREVENT, OR AT LEAST, DISRUPT THE ELECTIONS. THE PLOTTERS PLANNED TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE CAPITAL IN THE EXPECTATION OF A DOMINO EFFECT AMONG MILITARY GARRISONS IN THE REST OF SPAIN. THIS WAS THE STRATEGY OF THE ATTEMPTED COUP OF 23 FEBRUARY, 1981. THE OFFICERS INVOLVED MAY NOT HAVE THOUGHT THROUGH THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR ACTION, BEYOND THE IMMEDIATE ONE OF THWARTING A SOCIALIST VICTORY AT THE POLLS.

4. WE DO NOT YET KNOW WHETHER THE AUTHORITIES CHOSE THIS TACTICAL MOMENT, JUST BEFORE ELECTION CAMPAIGNING BEGINS ON 6 OCTOBER, TO ROUND UP FOR ELECTORAL IMPACT KNOWN RIGHT-WING OFFICERS WHOM THEY HAD OBVIOUSLY HAD UNDER SURVEILLANCE FOR SOME TIME. THE OFFICIAL EXPLANATION IS THAT THE ARRESTS WERE TRIGGERED BY THE DISCOVERY OF INCRIMINATING DOCUMENTS. THE SPANISH PRESS HAS TAKEN THIS AT FACE VALUE AND IS GENERALLY LESS ALARMIST THAN THE FOREIGN MEDIA. THE LATTER'S REPORTS PROBABLY EXAGGERATE THE PLOT'S IMPORTANCE.

5. THE TIMING OF THE ARRESTS, WHATEVER THE MOTIVE, IS BOUND TO AFFECT THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS. THE UCD GOVERNMENT MAY HOPE TO DERIVE SOME CREDIT FOR THWARTING THE PLOT. THERE MAY ALSO BE AN EFFECT ON VOTING INTENTIONS. BUT THE UCD MAY NOT BENEFIT FROM THIS. THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE, OLIART, WHO APPEARED ON TELEVISION ON 3 OCTOBER TO PROVIDE REASSURANCE ABOUT THE OVERALL LOYALTY OF THE ARMY, HAS FOR SOME TIME BEEN SUBJECT TO CRITICISM OVER THE LENIENT AND OPEN PRISON CONDITIONS OF THE 23 FEBRUARY PLOTTERS. MILANS DEL BOSCH, IN PARTICULAR, HAS BEEN TREATED MORE AS A WAR HERO WHO MADE ONE UNFORTUNATE ERROR OF JUDGEMENT THAN AS A CONVICTED CRIMINAL. KNOWN EXTREMISTS HAVE NOW BEEN SHOWN TO HAVE HAD EASY ACCESS TO INCORRIGIBLE AND OPENLY UNREPENTENT CONVICTED PLOTTERS. SOME PEOPLE MAY WELL NOW BE SCARED AWAY FROM VOTING FOR THE SOCIALISTS. BUT THE DISCOVERY OF THIS CONSPIRACY COULD INCLINE THE IMPORTANT FLOATING VOTE LESS TO UCD THAN TOWARDS FRAGA'S ALIANZA POPULAR, WITH ITS SIMPLE MESSAGE ABOUT THE NEED FOR STRONG GOVERNMENT.

PARSONS

GRS 200
DESKBY 0411200Z
UNCLASSIFIED
FM MADRID 041028Z OCT 82
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 508 OF 4 OCTOBER
AND TO IMMEDIATE MOD (DI3 WEST) GIBRALTAR
INFO IMMEDIATE UKDEL NATO
INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON UKMIS NEW YORK

SPAIN: MILITARY PLOTTING

1. THE SPANISH MINISTRY OF DEFENCE ANNOUNCED ON 2 OCTOBER THAT TWO ARMY COLONELS AND A LIEUTENANT COLONEL HAD BEEN ARRESTED EARLY THAT MORNING IN MADRID UNDER THE TERMS OF THE ANTI-TERRORIST LAW. THE MINISTRY STATED THAT IT HAD OBTAINED DOCUMENTS SUGGESTING THAT THE ARRESTED MEN HAD BEEN PLOTTING AGAINST THE STATE. THE KING SUBSEQUENTLY RETURNED TO THE CAPITAL EARLIER THAN PLANNED FROM A VISIT TO NORTHERN SPAIN. A NUMBER OF LEADING FIGURES OF THE 23 FEBRUARY 1981 MILITARY PLOT (INCLUDING GENERAL MILANS DEL BOSCH) WERE EITHER MOVED FROM THEIR PRISON NEAR MADRID OR REFUSED PERMISSION TO SEE VISITORS.

2. THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE SUBSEQUENTLY REVEALED THAT THE ARRESTED OFFICERS HAD BEEN PLANNING A MILITARY TAKEOVER OF MADRID ON 27 OCTOBER, THE DAY BEFORE THE GENERAL ELECTIONS. THE PLOT HAD COME TO LIGHT WHEN ONE OF THE COLONELS HAD SPENT FOUR HOURS VISITING LT GENERAL MILANS DEL BOSCH, LEADER OF THE 23 FEBRUARY PLOT. ARMY INTELLIGENCE HAD DISCOVERED INCRIMINATING DOCUMENTS IN HIS CAR. MORE WERE SUBSEQUENTLY DISCOVERED IN THE HOUSES OF THE THREE OFFICERS, INCLUDING LISTS OF OTHER OFFICERS WHOM THEY INTENDED TO ENLIST FOR THE ATTEMPTED TAKEOVER. THE THREE MEN WERE WELL KNOWN FOR THEIR RIGHT WING VIEWS AND WERE OPENLY LINKED WITH THE FALANGIST FUERZA NUEVA PARTY.

(FOR ALL EXCEPT GIBRALTAR.) COMMENT FOLLOWS.

PARSONS

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