



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

23 March 1989

Don Charles

El Salvador: Presidential Election

Although the result has yet to be officially confirmed, it is clear that the right-wing Arena candidate, Fredi Cristiani, has won a convincing victory in the Presidential election which took place in El Salvador on 19 March.

The preliminary view of our official observer is that the election was properly prepared, that voting was secure and secret, and that a real choice was offered to voters. There is no suggestion of fraud. Turnout was lower than hitherto, no doubt partly because of the high level of intimidation, for which the FMLN guerrillas were mainly responsible. Nevertheless the fact that the election has brought a change of Government shows that democracy is alive in El Salvador.

Arena has an unsavoury past. Cristiani is not however personally associated with its record of human rights abuse. During a recent visit to Britain he stressed his determination to prevent any repetition of the events of the early 1980s. But he will need international support if he is to succeed in asserting moderate policies over the wilder elements in the party (led by the Party's honorary life President, Roberto d'Aubuisson).

The Arena victory will cause difficulties for the US Administration. It will face congressional resistance to the continued provision of the substantial military and economic assistance given to the outgoing Duarte government. It has however little option but to work with Cristiani. In a statement after the election, the State Department described the voting as free and fair: confirmed its readiness to support the winner in the democratic process; and underlined that its future relationship would depend on the Arena Government's adherence to democracy and respect for human rights.

/The



/ The Foreign Secretary recommends that the Prime Minister should send a short congratulatory message along the lines of the attached draft telegram, when the result is officially confirmed.

Yours ever

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R N Peirce'.

(R N Peirce)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL

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PRIORITY

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RESTRICTED

FM FCO  
TO PRIORITY SAN SALVADOR  
TELNO

INFO PRIORITY TEGUCIGALPA

YOUR TELNO 62: MESSAGE TO NEW PRESIDENT

1. Please transmit the following message to Cristiani from the Prime Minister, as soon as the results of the elections are officially confirmed.

*I congratulate you*  
BEGINS: ~~Please accept my congratulations~~ on your victory in the recent Presidential elections, *and* wish you ~~every~~ success during *in* your ~~term of~~ office. ENDS

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MRS D HOLT

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