



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

20 November 1981

Prime Minister

Dear Michael,

Radio Marti

Please refer to your letter of 3 November in which you say that the Prime Minister wondered why the Americans could not broadcast to Cuba from their own territory.

The United States have told us that they limit output of their AM transmitters to 50kw, as a matter of domestic communications policy. With this limitation, Western Cuba could be covered from Florida, but reception in Eastern Cuba would be unsatisfactory.

If they wish to cover all of Cuba satisfactorily from Florida they would require a more powerful transmitter. In addition, they would have to apply to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) for a frequency allocation. The ITU offers allocations in this waveband for national coverage only and the US transmitter would very clearly be for other than domestic use. The applications would therefore most probably be refused and would certainly provoke widespread comment.

The Americans thus need to look elsewhere for a site for a transmitter. Their own Caribbean territories (Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands) would also need a more powerful transmitter and could therefore be open to the same objections as Florida. The Americans could however operate from their own base on Cuba, Guantanamo, or from another neighbouring independent state such as Jamaica, Bahamas or Haiti. The Americans presumably saw least political objection in approaching us for the use of the Caymans. But we consider that the objections to the use of Caymans territory outlined in my letter of 2 November to you are serious obstacles to our compliance.

/Our decision

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street

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Our decision has now been conveyed to the Americans, who expressed disappointment but accepted that the interests of the Cayman Islands and the likely extent of Cuban retaliation are matters for us to judge. Mr Luce will be prepared to discuss this during his visit to Washington on 23 November.

Yours ever
Roderic Lyne

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

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USA JS

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

3 November 1981

BF 13-11-81

RADIO MARTI

// The Prime Minister has seen your letter to me of 2 November on this subject. She agrees with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary that the weight of argument is against acceding to the American request. She does not believe that we should try to over-ride local opposition. She wonders why the Americans are unable to broadcast to Cuba from their own territory.

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

Roderic Lyne, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

2



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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Prime Minister

Having gone along with the Sinai N.F.O.,
I would have thought there was a strong
case for turning this down. Why
was broadcast from Florida?

2 November 1981

I think they
can broadcast -

I think - 3/11

Dear Michael,

for them to be
territory. We cannot
open in face of local opposition
ms

Radio Marti

Lord Carrington has asked that the Prime Minister be informed of an American request for permission to site a relay transmitter on Cayman Brac or the Turks and Caicos Islands to broadcast a new radio service, Radio Marti, to Eastern Cuba. The Americans have in mind a privately-run but Government-supported station which they claim would be comparable to the VOA or BBC, to start broadcasting on 1 January 1982. The Prime Minister may recall that Lord Thomas has been advocating for some time, not only here but in the US, the establishment of a Radio Free Cuba along the lines of Radio Free Europe or Radio Liberty. It seems likely that the American ideas may turn out to be close to his.

On the positive side, the operation would aim to make Cubans aware of the inadequacies of their own system. It would be without direct cost to the UK. In terms of our broad relations, we have an interest in supporting the Americans over Cuba. Castro's recent attack on the UK over Northern Ireland at the IPU Conference on 15 September gives us less reason to hesitate. We can also expect that Grenada will shortly begin transmission to the Eastern Caribbean of a radio service with which Cuba and the Soviet Union have provided extensive help.

On the other hand, support for the Americans would put us in front of our EC partners in backing the US stance towards Cuba. There is little chance that Latin American and Caribbean countries would welcome the initiative. Most difficult of all would be the position of the Cayman Islands or the Turks and Caicos Governments. Preliminary indications are that the Cayman Government would not welcome a development which would be bound to lead to a deterioration of their relations with a close and hostile neighbour. The Caymans are

/vulnerable



vulnerable to reprisals. Vital tourist air links with the United States cross Cuban airspace and could be interrupted. Geographical proximity means that retaliatory attacks on the station could not be ruled out. Not least, use of dependent territories for this purpose would be a propaganda gift to Castro. While there is no constitutional obstacle to our offering a site on Cayman Brac, we would only do so in practice with the acquiescence of the Government of the Caymans and the acceptance of the population of the Islands. We could expect to have little control over the material broadcast by Radio Marti. Assurances of a moderate editorial policy and of exclusion of exile content are unlikely to be sustained in practice. The Cubans are certain to regard the station as provocative and will bitterly resent its activity. Castro has privately described the proposal, which has already been aired publicly in Washington, as tantamount to 'a declaration of war'. There is a risk that they would retaliate against UK commercial interests, a danger which could create awkward pressures on the Government. Similarly we would have to assess carefully the problems which the Cubans could make for us over Northern Ireland, on which their scope for retaliation is unfortunately broad. We would be extremely reluctant to risk expulsion of staff in Havana or the sending home of the Ambassador. Cuban action of this sort would reduce our understanding of developments in Cuba itself, would inhibit our anti-Cuban information activities elsewhere and would also hardly be in the Americans' own interest.

The American Ambassador, on instructions from Washington, called on Mr Luce on 22 October to press the request for transmission facilities. Mr Luce expressed our general agreement with the objectives the Americans wished to achieve, but went on to explain the considerable problems we foresaw over the American request. Mr Luce asked for a proper consideration in Washington of all aspects of the proposal, including its potentially counter-productive effect on the sympathies not only of the Cayman Islands but also of many others in the Caribbean. The answers which we have since received from Washington are thoroughly unconvincing. The Americans had found it technically feasible to site the transmitter on U.S. Caribbean territory, but feared an adverse reaction from the local population if they did so. The same consideration of course applies to Cayman Brac.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary has yet to take a final decision, but considers that the weight of argument is on balance against acceding to the American request. If we are to say no, he would see much advantage in conveying the decision once our constructive response to the US over the Sinai peacekeeping force has been received and digested in Washington.

yours ever
Roderic Lyne

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
 10 Downing St



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

18 December 1981

Dear John,

Radio Marti

In his letter of 23 November, Michael Alexander asked for a little more background for the Prime Minister about the Americans' policy of limiting output of their AM transmitters.

We have consulted the Home Office. They have no knowledge of any official US pronouncements on why the power output is limited to 50kws. However, they speculate that national broadcasts on the British pattern, which would have to use a higher output, would be difficult to operate owing to the size of the US and the differing time zones. In addition, US broadcasting has developed from private enterprise, which has meant a multiplicity of local broadcasting stations. In order to maintain a modus vivendi between these broadcasting stations, it is possible to understand an agreement on a ceiling power for transmitters of only 50kws.

yours ever

Roderic Lyne

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

USA (2)

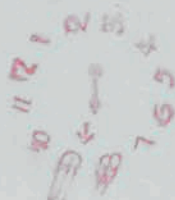
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Prime Minister

21/12

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22/12

DEC 1981



SD

USA

cc to Fed

23 November, 1981.

Radio Marti

The Prime Minister has read with interest your letter to me of 20 November about Radio Marti. She would be grateful for a little more background as to why the Americans "as a matter of domestic communications policy", limit output of their AM transmitters to 50kw.

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

R.M.J. Lyne, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

SD

CONFIDENTIAL
FM FCO 221745Z OCT 81
TO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON
TELEGRAM NUMBER 1585 OF 22 OCTOBER
AND TO UKDEL CANCUN
INFO IMMEDIATE HAVANA
RADIO MARTI

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1. US AMBASSADOR LOUIS CALLED ON MR LUCE ON 22 OCTOBER ON INSTRUCTIONS. HE DESCRIBED PREPARATIONS FOR 50 KW AM TRANSMISSION TO CUBA FROM TWO SITES, ONE ON THE FLORIDA KEYS AND THE SECOND EITHER ON CAYMAN BRAC OR LESS SATISFACTORILY IN THE TURKS AND CAICOS. HE STRESSED THE NEED FOR AN URGENT REPLY BY 1 NOVEMBER TO ENABLE FREQUENCY ALLOCATION TO BE REQUESTED AT THE ITU MEETING IN RIO ON NOVEMBER 9. HE DESCRIBED THE SERVICE PLANNED AS PROFESSIONAL AND OBJECTIVE, COMPARABLE TO THE VOA OR THE BBC, AND WITHOUT EXILE INPUT. THE OPERATION OF THE STATION WOULD BE LOW COST AND LOW RISK.
2. MR LUCE SAID THAT IN BROAD TERMS WE WERE SYMPATHETIC TO THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROPOSAL. BUT BOTH OF THE ALTERNATIVE SITES FOR THE SECOND TRANSMITTER WERE COLONIAL TERRITORIES WHICH WOULD OFFER AN EASY PROPAGANDA TARGET TO CUBA. A SHARPLY ADVERSE REACTION WAS INEVABLE. THE GEOGRAPHICAL PROXIMITY OF BOTH COLONIES TO A POWERFUL AND HOSTILE NEIGHBOUR WOULD CERTAINLY MAKE THEIR GOVERNMENTS FEAR THE PROPOSAL. IN THE CASE OF THE CAYMANS, INTERRUPTION OF VITAL AIR TOURIST FLIGHTS OVER CUBAN AIRSPACE WOULD PROVIDE CASTRO WITH A READY AND EFFECTIVE RESPONSE.
3. MR LUCE IN THE COURSE OF A RELAXED AND CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSION, QUESTIONED WHETHER IT WAS IN THE US INTEREST TO PUT AT RISK THE OPERATION OF OUR EMBASSY IN HAVANA, GIVEN THAT THE EXPULSION OF PERSONNEL OR EVEN THE AMBASSADOR HIMSELF MIGHT FOLLOW. HE EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT IT MIGHT BE DIFFICULT TO CONTROL EDITORIAL POLICY AND TO EXCLUDE ALTOGETHER PROVOCATIVE MATERIAL FROM EXILE SOURCES. HE ALSO QUESTIONED WHETHER TIME WAS OF THE ESSENCE, GIVEN THAT PROCEDURES EXISTED FOR REQUESTING FREQUENCY ALLOCATION OUTSIDE THE PERIODIC CONFERENCES OF THE ITU. HE ASKED FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE TECHNICAL OBSTACLES TO COVERING EASTERN CUBA FROM FLORIDA, AND ABOUT THE POLITICAL FACTORS WHICH THE US HAD IN MIND IN SEEKING A SITE UNDER BRITISH CONTROL.
4. LOUIS WHO LEFT A PIECE OF PAPER (COPY BY BAG) UNDERTOOK TO SEEK EARLY ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS. HE WAS TOLD THAT THE SECRETARY OF STATE KNEW OF THE PROPOSAL AND SAW NEED FOR CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF THE IMPLICATIONS, BEFORE ANY DECISION WAS REACHED.
5. FOR UKDEL CANCUN, MR LUCE FEELS THAT HIS CONVERSATION WITH LOUIS HAS MADE IT UNLIKELY THAT MR HURD NEED DISCUSS THE MATTER IN WASHINGTON ON 10/11 NOVEMBER. THE SECRETARY OF STATE MAY ACCORDINGLY NOT (NOT) WISH TO OFFER DISCUSSION BY MR HURD (WHO WOULD PREFER TO CONCENTRATE ON THE MIDDLE EAST IN HIS WASHINGTON TALKS) BUT CAN ASSURE MR HAIG IF NECESSARY THAT THE MATTER IS UNDER VERY ACTIVE CONSIDERATION.

CARRINGTON

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