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FM TEGUCIGALPA 001730Z MAR 82

TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 00 OF 22 MARCH

INFO IMMEDIATE MEXICO CITY SAN JOSE WASHINGTON

INFO SAVING BIS GUATAMALA CITY

EL SALVADOR: ELECTIONS.

1. HOPEFULLY NEXT SUNDAYS ELECTIONS WILL BEGIN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS SO LONG DENIED TO THE ELECTORATE AND REVEAL THE RELATIVE STRENGTH OF THE CENTRE AND RIGHT WING PARTIES. IF THEY FAIL THROUGH FRAUD, DISINTEREST OR INTIMIDATION THE ALTERNATIVE IS LIKELY TO BE A RIGHT OR LEFT WING AUTHORITARIAN REGIME.
2. SIX PARTIES WILL PARTICIPATE (I) CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (PDC) (II) NATIONAL REPUBLICAN ALLIANCE (ARENA) (III) NATIONAL CONCILIATION PARTY (PCN) (IV) DEMOCRATIC ACTION PARTY (AD) (V) SALVADOREAN PEOPLES PARTY (PPS) (VI) PEOPLES DIRECTION PARTY (POP). SEVENTH PARTY, ACTION RENEWAL PARTY (PAR), DID NOT NOMINATE ITS CANDIDATES IN TIME AND THESE WERE DISQUALIFIED. AN EIGHTH, "BUSINESSMEN FARMERS AND WORKERS" FAILED TO OBTAIN THE 2000 SIGNATURES NEEDED FOR LEGALISATION AS A PARTY.
3. ONLY THE FIRST THREE PARTIES HAVE CANDIDATES NATIONWIDE. THE OTHER THREE WHICH ARE SMALL HAVE LIMITED THEIR NOMINATIONS DUE TO LACK OF FUNDS AND PARTY ORGANISATION. THE CONTEST IS REALLY BETWEEN PDC, ARENA AND PCN.
4. ON POLICIES THE PDC FAVOURS CONTINUED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REFORM FIRMER CONTROL OF THE ARMED FORCES AND (ALTHOUGH NOT ADMITTED PUBLICLY) POST ELECTORAL TALKS WITH FDR TO INCORPORATE THEM INTO THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL LIFE. ARENA WANTS A RUTHLESS ANTI GUERRILLA CAMPAIGN (PRECEDED BY AN AMNESTY) AND AN END TO THE DUARTE REFORMS. PCN ACCEPTS THE REFORMS SO FAR IMPLEMENTED BUT WANTS NO MORE. IT RESERVES ITS POSITION ON WHICH OF THE OTHER TWO PARTIES IT WOULD SUPPORT IN A COALITION UNTIL IT SEES THE RESULTS. IDEOLOGICALLY IT IS CLOSER TO ARENA BUT KNOWS THAT DUARTE IS NECESSARY TO RETAIN U.S. SUPPORT. THE THREE SMALL PARTIES (AD, PPS AND POP) HAVE NO RECOGNISABLE POLICIES BUT ARE NOT AVERSE TO TALKS WITH THE FDR.
5. THE SIZE OF THE ELECTORATE IS UNKNOWN BUT IS ESTIMATED AT 1 1/4 MILLION; LIKELY PARTICIPATION IS 30 - 50 PER CENT. MORE THAN 500,000 VOTES WILL BE SEEN AS VICTORY FOR THE ELECTIONS, WHOEVER WINS; LESS THAN 400,000 WILL BE A VICTORY FOR THE QUERRILLAS. THE 70 SEAT CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY WILL APPOINT A NEW PRESIDENT AND CABINET.

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6. THE PDC SHOULD WIN WITH ARENA A CLOSE SECOND PCN A POOR THIRD AND THE THREE SMALL PARTIES TAKING NO MORE THAN 10 PER CENT OF THE VOTE. PROBABLY NO PARTY WILL WIN A MAJORITY AND EFFORTS WILL BE MADE TO FORM A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY. THE PDC WILL PARTICIPATE ONLY IF THEY HAVE A DECISIVE ROLE. DUARTE WILL NOT LEND HIS NAME TO A COALITION WHICH WOULD USE HIM TO RETAIN U.S. SUPPORT WHILE STOPPING REFORMS NEEDED TO RESOLVE THE INEQUALITIES OF THE PAST - TO WHICH THE GUERRILLA INSURGENCY IS A RESPONSE, WHOEVER HELPS THEM.

7. IF ARENA AND PCN FORM A COALITION GOVERNMENT IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT THE WHITE HOUSE COULD RESIST CONGRESSIONAL PRESSURE TO STOP ESSENTIAL MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID. IF THE PDC WINS OR DOMINATES A COALITION GOVERNMENT THE U.S. WILL BE ENCOURAGED TO CONTINUE ITS AID, DUARTE'S INFLUENCE OVER THE ARMED FORCES WILL BE STRENGTHENED AND TALKS COULD BE STARTED TO INCORPORATE THE FDP INTO SALVADOREAN POLITICAL LIFE. HOWEVER THESE WOULD NOT BE TO FORM A NEW BROADER GOVERNMENT WITH THE FDP/ FMLN UNLESS THE LATTER COMMIT THEMSELVES TO ELECTION RATHER THAN POWER SHARING.

8. THE BEST RESULT WOULD BE A PDC MAJORITY FOLLOWED BY TALKS WITH THE FDP AND NEW ELECTIONS WITHIN A LIMITED TIME. THE WORST WOULD BE AN ARENA VICTORY. THE MOST LIKELY IS A PDC LED COALITION. FCO PASS ALL AND PASS SAVING TO BIS GUATANALA CITY.

SHARKEY

(REPEATED AS REQUESTED)

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