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FM SAN JOSE 191900Z OCT 84

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 405 OF 19 OCTOBER 1984

INFO WASHINGTON, TEGUCIGALPA, MEXICO CITY, CARACAS, BOGOTA,
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EL SALVADOR: DUARTE /GUERRILLA TALKS

1. AT LUNCH WITH MYSELF AND OWEN, RUBEN ZAMORA GAVE FDR PERSPECTIVE ON LA PALMA MEETING. MAIN POINTS WERE:

(A) DUARTE'S PROPOSAL FOR TALKS, UNDOUBTEDLY WELL-INTENTIONED, HAD COME AS SURPRISE. HOWEVER, FDR HAD FOR 3 MONTHS BEEN HAVING BILATERAL CONTACTS WITH OFFICERS OF THE EL SALVADOR ARMY (DURING FIRST MONTH WITHOUT DUARTE'S KNOWLEDGE). THE ARMY AS WELL AS THE CHURCH HAD BEEN IMPORTANT INFLUENCES ON DUARTE.

(B) AT LA PALMA, OPENING POSITIONS ONLY HAD BEEN STAKED OUT. BUT ATMOSPHERE WAS GOOD AND BOTH FMLN AND FDR WERE HAPPY SO FAR.

(C) THE FACT THAT DUARTE HAD NOT TRIED TO ENTICE THE FDR TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MARCH ELECTIONS WAS MOST WELCOME. REASON FOR THIS WAS PROBABLY THAT DUARTE KNEW THAT IF LEFT TOOK PART, THEY WOULD DRAW VOTES AWAY FROM CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS.

(D) NEGOTIATIONS WOULD INEVITABLY BE PROTRACTED. FMLN/FDR PREFERRED BUILDING BLOCK APPROACH, TRYING TO FIND COMMON GROUND OVER MAJOR CONCERNS, RATHER THAN THE STAKING OUT OF DETAILED DEMANDS (AS THE GOVERNMENT SIDE HAD SET OUT BY DOING).

(E) GUERRILLAS WANTED NEXT ROUND TO BE IN SAN SALVADOR BUT WOULD LIKE VENUE TO BE KEPT SECRET FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE; CONCERN WAS OF COURSE SECURITY.

(F) ABSENCE OF COMANDANTE VILLALOBOS HAD REALLY BEEN FOR THE STATED REASON: HE COULD NOT GET, BY LAND, TO LA PALMA IN TIME.

(G) FMLN AND FDR WERE WORKING IN CLOSEST COLLABORATION, BUT ZAMORA CONCEDED THAT FMLN (UNLIKE FDR) VIEW OF POLITICAL PLURALISM DID NOT EASILY ADMIT POSSIBILITY OF ALTERNATION OF POWER AFTER REVOLUTIONARY SUCCESS.

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2. ZAMORA MAINTAINED THAT THE GOAL MUST BE TO ESTABLISH RULES OF THE GAME FOR EL SALVADOR WHICH WOULD BIND ALL PARTIES. DIVISIONS WERE GREAT, BUT THE CHURCH WAS A POWERFUL FORCE FOR CONCILIATION.

3. ZAMORA SAID THE SANDINISTAS WERE IN FAVOUR OF TALKS IN EL SALVADOR, EVEN THOUGH THIS WAS AWKWARD FOR THEM IN THE DOMESTIC NICARAGUAN CONTEXT.

SUMMERSCALE

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