

FM BELMOPAN

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SIC TELNO 217

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 217 OF 15 JULY 1980

INFO PRIORITY GUATEMALA CITY

INFO WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK AND MEXICO CITY

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*This leads to put recent  
Opinion in a rather different  
light.*

*Am*

MY TELNO 213: ANGLO/GUATEMALAN TALKS

1. PREMIER AND HIS DEPUTY CALLED YESTERDAY WITH A PIECE OF PAPER (SEE MIFT) SETTING OUT THE GOVERNMENT'S REACTIONS TO NEW YORK TALKS.

2. COURTENAY HAD SEEN ME EARLIER IN THE DAY TO WARN ME THAT PRICE WAS STILL NOT CONVINCED THAT GUATEMALANS WERE NEGOTIATING SERIOUSLY. HE BELIEVED THAT THEY WERE BEING CONCILIATORY SOLELY IN ORDER TO AVOID A ROUGH PASSAGE AT THE UN. THEIR AIMS HAD NOT CHANGED.

3. COURTENAY, SPEAKING VERY FRANKLY, ALSO TO

D ME THAT PRICE THOUGHT THE BRITISH SIDE MUST HAVE BEEN TAKEN IN BY THE GUATEMALANS FROM THE START AS THEY WERE BEING ALTOGETHER TOO FRIENDLY. PRICE NOW BELIEVED THE TIME HAD COME TO START PREPARATIONS FOR INDEPENDENCE. HE APPEARED NOT TO BE INTERESTED IN FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS.

4. COURTENAY'S OWN COMMENT WAS THAT WATTS HAD HANDLED THE NEGOTIATIONS IN NEW YORK EXTREMELY WELL AND HE HAD NOTHING BUT PRAISE FOR THE WAY THE DELEGATION HAD BEEN LED. HE HAD GAINED THE IMPRESSION THAT THE GUATEMALANS WERE SERIOUS ABOUT WANTING A SOLUTION.

5. HE SAID HE THOUGHT PRICE WAS PROBABLY RIGHT, HOWEVER, NOT TO ACCEPT THE INVITATION TO VISIT GUATEMALA AS THE OPPOSITION WOULD MAKE HIS POSITION INTOLERABLE. BUT HE WAS DISAPPOINTED THAT THE PREMIER AND HIS OTHER COLLEAGUES HAD REJECTED SO QUICKLY THE IDEA OF A JOINT AUTHORITY IN THE GULF OF HONDURAS. HE HIMSELF THOUGHT IT HAD DISTINCT POSSIBILITIES. HE WAS NOT SURPRISED, HOWEVER, THAT THE PLEBISCITE IDEA HAD NOT GAINED ACCEPTANCE. HAD THE PROPOSAL BEEN TO HOLD IT SHORTLY AFTER COMING TO AN AGREEMENT, IT MIGHT HAVE WON SUPPORT.

6. WHEN DISCUSSING THE MATTER WITH ME, PRICE REJECTED EVEN THIS POSSIBILITY. HE WAS QUITE ADAMANT THAT THERE WAS NOTHING IN ANY OF THE NEW YORK PROPOSALS THAT WOULD CAUSE HIM OR HIS COLLEAGUES TO CHANGE THEIR MINDS. HE WAS EXTREMELY SUSPICIOUS OF GUATEMALAN MOTIVES AND HIS SUSPICIONS APPEARED TO EXTEND EVEN

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*1/10 us.*

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TO US. HE WAS NOT IMPRESSED WITH THE QUOTE CHARM OFFENSIVE UNQUOTE.

7. PRICE IS A BITTER AND FRUSTRATED MAN. ALL HIS OLD SUSPICIONS HAVE BEEN AROUSED. HE TALKS OF HIMSELF AS A REVOLUTIONARY AND ANTI-MONARCHIST. HE SUSPECTS HMG OF COLLUSION. HE COMPLAINS ABOUT THE LIMITATIONS OF HIS POWERS ( THE POLICE, CIVIL SERVANTS, ETC) AND HE HAS EVEN RESURRECTED (TO THE CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER) THE CHARGE THAT THE BRITISH PRESENCE IN BELIZE IS BEING FUNDED CLANDESTINELY FROM WASHINGTON - A PIECE OF INFORMATION APPARENTLY KNOWN ONLY TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE PERSONALLY AND MR MUSKIE. COURTENAY WARNED ME TO EXPECT A ROUGH RIDE.

8. THE RECENT ARMS THEFT AND BOMB SCARES MAY HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH PRICE'S ATTITUDE. BUT THE GROWING FEELING IN THE COUNTRY, PARTICULARLY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE AND COMMERCIAL CIRCLES, THAT INDEPENDENCE WITH PRICE CAN ONLY BRING INCREASING CORRUPTION AND CONTINUING DETERIORATION IN THE ALREADY BADLY RUN-DOWN GOVERNMENT SERVICES IS OBVIOUSLY WORRYING HIM TOO. HE SEES THE PRIZE FOR WHICH HE HAS WAITED SO LONG SLOWLY SLIPPING FROM HIS GRASP.

9. HOWEVER, HE AGREED THAT A MEETING WITH THE MINISTER OF STATE BEFORE THE LATTER VISITED GUATEMALA WOULD BE USEFUL, AND HE SAW NO OBJECTION - THOUGH HE HELD OUT NO HOPE - FOR A RESUMED SESSION IN OCTOBER. HE TOLD ME THAT HE WOULD BE LEADING A 4-MAN MINISTERIAL DELEGATION TO THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTIONARY CELEBRATIONS LATER THIS WEEK. SHOMAN, HE SAID, WAS ALREADY IN GRENADA AND WOULD BE JOINING THE DELEGATION THERE. THEY HOPED TO BE BACK BY 22/23 JULY AND WOULD BE FREE TO SEE THE MINISTER ANY TIME FROM THEN ON.

10. I HOPE MR RIDLEY CAN MANAGE A VISIT.

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