

Prime Minister

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SIC TELNO 249

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 249 OF 5 AUGUST 1980

INFO GUATEMALA CITY, MEXICO CITY, WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK

MP 5/8 MB

ANGLO-Guatemalan DISPUTE

1. I USED THE OPPORTUNITY OF A TALK WITH THE PREMIER OVER TEA AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE YESTERDAY TO PRESS HIM ONCE AGAIN ON THE NEW YORK PROPOSALS.

2. THE FOLLOWING SUMMARISES HIS VIEWS:

TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND SOVEREIGNTY WERE, IN BELIZEAN EYES, NON-NEGOTIABLE. ANYTHING ELSE WAS. ALL THE NEW YORK PROPOSALS HAD NON-NEGOTIABLE ELEMENTS. THAT WAS WHY HE HAD HAD TO REJECT THEM. IF HE HAD ACCEPTED THE PROPOSAL THAT THERE SHOULD BE, FOR EXAMPLE, SOMETHING LESS THAN SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE SOUTHERN CAYES - AND THIS HAD RESULTED IN AGREEMENT WITH GUATEMALA - WE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO FURTHER FORWARD, BECAUSE THAT AGREEMENT WOULD THEN HAVE BEEN REJECTED BY A MAJORITY OF BELIZEANS.

3. GUATEMALA KNEW VERY WELL WHAT WAS NOT NEGOTIABLE. HE HAD TOLD THE MINISTER OF STATE AND THE LATTER HAD TOLD THE GUATEMALANS. YET THEY STILL PERSISTED IN PUTTING FORWARD PROPOSALS WHICH THEY KNEW COULD NEVER BE ACCEPTED IN BELIZE. ALL WERE VARIATIONS ON THEMES WHICH HAD BEEN DISCUSSED IN PREVIOUS NEGOTIATIONS. THIS WAS WHY HE SAID THEY WERE NOT NEGOTIATING SERIOUSLY. THEY MIGHT WANT A SETTLEMENT BUT ONLY ON THEIR TERMS - AND THOSE TERMS ALWAYS INCLUDED A LOSS OF SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORY FOR BELIZE. SIXTEEN YEARS AGO BELIZE HAD BEEN GIVEN FULL SELF GOVERNMENT AND THE THEN MINISTER OF STATE HAD PROMISED INDEPENDENCE SHORTLY. BELIZE WAS STILL WAITING. THE GUATEMALANS HAD BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL IN THEIR DELAYING TACTICS. IT WAS TIME THEY WERE TOLD THAT THEY COULD NO LONGER HOLD UP THE PROCESS OF INDEPENDENCE.

4. GUATEMALA HAD CLAIMED BELIZE FOR THE LAST 150 YEARS.

BRITAIN HAD ALWAYS RESISTED THOSE CLAIMS AND SAID THEY HAD NO VALIDITY. WHY WAS HE NOW BEING PRESSED TO RECOGNISE THESE CLAIMS AND CEDE TERRITORY AND SOVEREIGNTY IF THEY WERE FALSE. IT WAS BRITAIN THAT WAS UNDER A MORAL OBLIGATION TO GIVE GUATEMALA SOMETHING IN LIEU OF THE HELP SHE HAD PROMISED THEM WITH THE CART TRACK IN 1859. HOWEVER HE WAS WILLING TO PLAY HIS PART TOO. THAT WAS WHY HE HAD OFFERED MARITIME AND OTHER CONCESSIONS TO THE GUATEMALANS. HE SAW THE DESIRABILITY OF A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT VERY CLEARLY. BELIZE HAD NO TROOPS TO DEFEND HERSELF. BUT THERE WAS A LIMIT TO WHAT BELIZEANS WOULD ACCEPT IN ORDER TO SATISFY GUATEMALA'S PRIDE. AND AS A POLITICIAN HE HAD TO RECOGNISE THOSE LIMITS.

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5. HE RECOGNISED EQUALLY WELL THE DIFFICULTIES THE PRESENT GUATEMALAN GOVERNMENT WERE IN. IF THEY AGREED TO GIVE UP THEIR CLAIM TO BELIZE THEY MIGHT BE OVERTHROWN. IT WAS ALREADY A WEAK AND WOUNDED GOVERNMENT. TO GIVE UP THE CLAIM TO BELIZE MIGHT FINISH IT OFF. THAT WAS WHY IT MIGHT BE IN THEIR OWN BEST INTERESTS TO BE PRESENTED WITH A FAIT ACCOMPLI. THEY COULD THEN SAY TO THEIR PEOPLE THAT THEY HAD DONE THEIR BEST. THEY HAD NOT ACTED DISHONOURABLY. THEY HAD MAINTAINED THEIR CLAIM TO THE END.

6. HE DOUBTED WHETHER GUATEMALA WOULD ATTACK AN INDEPENDENT BELIZE. THEY HAD TOO MANY OTHER PREOCCUPATIONS. BUT OF COURSE THE OPPOSITION WOULD NEVER ACCEPT THAT THIS WAS SO. THEY WOULD DEMAND A GUARANTEE. EVEN HIS OWN PARTY WOULD WANT SOME SORT OF SECURITY AGREEMENT. SO HE WOULD NEED A DEFENCE TREATY OR ITS EQUIVALENT BEFORE HE COULD ACCEPT INDEPENDENCE. HE HOPED BRITAIN WOULD PROVIDE IT. IF SHE DID NOT HE HOPED THEN COMMONWEALTH OR USA OR CANADA WOULD. IF THEY TOO REFUSED HE WAS NOT SURE WHAT HE COULD DO ON HIS OWN. THAT WAS WHY HE WOULD PREFER A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. BUT THAT SETTLEMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE ACCEPTABLE TO ALL HIS PEOPLE. OTHERWISE IT WOULD NOT BE A SETTLEMENT. HE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO MAKE IT STICK.

7. PRICE WAS RELAXED AND FRIENDLY THROUGHOUT. BUT HE WAS ALSO EXTREMELY SI

M. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HIM MOVING AWAY FROM THIS POSITION.

FCO PASS GUATEMALA CITY, MEXICO CITY, WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK

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