



Source 4

Parts of a report on race relations in the US from Mr Greenhill in the British Embassy in Washington, 6 August 1963

(Catalogue ref: FO 371/168485)

Questions

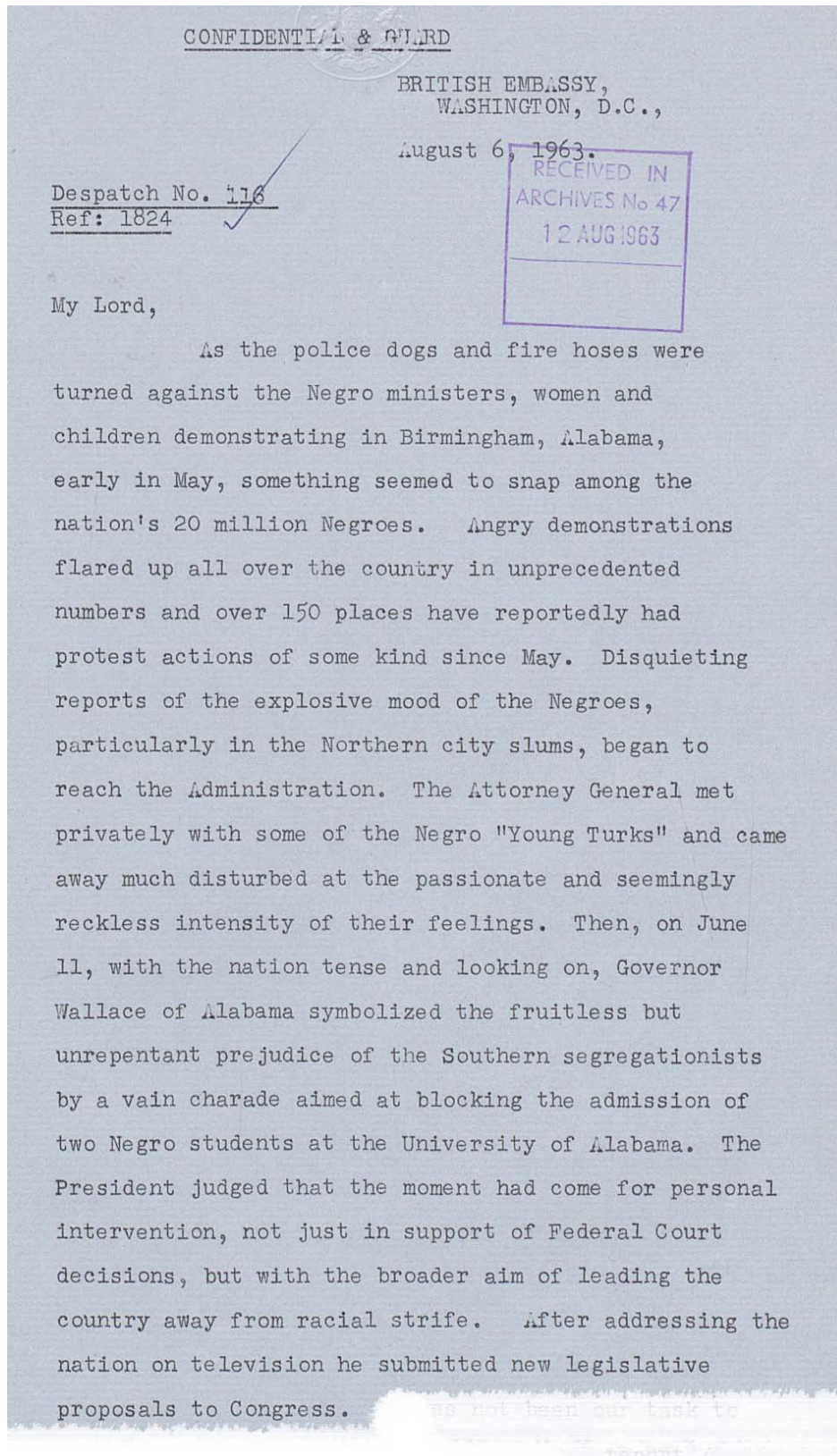
1. What were the effects of events in Birmingham on
 - a) the rest of the black population of the USA?
 - b) the President?
2. Why were Dr. Martin Luther King's non-violent methods considered to be so effective?
3. What battles in the fight for civil rights still needed to be won?



HEROES & VILLAINS

King & civil rights > Birmingham

Source 4a





HEROES & VILLAINS

King & civil rights > Birmingham

Source 4b

4. Direct action has won its way because it has caught the mood of the rising generation of Negroes and because it has won initial successes. From the early desegregation of travel facilities following the "Freedom Rides", to the hundreds of restaurants, hotels and public facilities desegregated in the wake of the Birmingham demonstrations, more of the most obnoxious walls of segregation have come tumbling down than in all the years since Reconstruction. The movement has given expression to the militancy of young Negroes who saw Africans gaining full independence while they, with superior qualifications and achievements, were subject to the daily insult of "white only" signs. The doctrine of Christian non-violence, as adapted from Gandhi by churchmen such as Dr. Martin Luther King, has offered them a powerful, sophisticated and satisfying weapon. As they kneel in prayer, sing hymns on the way to jail, or submit passively to the blows and abuse of white

hooligans and police, the demonstrators at once disarm their oppressors and add to the ugliness and guilt of those who brutalize them. For themselves they gain the inspiration and satisfaction of superior Christian behaviour in face of enemies who profess to call themselves Christians and claim that the Negro race is inferior. Further stature has been added to the movement by its leaders who have generally emerged under the glare of publicity as men of character and ability. Their Southern enemies have charged that they are under Communist influence. The Administration have stated publicly that they have no evidence of this. While some Communists and Communist sympathizers undoubtedly take part in the demonstrations, the direct action movement certainly does not lean on the Communist movement.



HEROES & VILLAINS

King & civil rights > Birmingham

Source 4c

5. I said above that the non-violent movement has been successful. Yet its successes, though dramatic in relation to the past, and of great symbolic importance, have so far only scratched the surface of the real problem. For all the hundreds of restaurants desegregated, hundreds more remain barred to Negroes. Despite voter registration drives undertaken at great personal risk, the Southern Negro remains largely disenfranchised. In darkest Mississippi only 6.1% of voting age Negroes are registered and can vote (if they dare).