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N 2682

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1942

SOVIET UNION

22 MAY 1942

Visit of S.S. "Mikoyan" to Uruguay.

Reports arrival in Montevideo from Durban, on the 12th April of the Soviet icebreaker S.S. "Mikoyan" under command of Captain Sergei Sergeiev. Latter laid a wreath at the statue of General Artigas and the Captain and First officer were invited to the Anglo-United States reception in honour of the U.S.S. "Memphis" and "Winslow" and H.M.S. "Diomedes" also in port. Visits were exchanged between the ships. The "Mikoyan" left for San Francisco on 19th April. Visit gave encouragement to popular demand for resumption of relations with the Soviet Union. Copied Washington, Buenos Aires, and Santiago.

Registry Number } N 2682/2682/38.

FROM Mr. Skrine Stevenson (Montevideo).

No. 38.

Dated 20th Apr. 1942.

Received in Registry }

22nd May, 1942.

N : Soviet Union.

Last Paper.

(Minutes.)

Copy Knit yphew
Administly
Dominion Office

References.

J. American Repr.

RRHens
23/5

(Print.)

(How disposed of.)

1) Knit yphew no 159
May 27

See Chancery letter of 2 May.

2) administly
D.R. May 27

Copy Knit yphew
Administly
RRH
12/6

P.W.
N. Dept's compts 15
a) Knit yphew June 12
b) administly June 2

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(Action completed.)

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BY AIR BAG.

No. 38.

BRITISH LEGATION,

MONTEVIDEO,

20th April, 1942.

Sir,

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I have the honour to report that the arrival in Montevideo from Durban, on the 12th April, of the Soviet ice-breaker s.s. "MIKOYAN", under the command of Captain Sergei Sergeiev, roused lively interest in this capital.

2. Her outward appearance, not unlike an old-fashioned cruiser, was a source of puzzlement to the Uruguayan authorities who were at first unable to decide whether to treat her as a warship or merchant ship. Although she is in fact, I understand, a vessel of war, she had been disarmed to permit her passage through the Dardanelles from Rostov-on-the-Don where she had begun her journey, and she was consigned to a firm of British shipping agents as a merchant vessel. All necessary arrangements were made for her by that firm and by His Majesty's Consul.

3. Shortly after her arrival I was asked on behalf of the Captain if, as no diplomatic relations have existed between the Soviet Union and this Republic since 1936, I would be willing to enquire of the Uruguayan Government whether they would see objection to his laying a wreath at the base of the statue of General Artigas -- a ceremonial gesture comparable to the deposition of a wreath at the Cenotaph. Although I had, of course, no official standing in the matter, I decided to approach the Minister for Foreign Affairs in a friendly and informal manner. The successful resistance of the Soviet Army has given considerable encouragement to the small Communist party in this country and although there was a possibility that the ceremony might be exploited by Uruguayan communists, Doctor Alberto Guani took my intervention in the most friendly part and assured me that the Uruguayan Government had no objection. The ceremony was duly carried out in the presence of a considerable but orderly crowd.

4. The Captain and crew of the s.s. "MIKOYAN" did not retain very happy memories of their sojourn in South Africa, where they were apparently given a cool reception. With a view to removing as far as possible these unfavourable impressions, I made arrangements for the Captain and First Officer to receive invitations to an Anglo-American reception in honour of the U.S.S. "MEMPHIS" and "WINSLOW" and H.M.S. "DIOMEDE" who all were in port at the time. Visits were thereafter exchanged between these ships and the s.s. "MIKOYAN". I also arranged for the Victoria Hall, where naval dances are customarily held, to be placed at the disposal of the Russian Red Cross for a dance in honour of the ship, which was attended by a large number of the British community and at which I was represented by His Majesty's Consul and members of the staff.

5. I myself visited the ship at the invitation of the Captain and took luncheon with him, the First Officer, and the/

The Right Honourable,

Anthony Eden, M.C., M.P.,

etc., etc., etc.

the R.N. Liaison officer on board, Lieutenant the Honourable E.J. Anson, who appears to have established the most friendly relations with the officers and crew. I subsequently inspected the ship. Internal space on ice-breakers is considerable and the members of the crew have commodious and comfortable quarters. Food and all amenities seemed to be extraordinarily good and the pay is high. There is a crew of 13 officers and 130 men, including three British ratings.

6. The Captain, who was most appreciative of all that was being done for him, assured me that he considered himself to be under my orders. Throughout the visit he showed himself anxious to avoid causing any embarrassment to the Uruguayan Authorities, and invariably consulted either me or His Majesty's Consul before accepting any invitation which might have internal political repercussions here.

7. The ship left on the 19th April for Coronel for bunkers and will then proceed through the Magellan Straits to San Francisco, where she is to receive armament preparatory to her two or three years' task of keeping open the North-western passage to Murmansk.

*See attached
Chancery letter
of 2nd May for
amendments.*

8. The most important political result of the visit has been the encouragement which it has afforded to the popular demand for the resumption of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, which has of late become rather more vociferous. I have the impression that at least Doctor Guani does not view the suggestion with disfavour but I have no reason to believe that the Government have any intention of giving effect to it at the moment.

9. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Washington, Buenos Aires and Santiago.

I have the honour to be, with the highest respect,

Sir,

Your most obedient,

humble Servant,

Ralph Krime Stevenson

The Right Honourable,

Anthony Eden, M.P.,

etc., etc., etc.

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BRITISH LEGATION,
MONTEVIDEO,
2nd May, 1942.

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End

1 JUN 1942 2682/-/38

Dear Department,

Our despatch No. 38, of the 20th April, regarding the visit of the Soviet ice-breaker "MIKOYAN" to Montevideo.

Would you kindly amend paragraph 7 to read as follows:-

"7. The ship left on the 19th April. She will proceed through the Magellan Straits to Coronel, for bunkers, and thence to San Francisco, where she is to receive armament preparatory to her two or three years' task of keeping open the north-western passage to Murmansk".

Yours ever,

CHANCERY.

South American Department,

Foreign Office, S.W.1.

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