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AN
NORTH AMERICAN DEPARTMENT

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1948

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FROM Mr. Steptoe,
San Salvador.
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Next Paper.

AN 4351

AN 3657

Desire of Salvadorean President for permission to absent himself from his post or country at any time indicated by him; Proposed Conference of American Presidents.

Wide publicity has been given to the President's request to the Legislative Assembly to be allowed to absent himself from his post, or from the country at any time. The only reason given was that he desires to cross anew bridge on the El Salvador/Guatemalan frontier.

Reports rumours of Presidential Conference, of which President denies official knowledge. Copied Washington, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama.

The President's bi-partisan attitude described in para 3 is interesting if sincere in view of his previously reported remarks on the desirability of his remaining in office to further the cause of C.A. unity. The gang-up of El Salvador, Honduras & Nicaragua with Guatemala & Costa Rica remaining outside any agreement is a logical development of recent history.

President Castro's term of office expires on 15th March 1949.

J. Falle
10/12.

~~C.L. Dept.~~
L.A.I.D.
F.O.R.D. 27/11

I regret that this & attached pp were not sent to you before. The information has been overtaken by events but may be useful for background.

10/12/48

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No. 107.

HNS/FH

BRITISH LEGATION,

SAN SALVADOR,

4322 20th November, 1948.

Sir,

I have the honour to report that, according to the local press the President of this Republic on November 17th sought permission from the Legislative Assembly to absent himself from his post, and to leave the country at any time indicated by him, and for as long as he may deem it necessary in order that he may be able, in his character as chief executive of the Republic, to deal with certain questions which will be discussed outside this Republic. The Legislative Assembly gave the desired permission by decree on November 19th stating that the President was free to leave the country at any time between the date of publication of the decree in the Diario Oficial and December 31st, 1948.

The wide publicity given to the President's request has excited no little curiosity and the President himself has been very responsive in replies to questions put to him privately by various members of the Diplomatic Body as to his real reason for seeking this permission. In conversation with the American Ambassador he dismissed the matter as a huge joke, and stated that he had merely sought permission to leave the country as he was very anxious to inspect and cross a new bridge over the Rio de Paz on the El Salvador/Guatemalan frontier. The actual crossing of the bridge would take him out of El Salvador territory and being a very constitutional "mandatario" he thought it much better to ask the formal consent of the Legislative Assembly! The President also dismissed in a very light hearted way the seriousness with which the local press had treated his request to the Assembly, but he refused an answer to the direct question put to him whether he had issued invitations to a conference of the Presidents of the five Central American Republics to discuss Central American unity and whether he had so far received any acceptances.

3. In a press interview which was published in the Presidents own paper "El Nacional" he stated that while he had no official knowledge of any such meeting, he would attend if it were found possible to arrange it, no matter where it was held. He went so far as to suggest that the Presidential candidates, if it were possible to issue invitations to them, should also attend the Conference of Presidents on the grounds that any negotiations towards general unity and a real understanding of present Central American questions needed the presence of representatives of various social circles. In editorial comment in the same newspaper the view expressed by the President on this particular point was further elaborated, and he is reported as having said "Without these elements no really democratic formula can be evolved. Moreover by attending they will be morally compromised for the future before the peoples they represent".

4. It is therefore difficult to say whether the President has himself attempted to arrange a conference

The Rt. Hon. Ernest Bevin, M.P.,
etc., etc., etc.,
Foreign Office,
S.W.1.

of

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BRITISH LEGATION
SAN SALVADOR

No. 107
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of Presidents or whether a similar suggestion has been made to him by the Presidents of Honduras or Nicaragua. Agency messages from Guatemala and Costa Rica indicate that neither President Arevalo nor General Figueres have any official knowledge of the alleged conference; neither have they received invitations to attend. A Chicago message quoted by the Guatemalan correspondent of the local press states, however, that the conference is to be held at Amagala in the Gulf of Fonseca and will be attended only by the Presidents of El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua.

It is stated that the date is free to leave the country at any time between the 15th and 15th. Rumours have been current for some time past that efforts were being made to bring about a meeting of the heads of the five Republics but no one has paid serious attention to them. The best informed local opinion still regards Central American unity as a distant dream and a meeting of the Presidents is held to result in no more than empty promises which will be quickly forgotten in the relations between Guatemala and Nicaragua and Costa Rica in particular.

Very anxious to inspect and cross a new bridge over the Rio San Antonio, a meeting of this sort is expected to H.M. Ambassador at Washington and to Mr. Mikoyan in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. "mandarino" he thought it much better to ask the formal consent of the Legislative Assembly. The President also dismissed in a very light hearted way the seriousness of the situation. I have the honour to be, with the highest respect, Sir, your most obedient, humble servant,

[Signature]

8. In a press interview which was published in the President's own paper "El Nacional" he stated that while he had no official knowledge of any such meeting, he would attend it if it were found possible to arrange it, no matter where it was held. He went so far as to suggest that the Presidential candidates, if it were possible to issue invitations to them, should also attend the Conference of Presidents on the grounds that any negotiations towards general unity and a real understanding of present Central American questions needed the presence of representatives of various social circles. In editorial comment in the same newspaper the view expressed by the President on this particular point was further elaborated, and he is reported as having said "Without these elements no really democratic formula can be evolved. Moreover by attending they will be morally compromised for the future before the people they represent."

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