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R 182128Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1001
INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
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~~C O N F I D E N T I A L~~ SECTION 1 OF 2 GUATEMALA 4230

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, GT
SUBJ: BACKGROUND FOR HUMAN RIGHTS SPEECHES: GUATEMALAN
PERCEPTIONS OF OUR POLICIES

REF: STATE 176956

1. GUATEMALAN OFFICIAL REACTION AND MUCH UNOFFICIAL OPINION,
TO THE EXTENT IT HAS FOUND EXPRESSION, HAS TENDED TO OPPOSE
U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT IS INTER-
VENTIONIST AND DOESN'T TAKE INTO ACCOUNT LEFTIST EXTREMISTS
WHO REFUSE TO PLAY BY THE RULES. THERE ARE SOME SIGNS THAT
THIS ATTITUDE MAY BE CHANGING SOMEWHAT.

2. THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT LEFT NO DOUBT THAT IT OPPOSED U.S.
HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY ON GROUNDS THAT IT COULD NOT ACCEPT UNI-
LATERAL JUDGMENT OF ITS ACTIONS. HOWEVER, THE LAUGERUD
ADMINISTRATION SUPPORTED THE PRINCIPLE OF COLLECTIVE MONITORING
OF HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE -- IT RATIFIED THE SAN JOSE CONVEN-
TION, SUPPORTED CREATION OF THE POST OF UN HUMAN RIGHTS HIGH
COMMISSIONER, AND ACCEPTED THE IDEA OF IAIRC ACTIVISM -- BUT
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LESS OUT OF CONVICTION THAN POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY. IT WENT SO
FAR AS TO PUBLICLY REJECT U.S. ASSISTANCE PREDICATED ON U.S.
REPORTING OF GUATEMALAN HUMAN RIGHTS BEHAVIOR, AND OFTEN

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ACCUSED THE USG (AND HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS WE SUPPORT) OF ADOPTING A DOUBLE STANDARD. NEVERTHELESS, "HUMAN RIGHTS" ENTERED THE GUATEMALAN POLITICAL LEXICON IN A MAJOR, IF OFTEN SUPERFICIAL OR SELF-SERVING, WAY.

3. ESTABLISHMENT REACTION HAS BEEN GENERALLY SIMILAR, THOUGH BY NO MEANS AS SOLID. IMPORTANT MEDIA, SUCH AS THE LARGE CIRCULATION NEWSPAPER PRENSA LIBRE, DENOUNCED THE US POSITION NOT ONLY AS INTERVENTIONIST BUT AS HYPOCRITICAL, CITING EXAMPLES OF WHAT IT CONSIDERED US VIOLATIONS. OTHERS, INCLUDING THE MILITARY BRASS, MAINTAINED IT WAS A SCREEN TO COVER OUR ALLEGED SUPPORT OF THE BRITISH POSITION ON BELIZE. EVEN LIBERALS WHO EMBRACE MOST ASPECTS OF OUR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY HAVE FROM TIME TO TIME ATTACKED US ON PARTICULARS (E.G., TYING IPI LOANS TO HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE). A PROMINENT CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT RECENTLY ARGUED PRIVATELY WITH US THAT FULL RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, HOWEVER COMMENDABLE IN THE ABSTRACT, IN GUATEMALA WOULD LEAD TO CHAOS. (THIS POSITION MAY NOT BE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DCG, AND IS CERTAINLY NOT THAT PARTY'S PUBLIC VIEW.) MOST OF THE MEDIA WAS, AND IS, UNSYMPATHETIC TO THE POLICY. THE FAR LEFT REGULARLY DENOUNCES IT AS A SHAM -- FINE WORDS BELIED BY THE ALLIANCE OF US BUSINESS INTERESTS, SUPPORTED BY THE USG, WITH THE MILITARY AND ECONOMIC PRESERVERS OF THE STATUS QUO. NO ONE ATTACKS "HUMAN RIGHTS." THE MLN INCORPORATES THE PHRASE IN SUPPORT OF ITS CONSERVATIVE OBJECTIVES; THE CARDINAL USES IT TO DECRY BIRTH CONTROL.

4. ONE THING COMES THROUGH RATHER CLEARLY. THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN SEEN LARGELY AS A CREATURE OF THE USG AND OF PRESIDENT CARTER. VENEZUELAN AND COSTA RICAN INITIATIVES

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ARE GENERALLY IGNORED, OR ASSUMED TO BE STIMULATED BY THE USG.

5. THE NEW LUCAS ADMINISTRATION HAS PUBLICLY COME OUT IN FAVOR OF HUMAN RIGHTS; THE VICE PRESIDENT HAS BEEN QUOTED IN THE US PRESS CLEARLY IN SYMPATHY WITH US HUMAN RIGHTS OBJECTIVES, AND THE PRESIDENT'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS TOOK CANDID ACCOUNT OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INEQUITIES, AND THE NEED TO REMEDY THEM UNDER THE RULE OF LAW. A RECENT REQUEST FOR RESUMPTION OF IMET INDICATES THAT THE MILITARY IS PREPARED TO SWALLOW PERCEIVED INTRUSIONS IN GUATEMALAN SOVEREIGNTY POSED BY OUR LINKAGE OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE. CURRENT INDICATIONS ARE THAT PRESIDENT LUCAS WANTS VERY MUCH TO HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE US AND WILL

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NOT BALK AT QUIETLY ACCEPTING ASSISTANCE TIED TO HUMAN RIGHTS REQUIREMENTS.

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6. THE LUCAS ADMINISTRATION HAS STARTED OFF AS IF IT HOPES TO AVOID CONFRONTATION WITH POLITICAL GROUPS WHICH COULD LEAD TO HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS OF THE MORE BLATANT SORT. PRESIDENT LUCAS, FOR EXAMPLE, MET WITH A MIXED (LARGELY COMMUNIST-INFLUENCED) COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE THE PANZOS MASSACRE. AFTER CAUTIONING THE GROUP TO EXERCISE GREAT CARE NOT TO STIR THINGS UP IN PANZOS, HE PROMISED THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH THEIR INVESTIGATION. AS LONG AS THIS MOOD PERSISTS, GOG REACTION TO BROAD US HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVES WILL PROBABLY BE ONE OF VERBAL SUPPORT. SHOULD LUCAS FIND IT NECESSARY TO GET TOUGH, AND THE ADMINISTRATION BEGIN TO SEE ITSELF AS A PARTICULAR TARGET, THE GUATEMALAN RESPONSE CAN BE EXPECTED TO SHIFT CORRESPONDINGLY. AS WE HAVE SAID IN OUR "GOALS AND OBJECTIVES" PAPER (GUATEMALAN A-34 OF APRIL 13, 1978), TO THE EXTENT WE GO BEYOND THE RECENT REPORT TO CONGRESS TO PUBLICIZE SPECIFICS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES COMING TO OUR ATTENTION, WE WOULD ENDANGER WHAT REMAINS OF OUR INFLUENCE WITH THE GOG ON OTHER MATTERS OF IMPORTANCE, INCLUDING THE CLIMATE FOR SETTLEMENT OF THE BELIZE PROBLEM.

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7. FINALLY, IT MAY BEAR RESTATING HERE THAT GUATEMALA FALLS
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INTO A HUMAN RIGHTS "GRAY AREA" WHICH DEFIES SIMPLE DESCRIPTION. CIVIL LIBERTIES AND POLITICAL RIGHTS ARE, FOR THE MOST PART, RESPECTED; THE PRESS IS FREER FROM INHIBITION THAN MOST. INDEED THE LAUGERUD ADMINISTRATION CAME UNDER HEAVY CRITICISM IN ITS LAST YEAR FOR REFRAINING FROM USING AVAILABLE LEGAL MEASURES AGAINST ILLEGAL STRIKES AND OTHER PROTEST MOVEMENTS. VIOLENT DEATH MAY BE A COMMONPLACE, AND IT IS TRUE THAT THE GOVERNMENT, AT A MINIMUM, HAS BEEN LESS THAN VIGOROUS IN COMING TO GRIPS WITH THE PHENOMENON OF UNEXPLAINED DISAPPEARANCES. BUT EVEN GOVERNMENT OPPONENTS FIND IT DIFFICULT TO SUBSTANTIATE MOST CHARGES OF DIRECT OFFICIAL CONNIVANCE IN REPRESSION. THIS LEADS MANY INFLUENTIAL GUATEMALANS, IN GOVERNMENT AND OUT, TO BECOME OUTRAGED AT SUGGESTIONS THAT THE GOG IS A SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATOR IN ANY TRADITIONAL SENSE. PANZOS, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAS MADE DEPLORING OF CAMPESINO PROBLEMS AND LAND TENURE INEQUITIES ALMOST RESPECTABLE IN THESE QUARTERS.
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