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Q. 25/7.



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

19 July 1984

Dear Charles,

Visit by President Duarte of El Salvador: 21 July

President Duarte will be calling on the Prime Minister at 1000 on 21 July at Chequers. He will be accompanied by his Foreign Minister Dr Jorge Eduardo Tenorio, and his Chief of Staff Colonel Blandon. President Duarte speaks good English and no interpreter is necessary. We shall ensure that he arrives at Chequers shortly before 1000.

I enclose a brief together with a personality note on the President, and a copy of a paper on UK policy towards El Salvador. You might find the latter useful, but the brief is self-contained and we do not believe that the Prime Minister need read the policy paper as well.

Yours ever,

Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

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CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER BY PRESIDENT DUARTE OF EL SALVADOR
21 JULY AT 1000

POINTS TO MAKE

1. **Congratulations on your election.** UK official observers and most others reported favourably on the elections' fairness. Appreciate difficulties in organising elections in face of armed opposition.

2. **Aware of problems facing you.** **How do you envisage tackling them?**

3. **How do you see prospects for national reconciliation?** Can some of the less extreme guerrillas, e.g. Ungo, be brought back into the political process in time for National Assembly elections next year?


4. **What prospect of an early reduction in human rights abuses attributed to the security forces?** Public opinion here has hitherto been very critical of human rights situation. Encouraged by your commitment to an improvement and by steps already taken but note reports of 134 killed or disappeared as a result of death squads activities in June 1984.

5. **(If raised) We shall consider resuming a modest aid programme** though there are many calls on our finite aid resources, including from poorer countries.

Contadora

6. **Sir G Howe hopes to attend Foreign Ministers' meeting at San José in September.** We and our European partners wish to encourage a workable political settlement.

7. **What are your views on the draft Act of Contadora?** Can a settlement be achieved and made to work?



BACKGROUND

1. President Duarte won the second round of the Presidential election on 6 May, beating the right-wing ARENA party candidate, Major D'Aubuisson (54% - 46%). Turn-out was 75%. He was inaugurated on 1 June; Mr Julian Amery MP represented the Foreign Secretary. The UK official observers (Sir James Swaffield and Dr David Browning) made a meticulous and generally favourable report on both rounds on the election. International opinion regards the elections as fair, and even UK critics such as Lord Chitnis have acknowledged the same.

2. On his inauguration Duarte pledged his government to end human rights abuses by the security forces. To this end he has dismissed certain senior officers; obtained the conviction of the murderers of 4 American nuns in 1981; disbanded intelligence units associated with the 'death squads'; and tightened the rules about arrest and detention. He is also committed to seek national reconciliation but military opposition to any substantial concessions in any negotiations with the FDR/FMLN* will be an important constraint. Duarte can also expect bitter opposition from the right. Some senior elements in the military accept the need for a negotiated solution, however, and most observers agree the army is unlikely to be able to win the war by military means. (40,000 army and police face some 10,000 insurgents). Equally the insurgents do not have the capacity to achieve a decisive military victory, although they are capable of spectacular operations (eg an attack on a hydro-electric dam on 28 June).

3. The various factions of the FDR/FMLN are divided about negotiating with the Duarte government an end to the guerrilla war. The more moderate elements (mostly FDR) seek genuine negotiations (although their terms are unlikely to be acceptable to the right-wing opposition to Duarte); the dominant hard-liners (mostly FMLN) see negotiations as a tactical device in the pursuit of the long-term objective of bringing about a Marxist-Leninist revolution. Duarte's election platform included a pledge to negotiate. At his inauguration the FDR/FMLN publicly proposed talks without preconditions. Duarte responded publicly that he would accept if

* The combination of political (FDR) and paramilitary (FMLN) ^{the} elements of the opposition forces in El Salvador.

The guerrillas ceased their military operations. The FDR/FMLN rejected this. They have dropped the previous preconditions which were the banning of the right-wing ARENA party; the dismantling of the security apparatus; the integration of the insurgent armed forces with the army; and full FDR/FMLN participation in new elections. But these remain their aims.

4. Duarte has moved cautiously on the subject of negotiations, but some contacts through intermediaries may have started. His aim will be to detach the guerrilla moderates (eg the radical Christian Democrat, Ungo) from the hard-liners. But he is under pressure from parts of his power base (the Church, the unions) to make visible progress in achieving a negotiated end to the conflict. It is unclear whether this will happen quickly enough to allow the participation of the moderates in the National Assembly elections planned for March 1985.

5. Duarte faces a critical economic situation: GDP fell by about 25% between 1978 and 1983; exports fell by 40% and unemployment is running at about 33%. US economic assistance (nearly \$335 million in 1984 if the full package is approved) is essential to the country's economic survival. US military assistance in 1984 totals \$465m so far with a further \$65m pending. Since Duarte's election he has received assurances of FRG (Dm 20m (£5.4m)) and Italian aid (amount unknown).

6. British aid was suspended from 1979. We have it in mind to offer a modest technical co-operation programme of about £14,000 in the next financial year. Commitment to a larger programme is inadvisable until the human rights situation has clearly improved; human rights groups maintain that since Duarte's inauguration civilian deaths at the hands of the security forces have been running at an undiminished rate. Tutela Legal, the Archbishop of Salvador's respectable human rights organisation, claimed that 134 had died or disappeared as a result of death squad activity in June.

Regional peace moves: Contadora

A new draft Contadora agreement (the 'Act of Contadora') was put to the Central Americans in early June. They have reacted cautiously but negotiations on the text are likely. El Salvador has given a qualified welcome; Nicaragua has more fundamental difficulties with it (especially its provisions for pluralist democracy).

8. Direct US-Nicaraguan talks are to continue after Shultz's surprise visit to Managua on 1 June and meetings between Schlaudeman (US roving Ambassador) and Tinoco (Nicaraguan Vice Foreign Minister).

9. A meeting of European (EC, Spain and Portugal), Contadora (Mexico, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela) and Central American Foreign Ministers (El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala) is due to take place in San José, Costa Rica in September. The Foreign Secretary hopes that dates can be agreed enabling him to attend. The meeting, called on the initiative of Costa Rican and FRG, is expected to reaffirm European support for a political settlement of the Central American crisis. It may also tackle the question of an EC/Central American economic co-operation and aid agreement, about which we have serious reservations.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

19 July 1984



E L S A L V A D O R

DUARTE, José Napoleon, Ingeniero

President of El Salvador (1984)

Aged 58 years. Duarte is the leading politician of the Christian Democratic Party. Educated in the United States (civil engineer) he is an ex-Mayor of San Salvador. He lost the 1972 Presidential elections which allegedly were rigged to favour the government candidate. Subsequently arrested he was tortured by the army and exiled to Venezuela with which he maintains close political and family contact. In 1979 he returned to El Salvador and participated in the coalition Junta when reformist army officers overthrew the government of General Romero.

When the more radical members left the Junta in 1980 to ally themselves with the guerrillas, Duarte headed a Christian Democratic/army Junta from 1980-82. This government introduced sweeping but not fully implemented agrarian and financial reforms but failed to either defeat or reach agreement with the guerrillas. When the Christian Democrats failed to win the 1982 elections, Duarte retired from the Presidency and concentrated on organising the Christian Democratic Party for the 1984 election. Sponsored by Konrad Adenauer Foundation, he visited Germany, Britain, Belgium, Italy and Spain in 1983, meeting heads of government and promoting the cause of moderate Salvadorean politics. In May 1984 he was elected President, defeating the ARENA candidate Roberto D'Aubuisson.

A sincere, tenacious and ambitious politician dedicated to a better way of life for the Salvadorean people. Anathema to the right wing and strongly supported by the U.S. government.

Speaks good English. Married with six children.

UK POLICY TOWARDS EL SALVADOR

Purpose of this paper

1. This paper is designed to serve as a starting-point for discussion of a possible revision of UK policy towards El Salvador following President Duarte's election and as an input to the Planning Staff paper on Central America now in preparation. Planning Staff and ODA views have been taken into account.

BACKGROUND

1979-1983

2. From the outbreak of serious internal conflict in El Salvador in 1979 British relations with El Salvador, never substantial, were reduced to a minimum. Physical security problems led to the decision to close the Embassy in 1980. The outstandingly bad human rights record of the government security forces caused the running-down and halting of the aid programme from 1979, the administration and effectiveness of which were in any case hampered by the prevailing conditions of violence. Arms sales, including those of non-lethal equipment, were suspended in 1978, also on human rights grounds. Relations at a political level were maintained by the accreditation of a non-resident ambassador, but remained insignificant. The call in July 1983 on the Prime Minister and Lady Young by Sr. Duarte, then out of office, constituted a discreet but important contact.

3. In contrast to the UK attitude after 1979 the Americans, in part reacting to the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua that year, gave vigorous support to successive governments in El Salvador, primarily to prevent further economic collapse and to enable the armed forces to resist the increasing challenge from the left-wing FMLN insurgents. In doing so the US Administration incurred strong domestic criticism on the grounds that support was being given despite grave human rights abuses and that direct US military involvement would become inevitable.

4. The UK and our European partners faced even greater domestic pressure to stay at arm's length from El Salvador. There was good reason for public disgust with the human rights situation, but public feeling was fanned by skilful left-wing propaganda against US policies on behalf of the FMLN. There was widespread scepticism about the wisdom of US attempts to reverse by force what was perceived as an inevitable social revolution, and European governments by and large kept their distance.

Transition

5. This situation had begun to change even before President Duarte's election on 6 May 1984 under what are generally accepted as fair democratic conditions. The UK defied prevailing liberal orthodoxy by sending observers to the 1982 National Assembly elections, which proved to be acceptably fair. This point was not conceded by most critics, but it became evident that public opinion began to accept that there were more sides to the argument. This process was sufficiently advanced for the UK to be joined by the FRG, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy and Canada in sending observers in 1984 to the Presidential election.

6. In December 1981 the US Congress imposed the condition on further US aid to El Salvador that the human rights situation should measurably improve. Although in November 1983 the Administration were obliged to evade this condition by a procedural device, the spirit of it was followed when Vice-President Bush, visiting San Salvador for the purpose, made it clear to the Government that the Administration was in earnest in insisting on a real improvement.

The present

7. President Duarte took office on 1 June 1984, committed to a policy of national reconciliation, ending the abuse of human rights and investigation into the activities of the death squads. But too vigorous an investigation into the past activities of the death squads, (and effective judicial follow-up action) might increase friction with the security forces and the danger of a coup. At the same time Duarte must retain the confidence of the military in order both to enhance their operational effectiveness and to strengthen his negotiating hand with the guerrillas. He is therefore likely

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to proceed cautiously. As a concession to feeling among the military, who are inclined to suspect he may make imprudent concessions in negotiations with the FDR/FMLN, Duarte has retained the previous Minister of Defence, Vides Casanova, and other senior officers; but some officers associated with death squad activities have been transferred to less sensitive posts. So far the FDR/FMLN have been the demandeurs in seeking negotiations and Duarte has shown no sign of playing his cards too soon. The insurgents have stepped up their attacks from late June as a mark of their disappointment at his rejection of their overtures. The Americans expect them to mount a larger offensive in October, at Cuban instigation, to embarrass President Reagan in the run-up to the US presidential election and in the expectation that he would not step up US military support for El Salvador before the election. In addition to the constraints posed by the attitude of the military and by the continuing insurgent war, Duarte faces labour unrest (partly FMLN-inspired) and systematic opposition to his legislative plans by the extreme right-wing majority in the National Assembly.

8. Duarte's election has restored some respectability to El Salvador and the proposals for progress towards the US Administration's objectives look more hopeful than a year ago. The presence of the Mexican Foreign Minister, Sr. Sepúlveda, at Duarte's inauguration on 1 June is taken to signify a change in the Mexican attitude: until then the Mexicans, who play host to the FDR/FMLN headquarters, seemed to have virtually counted on an insurgent victory. The French, whose position was close to that of the Mexicans, now seem to admit that Duarte's government does have some moral legitimacy. The Germans offered considerable sums of aid the moment Duarte's victory was confirmed.

9. Nevertheless the outlook in El Salvador is still uncertain and it remains a contentious issue for the US Congress and public opinion. The extent to which the Contadora process may contribute to stabilising the situation in El Salvador is hard to forecast: hitherto the Contadora negotiations have tended to focus on Nicaragua and its relations with its neighbours rather than on the insurgency in El Salvador. New successes by the guerrillas and/or perceived failure by Duarte to live up to expectations would be

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likely to generate renewed political controversy in the US and abroad and to face the US Administration and its allies with difficult choices.

Future UK policy

10. The UK shares with the US, EC and most regional countries the aim of establishing and consolidating democracy in Central America. If democratic rule can be shown to bring about economic development and social justice, there will be a better prospect of isolating the guerrillas and preventing further destabilisation of the region, with its strategic consequences for US defence policy. Future UK policy should be to continue to promote the consolidation of democracy in El Salvador. It could do so by lending political support to the Duarte government, for as long as it respects democratic processes and works for a radical improvement in the human rights situation. Support could most effectively be given by political gestures, such as high-level meetings, and by encouraging our European partners to take a similarly constructive attitude. Some such political gestures of UK support for the democratic process in El Salvador have already been made: the sending of observers to the elections in 1982 and 1984, and of Mr Julian Amery MP as the Secretary of State's representative at President Duarte's inauguration on 1 June. The re-opening of the Embassy in San Salvador in mid July, announced in March, also displays our interest. These gestures have been appreciated, and can be followed up. Longer-term tangible assistance to El Salvador, in the form of aid or clearance for arms sales, should be considered carefully in the light of evidence of the new government's success in tackling human rights abuses.

11. Failure to demonstrate support for the new democratic government would disappoint the Americans, and undo the good done by the despatch of UK observers to the elections. Lukewarmness about El Salvador might give the undesirable impression to other emerging democracies that we are unprepared to back successful reform when it happens. A positive UK response, adding to the momentum already provided by the favourable West German and Italian attitudes, could help to promote a constructive EC consensus on El Salvador. This would pay dividends in counteracting impressions current in the US

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that the Europeans are misguided and unhelpful over Central America.

12. The UK is unlikely to have the aid resources available to make more than a gesture of support for the democratic process in El Salvador. By comparison with generous US funding of aid projects, any UK contribution would always look tiny. Further, ODA see a number of difficulties in mounting a new aid programme in El Salvador. The poor human rights record of the Salvadorean Government was one of the major reasons for terminating aid after 1979. Ministers will wish to consider whether even a token amount of aid should be provided until the Duarte Government shows its ability to end human rights violations by the security forces. Other constraints are practical. Adequate administration of a conventional technical co-operation programme would require an increase in Embassy staff resident in San Salvador, but in any case the continuing risk to aid personnel from violence effectively rules out long-term to projects at present. These difficulties might be overcome by confining a new programme to the provision of a token sum for scholarships in the UK, perhaps in the order of £14,000, in addition to the existing £5,000 for the Heads of Mission Gift Scheme. This might enable us to make a modest political gesture in favour of the Duarte Government while avoiding both disproportionate administrative costs and significant public criticism in the UK.

13. Any change in the existing ban on arms sales to El Salvador would, however, probably lead to protests. It is worth recalling that public protests including an appeal by Cardinal Hume led to an end to arms sales in 1978: the Archbishop of El Salvador is still reporting serious violations of human rights. It is too early to judge what success the new Salvadorean Government may have in their campaign to achieve an end to human rights violations by the security forces. In any case, sales prospects are poor, given Salvadorean dependence on US military aid for their purchases. But should clear progress have been made by the end of 1984, consideration might be given to authorising the sale of non-lethal equipment.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions

14. The situation in El Salvador is still volatile and the outlook hard to predict. Serious human rights abuses persist, albeit at a diminishing level, and the military situation is one of stalemate. Nevertheless the election of President Duarte in what were, given the circumstances, free and fair elections is an important and hopeful development. We should now look for ways of giving greater substance to HMG's present policy of encouraging the emergence and consolidation of democracy in El Salvador. In considering how this might be done we should take account of:

- a) the great importance which the US Administration attaches to strengthening Duarte's position;
- b) our own and wider Western interests in preventing the spread of Cuban and Soviet influence in Central America;
- c) our interest in promoting a constructive consensus within the European Community and of minimising EC-US differences over El Salvador;
- d) regional efforts to defuse the Central American crisis (e.g. the Contadora process) and ways in which we and our allies and partners could most usefully contribute to them;
- e) the state of British parliamentary and public opinion on the developing situation in El Salvador;
- f) financial and other practical constraints on our own freedom of action.

15. Against this background, specific actions which we can take in the near future in support of our objectives are likely for the most part to consist of gestures of political support for democracy and social justice in El Salvador. In time it may be appropriate for these to be supplemented by the restoration of a modest bilateral aid programme. There is no urgency to consider restoring clearances for arms sales.

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