

Subject filed on Guyana : Dispute with Venezuela Sept 82



Georgetown

Co-operative Republic of Guyana

August 27, 1982.

PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE  
SERIAL No. T169 A/82

My dear Prime Minister,

I am prompted by recent developments in our relations with Venezuela to advise you of the delicate stage which has been reached in the controversy precipitated by that country's untenable claim to territory in Guyana.

It is only fitting that I should do so, since the United Kingdom is also a signatory to the Geneva Agreement which regulates the procedures for resolving the said controversy, and which has re-entered into force with the expiration of the Protocol of Port-of-Spain on June 18, 1982.

As you are aware, the boundary between Guyana and Venezuela was demarcated on the ground between 1901 and 1905 pursuant to an Arbitral Award unanimously made by an international Arbitration Tribunal in 1899. However, in 1962, Venezuela asserted a claim to Western Essequibo in Guyana, alleging that the 1899 Award was null and void.

Her Excellency, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher,  
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of  
Great Britain and Northern Ireland,  
10 Dowding Street,  
LONDON,  
England.

In order to deal with the controversy which arose as a result of the Venezuelan allegation, the Geneva Agreement was concluded in February 1966, a few months before Guyana's independence. The mechanisms so far employed under the Geneva Agreement have unfortunately failed to resolve the controversy, and the Protocol of Port-of-Spain, which sought in 1970 to interpose a quietus, initially for twelve years, came to an end on 18 June 1982 on the initiative of the Government of Venezuela.

Under Article IV of the Geneva Agreement, the Government of Guyana and the Government of Venezuela now have until 18 September, 1982 to seek agreement on one of the means of peaceful settlement provided for in Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations. These include negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and judicial settlement.

The Government of Venezuela has proposed 'negotiation'. However, having regard to a number of factors, not least of which are the nature of Venezuela's contention that the 1899 Award is a nullity and her intransigent refusal to advance any evidence in support of that contention, my Government has proposed 'judicial settlement' and has urged recourse to the International Court of Justice.

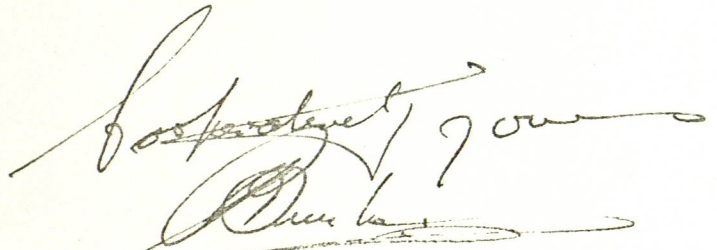
In spite of numerous violations in the past by Venezuela of the provisions of the Geneva Agreement, and of the Protocol of Port-of-Spain as well, the Government of Guyana has always acted in good faith and with scrupulous respect for the principles and norms of international law, including those relating to sovereign equality of States, territorial integrity, and non-use of force in the settlement of disputes. We intend to adhere to this course. Meanwhile, we await a reply from the Government of Venezuela to our proposal.

I would be less than candid if I did not express my concern that Venezuela might be tempted to have recourse to military means in the pursuit of her claim. Hopefully, the recent developments in the South Atlantic over the Falkland Islands will serve to reinforce the principle that the unlawful use of force will not be condoned and may deter Venezuela from such a course. However, I wish to urge your Government to give its continuing support to all efforts at peaceful settlement and to do whatever is in its power to prevent the eruption of violence in the controversy which has eventuated from Venezuela's allegation of nullity.

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I do value greatly the support which you and your government have given on this issue and undertake to keep you abreast of further developments as they unfold.

*Thank you very much.*

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "L.F.S. Burnham". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

L.F.S. Burnham,  
President of the Co-operative  
Republic of Guyana.