

Mr. Tolson
Mr. Belmont
Mr. Mohr
Mr. DeLoach

plw Aww 049/325/12 Additional circulation to

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R. H. Smith
3/12

CALL BY THE CUBAN AMBASSADOR

1. The Cuban Ambassador called on me at his own request today on the eve of his departure tomorrow for Havana, where he will attend the forthcoming Communist Party Congress. In reply to my question, Sr Bolanos said that, although not a Central Committee member, he had recently been elected a Delegate (whatever that may mean) and it was in that role that he would be attending. He was going home a bit early in order to brief himself on international affairs. This brought him to the point of his call, which was to ask me for a run down on British policy towards Latin America. He said he had observed in the last year or so an upsurge of British activity and interest in Latin America exemplified in the numerous visits of senior Ministers which had taken place this year, including that of the Secretary of State. He had also noticed that the Government were showing a new determination in solving the long-standing colonial disputes concerning the Falkland Islands and Belize. He thought this a very interesting development and wondered if I could comment on it.

2. In reply, I said that it was indeed the case that there had been in recent months an upsurge in British interest in Latin America. Though this was in a sense pioneered by the FCO, as he had suggested, it was also true to say that it arose from a spontaneous recognition on the part of various Government Departments that British relations with Latin America had been sadly neglected in the past and that a new and sustained effort was required to put them in good order. Our motive was, as the Ambassador would readily understand, primarily economic and commercial in the sense that we wished to develop new markets for our products and to encourage trade in both directions but there was also a political ingredient. There had been some attenuation of American influence in Latin America in recent years; and we had discerned in many of these countries a revival of interest in ties with Western Europe, including Britain. It was our intention to multiply contacts in the future and to inject more substance into our political dialogue with the independent countries of the region.

3. As to the outstanding colonial problems, I said that, while previous Governments had given sustained and often ingenious attention to various methods of solving them, the present Government had perhaps shown more resolution in pressing ahead in the direction in which they had decided to go. Thus, in the Falkland Islands Mr Ridley had, as the Ambassador would have seen from press reports, made a deliberate effort to make the Islanders aware of the long term weakness of their position and the need to think positively about finding solutions for a dispute which had hitherto blocked their economic development. Sr Bolanos enquired whether the suggested lease-back of 25 years which he had read in the papers

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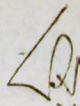
was in fact a firm proposal put forward by the British Government or whether it was just one of many options. I confirmed that it was the latter. We were not trying to sell any particular ideas to the Islanders but rather to cause them to think seriously about the problem for themselves. As to Belize, the Ambassador would know of the recent overwhelmingly supported UN resolution calling on Britain to bring Belize to independence by the end of the next General Assembly. It was our intention to do so if possible, while continuing to negotiate in good faith with the Guatemalans in the hope of finding a lasting settlement to our dispute with them. Sr Bolanos said that he was sure that our tactics were right. Previous British Governments had adopted a softly softly approach and the Guatemalans had been able to stall indefinitely. Now that they had the whole weight of the United Nations against them he personally was doubtful whether they would in fact make a military move to invade Belize, whatever their war-like noises. He asked whether there was anything in the Guatemalan Ministry of Defence allegation reported today that British troops had advanced to the line of the border. I explained that this was nonsense. We had maintained a constant posture of military readiness since reinforcement took place in 1977; but we were far from making any threatening dispositions at the present time. He asked whether we had it in mind to give any portion of Belize territory to the Guatemalans as the price of an agreement with them. He had heard that the British Mission to the UN had been coy in accepting an explicit phrase ruling out territorial cession in the draft UN Resolution. I said that I was sure that this was not so. We were quite clear that any kind of territorial cession was opposed both by Mr Price and by the Belize Opposition; there could therefore be no question of it.

4. Finally, the Ambassador asked me what I made of the new situation in Jamaica. Was it true that Seaga was turning to Britain for aid? I hedged on this point, saying that we still maintained our attitude that the Jamaican Government must first address themselves to the IMF. Sr Bolanos said that he was a good friend of Mr Manley and admired him very much. He knew the new Foreign Minister, Mr Shearer, and thought quite highly of him. I said that I had met Mr Seaga during his visit to London and had formed the impression that he was a very clever and resolute man. I thought he had a lot going for him at the moment, though I agreed that Jamaica had many problems that would be difficult to solve in the short term.

5. As the Ambassador rose to leave, I thanked him for his intervention over the question of access to the tarmac at Havana Airport for our Embassy. I referred to the long running saga of Mr Jackson's maps and said that it was time that this chapter was closed. Finally, I had to say that it was our impression that the authorities had been rather obstructive over the past year in their dealings with our Embassy: I looked to him to oil the wheels on his return to Havana, in the hope that we would have

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no more reports of this kind. Sr Bolanos took this in good part and said that he would do his best. We agreed that we would meet after his return towards the end of the month for a tour d'horizon on Central America, which worries both of us - for almost exactly opposite reasons.



G W Harding

1 December 1980

cc

PS/Mr Ridley
Mr Day
Mr Duncan, Research Dept
Mr Empson, PUSD
Mr Martin, P & CD