DECEPTIONED

SAN JOSE FOR AMBASSADOR WINSOR FROM NEGROPONTE

E.O. 12356: 12/31/99
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, CS
SUBJECT: THE MONGE STYLE: CONSENSUS NOT CONFRONTATION

REF: SAN JOSE 8772

1. ENTIRE TEXT.

2. READ WITH GREAT INTEREST YOUR MESSAGE ABOVE SUBJECT.

3. REGARDING PARA NINE, WE UNDERSTAND VARIOUS INTERESTS GOCR BELIEVES IT MUST BALANCE IN PURSUING ITS FOREIGN POLICY. AND WE UNDERSTAND WHAT MOTIVATES SUGGESTION IN FOURTH SENTENCE OF PARAGRAPH FOUR WHICH STATES QUOTE WE MUST REASSURE COSTA RICA'S FRIENDS THAT IT'S TACKING IS NOT DUE TO UNCERTAINTY BUT RATHER TO THE CONSENSUS STYLE OF THE PRESIDENT, WHO IS EVERY BIT A REALIST AND FRIEND OF THEIRS AND OURS, BUT WHO ALSO PERCEIVES A NEED TO MAINTAIN THE UNITY OF THE PLN PARTY AND TO SUSTAIN AN INDEPENDENT IMAGE IN THE EYES OF THE LESS COMMITTED POLITICAL ELEMENTS OF THE HEMISPHERE AND THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL. END QUOTE.

4. OUR ONLY COMMENT WOULD BE THAT THERE MAY BE WAYS IN WHICH COSTA RICA COULD AVOID GIVING THE IMPRESSION THAT THE WEIGHT IT ASSIGNS TO THESE VARIOUS INTERESTS ARE NOT OUT OF BALANCE. SURELY GOCR DOES NOT WANT TO PURSUE FRIENDSHIP WITH SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL TO EXCLUSION OF CENTRAL AMERICAN UNITY. MOST SPECIFICALLY, GOCR WOULD NOT WANT EL SALVADOR AND HONDURAS TO CONCLUDE THAT SOMEHOW GOCR BELIEVES IT CAN BUT LONG-TERM IMMUNITY FROM PROBLEMSPOSED BY NICARAGUA BY PUBLICLY DISTANCING ITSELF FROM EL SALVADOR AND/OR HONDURAN POLICIES. HONDURANS NEED REASSURANCE ON THIS SCORE, PERHAPS NOT SO MUCH FROM US AS YOU SUGGEST, BUT MORE LIKELY THROUGH SOME DIRECT DIPLOMACY WITH COSTA RICA ITSELF.
5. RECENT SELECTION OF A NEW COSTA RICAN FOREIGN MINISTER WOULD APPEAR TO OFFER AN OPPORTUNITY TO RESTORE HONDURAS/COSTA RICAN DIALOGUE TO STATUS QUO PRIOR TO VOLIÓS' DECLINING FORTUNES WITH GOCR. VOLIÓ WAS MUCH RESPECTED HERE AND HIS DECLINING INFLUENCE DURING PAST YEAR WAS SORELY LAMENTED BY GOCR. PERHAPS FOREIGN MINISTER GUTIÉRREZ COULD GET THINGS OFF TO A GOOD START BY CONSIDERING AN EARLY VISIT TO HONDURAS. THIS WOULD PERMIT HIM TO PERSONALLY EXPLAIN TO HIS HONDURAN COLLEAGUER THE VARIOUS TACTS OF COSTA RICA'S DIPLOMACY, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME SYMBOLICALLY REASSURING GOCR AND HONDURAN PUBLIC OF GOCR SOLIDARITY BY MERE FACT OF VISIT.

6. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, GOCR DOES NOT MAKE SOME SUCH GESTURE AND CONTINUES, FOR EXAMPLE, TO MAKE STATEMENTS WHICH ARE CONSTRUED HERE AS FURTHER SOFTENING GOCR STANCE ON NICARAGUA, (AS APPEARED TO BE CASE IN GUTIÉRREZ’ FIRST PUBLIC REMARKS DECEMBER 27) THEN ANY EXPLANATION USE-HIGHT MADE TO GOCR ABOUT STEADFASTNESS OF GOCR POLICIES WILL BE MET WITH DEEP SKEPTICISM.

7. WE RECOGNIZE GOCR DIPLOMACY DURING PAST YEAR COULD ALSO HAVE USED SOME BRUSHING UP OF ITS OWN. FOREIGN MINISTER HAS ALSO FOICUSED A LOT OF PERSONAL ATTENTION ON EUROPE, PROBABLY FOR MANY OF THE SAME CONSIDERATIONS THAT GOCR NURTURES RELATIONSHIP WITH SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL. PRESIDENT SUAZO DOESN'T CARE MUCH ABOUT FOREIGN RELATIONS OTHER THAN BILATERAL POLICIES TOWARDS U.S., NICARAGUA, AND EL SALVADOR. EVEN ON THOSE SUBJECTS, SUAZO HAS NOT DONE MUCH TO INVESTIGATE MATTERS. AND, AS A RESULT, REGIONAL RELATIONSHIPS, WHICH SHOULD ENJOY MUCH HIGHER PRIORITY HAVE BEEN RELEGATED TO A SECONDARY POSITION EXCEPT WHEN OBLIGED TO PAY ATTENTION BY CONTADORA PROCESS. THUS, IN ADDITION TO NEGLECTING AN ISSUE OF VITAL IMPORTANCE, OUR CENTRAL AMERICAN FRIENDS HAVE FAILED TO BUILD A BROAD BASE OF POLITICAL COOPERATION WHICH WOULD AS A

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Matter of course have they less vulnerable to some of the Contadora Four's more mischievous maneuvers. Perhaps this criticism is valid to some degree or other of every one of the core four countries. I think, in case of Honduras at least, the message is beginning to sink in and I view designation of highly respected Ambassador Roberto Galvez as Ambassador for Central American and Caribbean Affairs as a very positive, albeit belated, first step. Galvez has held a variety of top posts in this country for close to thirty years. This calm and low key style will go over well with the neighbors and perhaps his appointment will prompt similar designations in other Central American countries. Let's hope it is not "a day late and a dollar short." - Negroponte