

Resumed with P.A.

(2)

L.A. Am 11/3

Foreign and Commonwealth Office



Rome Minister

London SW1A 2AH

In general the line taken by Lord
 C seems to me v. good. But in the
 sidelined passage I think he went a
 little further than he meant to go. I asked
 for this letter: "I thought his words might
 attract attention... in fact they do not seem to"
 Dear Michael, have done so.

6 March 1981

*Michael - this
 is directly
 contrary to our
 proposal we
 in Westport. Day we
 have a word.*

El Salvador

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary was interviewed
 about the Washington talks by Sir Robin Day on 'The World at
 One' on 4 March. One of the questions was about a possible
 British offer to mediate in the El Salvador civil war. I
 enclose a copy of Lord Carrington's reply. The question led
 on to the initiative attempted by the German Government which
 appears to have been unsuccessful.

It is possible that this exchange may lead to misleading
 speculation that Britain may at the next EC Foreign Ministers
 meeting be proposing some sort of mediation by the EC in El
 Salvador. We consider that the situation in El Salvador is at
 present too sharply polarised to offer any prospect of a favour-
 able mediation: even if this were not so, there are other
 countries (eg Mexico, Costa Rica and Panama) who would be better
 placed than the EC to bring the two sides together.

However we intend to discuss the situation in El
 Salvador within the Political Cooperation framework. It is on
 the agenda of the Political Committee on 10/11 March and the
 Germans will no doubt wish to give an account of their
 unsuccessful mediation attempt.

We are issuing appropriate guidance to posts.

*Yours ever
 Robert Lyne*

(R M J Lyne)
 Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
 10 Downing St

too involved in Central America and that this is very much in their minds.

RD: But how does one prevent the step of advisers going in escalating into a situation where you have more than advisers, after an adviser has been killed, and so on as we have seen in previous history?

Lord C: I don't think the Americans have any intention of doing that. As I said, it was very clear to me that they understood and realised the dangers. After all, nobody would understand it better than Mr Haig. He was in Vietnam himself.

RD: Why doesn't the British Government offer to mediate in the El Salvador civil war?

Lord C: Well, I think we must have a discussion in Europe about this in our Political Cooperation. As you know the German government has been seeking to mediate without much success, and maybe at the moment there is no prospect of success. But we shall be meeting in Europe shortly, the Foreign Ministers, and I hope that we may perhaps be able to devise something on those lines which may be useful. It may not be possible to do it yet, but certainly it's something we ought to be thinking about.

RD: But the Prime Minister told the House of Commons on Monday that the British Government had not been informed of any West German initiative.

Lord C: No we weren't informed of it, but I read about it in the paper and I know it happened.

RD: What is the nature of that initiative?

Lord C: I think the Germans were trying to get the two sides together in order to see whether it was possible to come to some democratic solution in Salvador. I think they failed. I don't think that they found it possible at the present time. But it seems to me that if something on those lines were possible, perhaps it's rather over optimistic at the moment to suppose that it is; it would be worth trying.

Do you agree with the reported statement by one West German government person that a political solution is more desirable than a military solution?

Lord C: That's always so isn't it. Nobody wants to see these issues settled by force, and the amount of violence going on in Salvador at the present time is appalling. So anything that any of us can do to bring it to an end must be worth trying to do, at any rate. At the moment I think that the situation doesn't look as if it is very likely that that kind of proposal will be acceptable, perhaps to either side. But that's no reason for not trying.

RD: The leader of the opposition in the Commons has repeatedly asked why the Prime Minister doesn't condemn American intervention as she does Communist intervention in El Salvador. What is your answer to that question?

Lord C: The difficulty about that sort of a question is that, if you don't support those who are trying to defend themselves against Communist subversion, all you are doing is to let the Communist infiltration and the left wing win. I think the Americans are faced with the very difficult problem, either of supporting a government of which, as Mr Haig says, they don't wholly approve (because they see the problems of human rights as well as we do) or of letting a situation arise in which the whole of their backdoor is destabilised by the Cubans and by the Soviet Union. I think what they have done is right. What they have done is to say yes we will help you, but we expect you to have very much more regard for human rights and to democratic processes in Salvador than you are doing at the present time.

RD: Secretary of State, do you regard El Salvador and Central America as a good place to choose as a test of will for standing up against Communist activity?

Lord C: Well you see you are speaking, aren't you, sitting in Broadcasting House rather a long way from Central America. The Americans are speaking in Washington very much concerned with what's happening on the continent, on their own continent, and very much worried about what's happening on their backdoor. They have seen what the Cubans have been trying to do. They have been worried for some time about Cuba, and I think that they feel that in their own continent, on their own backdoor, they are weak and allow the sort of things that they have

Sarvet hani Feb. 81

Sarvet and Cenkut Interact.



6 MAR 1981