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RELEASE IN FULL

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ACTION ARA-15

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
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REVIEW AUTHORITY: Richard Zorn,  
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FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN  
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INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN  
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON  
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO  
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

SECRET SECTION 1 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 2004

E.O. 12065: GDS 4/29/86 (DWYER, RICHARD A.) OR-M  
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, GY  
SUBJ: INTERVIEW WITH WORKING PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE LEADER,  
DR. WALTER RODNEY

1. (S) SUMMARY: WORKING PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE LEADER DR. WALTER RODNEY CLAIMED U.S. ASSISTANCE TO GUYANA ENABLED THE GOG TO DIVERT FUNDS FROM THE SOCIAL SECTOR TO PURCHASE TECHNICAL SURVEILLANCE EQUIPMENT FOR USE AGAINST OPPOSITION GROUPS. HE DESCRIBED GUYANA AS AN ANOMALY BETWEEN BARBADOS ON THE ONE HAND, WHERE THE U.S. APPROVED OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICE, FISCAL POLICY, AND DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE, AND GRENADA ON THE OTHER, WHERE THE U.S. CRITICIZED SHORTCOMINGS IN THE SAME AREAS. HE REITERATED THAT THE WPA WOULD RETALIATE WITH TERRORISM IF PROVOKED BY THE GOG. UPCOMING ARSON TRIALS INVOLVING HIMSELF AND TWO OTHER WPA ACTIVISTS WOULD BE OBSERVED BY A NUMBER OF PROMINENT FOREIGN LAWYERS, SAID RODNEY. THE EXODUS OF CUBAN REFUGEES DID NOT NECESSARILY INDICATE TO HIM THAT THE CUBAN ECONOMIC MODEL HAD FAILED. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE WPA AND GRENADA'S BISHOP REGIME WERE DESCRIBED AS QUITE GOOD. RODNEY, HOWEVER, SEEMED NOT TO HAVE FOCUSED ON  
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SURINAME. END SUMMARY.

2. (S) EMBOFF MET WORKING PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE (WPA) LEADER DR. WALTER RODNEY FOR LUNCH ON 24 APRIL 1980. THE EMBASSY HAD NOT BEEN IN TOUCH WITH RODNEY SINCE HIS INTERVIEW WITH THE AMBASSADOR ON JANUARY 15. RODNEY WAS IN GOOD SPIRITS DESPITE HIS APPROACHING ARSON TRIAL. IN ADDITION TO HIS ORGANIZATIONAL WORK WITH THE WPA, RODNEY HAS BEEN ACTIVE ON THE ACADEMIC FRONT, HAVING RECENTLY COMPLETED A BOOK ON CARIBBEAN HISTORY WHICH IS TO BE PUBLISHED BY THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS, AND HAS EDITED SEVERAL

PAPERS FOR PUBLICATION ON THE SUGAR INDUSTRY. RODNEY COMPLAINED THAT RESEARCH WAS DIFFICULT IN GUYANA EVEN IF ONE HAD ACCESS TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GUYANA LIBRARY, WHICH HE DID NOT. HE FELT IT IMPORTANT TO DEMONSTRATE THAT HE COULD CONTINUE TO BE PRODUCTIVE ACADEMICALLY IN SPITE OF HIS POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AND THE REPRESSION BEING DIRECTED AT HIM BY THE GUYANESE GOVERNMENT (GOG).

3. (S) DESPITE HEAVY PRESSURE FROM GOVERNMENT SECURITY FORCES, THE WPA HAD MADE GOOD PROGRESS IN ORGANIZING ITSELF AT THE BASE LEVEL, SAID RODNEY. PARTY SUPPORTERS COULD NOT MEET OPENLY THE WAY THEY HAD A YEAR AGO AND PARTY LEADERS WERE STILL SUBJECT TO ARREST EVERY TIME THEY LEFT THE GEORGETOWN AREA, BUT HIS HAD NOT STOPPED PARTY ACTIVITY. RODNEY CLAIMED INFORMATION WHICH IMPLICATED THE GOG IN WIDESPREAD TECHNICAL SURVEILLANCE OF PARTY ACTIVISTS. SOME WPA ACTIVISTS SUSPECTED THAT THE USG HAD SUBSIDIZED THE PURCHASE OF THIS SURVEILLANCE EQUIPMENT, RODNEY REPORTED.

4. (S) EMBOFF COUNTERED THAT THE USG HAD NOT BEEN INVOLVED IN ANY WAY IN THE EQUIPMENT PURCHASE. THE EMBASSY HAD ALSO RECEIVED REPORTS OF THE EXISTENCE OF THIS EQUIPMENT AND HAD HEARD ALLEGATIONS THAT THE USG HAD FUNDED THE PURCHASE. EMBOFF  
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EXPRESSED REGRET THAT ANYONE WOULD FALL FOR SUCH MISINFORMATION WHEN, IN FACT, THE USG HAD NOT CONSIDERED AND WOULD NOT CONSIDER FURNISHING TECHNICAL SURVEILLANCE EQUIPMENT TO GUYANA FOR POSSIBLE USE IN HE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. MOREOVER, THE USG HAD NOT PROVIDED THE GOG WITH MILITARY EQUIPMENT. RODNEY SAID THAT HE WAS WILLING TO ACCEPT EMBOFF'S WORD ON THE MATTER, HOWEVER, WHETHER THE EQUIPMENT HAD BEEN FURNISHED OR NOT WAS OF LITTLE IMPORT WHEN USAID ASSISTANCE TO GUYANA ENABLED THE GOG TO SHIFT RESOURCES FROM THE SOCIAL SECTOR TO INTERNAL SECURITY, RODNEY NOTED.

5. (S) EMBOFF POINTED OUT THAT GOVERNMENTS SELDOM STINTED ON EXPENDITURES WHICH THEY CONSIDERED NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN THEMSELVES IN POWER. WHETHER THE GOG OBTAINED FOREIGN ASSISTANCE OR NOT, MONEY WOULD LIKELY HAVE BEEN SPENT ON THE SURVEILLANCE ITEMS. AT ANY RATE, USAID PROGRAMS WERE AIMED AT THE POOREST OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND THEIR OBJECTIVES WERE TO EASE THE CONDITIONS OF THE POOREST, USUALLY RURAL SECTOR, WHICH HAD BEEN HISTORICALLY IGNORED. IN EVERY SUCH COUNTRY, THERE WAS ONE OR MORE ASPIRING POLITICAL GROUPS WHICH MADE THE SAME ARGUMENTAS HE, RODNEY. IF THE USG WERE TO ACCEPT THAT ARGUMENT AS VALID, IT WOULD BE FORCED TO CLOSE DOWN AID PROGRAMS WORLDWIDE.

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; (S) RODNEY THEN MOVED THE SOUBJECT TO RECENT STATEMENTS OF U.S. POLICY IN THE CARIBBEAN. HE NOTED THAT USG SPOKESMAN

HAD HEAPED PRAISE ON THE GOVERNMENT OF BARBODOS FOR ITS RESPONSIBLE FISCAL POLICY, DEMOCRATIC PROCEDURES, AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. AT THE SAME TIME, THE PRG OF GRENADA HAD BEEN LAMBASTED FOR VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FAILURE TO HOLD ELECTIONS, AMONG OTHER THINGS. HE DID NOT TAKE ISSUE WITH THOSE STATEMENTS BUT WONDERED WHERE GUYANA FIT IN BETWEEN BARBADOS AND BRENADA. GUYANA DID NOT HOLD HONEST ELECTIONS, GUYANA VIOLATED HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GUYANA WAS FISCALLY IRRESPONSIBLE, BUT NO STATEMENTS HAD BEEN FORTHCOMING FROM  
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U.S. OFFICIALS COMPARING GUYANA TO GRENADA. WHERE THEN DID GUYANA FIT IN? GUYANA WAS AN ANOMALY, HE CONCLUDED.

7. (S) RODNEY ALSO WANTED TO KNOW WHY THE IMF HAD PLACED SUCH STRINGENT REQUIREMENTS ON JAMAICA BUT HAD BEEN SO LENIENT WITH GUYANA? AFTER ALL, SAY WHAT YOU WOULD ABOUT PRIME MINISTER MICHAEL MANLEY, JAMAICA WAS STILL A PRACTICING DEMOCRACY. EMBOFF POINTED OUT THAT GUYANA HAD DONE A MUCH BETTER JOB MEETING IMF GUIDELINES THAN HAD JAMAICA. BESIDES, THE DECISION TO DROP THE IMF WAS ONE THAT HAD LONG BEEN SOUGHT

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BY LEFTIST MEMBERS OF THE PNP NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

REGARDLESS OF THE STRINGENCY OF THE IMF GUIDELINES.

8. (S) THE SUBJECT OF TERRORISM CAME UP WHEN EMBOFF REMINDED RODNEY THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF IT HAD BEEN MENTIONED AT THEIR LAST MEETING. RODNEY REITERATED THAT THE WPA HAD THE CAPABILITY AND THE WILL TO DEFEND ITSELF SHOULD THE GOG PHYSICALLY ELIMINATE A WPA LEADER. HE ADDED THAT TIF THE GOG OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACT WAS SO WELL PROTECTED THAT THE WPA COULD NOT RETALIATE AGAINST HIM, THE VICTIOM MIGHT BE A RANDOMLY SELECTED POLICEMAN WHO REALLY HAD NO PART IN THE ISSUE. EMBOFF OBSERVED THAT OPPOSITION PARTIES WHO WERE HARD-PRESSED AND FRUSTRATED BY GOVERNMENT REPRESSION OFTERN TURNED TO EASY TARGETS LIKE THE CONVENIENT BEAT COP OR A FOREIGN DIPLOMAT, NEITHER OF WHOM HAD A STAKE IN THE CONFRONTATION.

9. (S) RODNEY WAS ASKED WHETHER HE FORESAW THE POSSIBILITY OF TERRORISM DIRECTED AT FOREIGN DIPLOMATS? HE REPLIED THAT HE FORESAW NO SHORT-TERM THREAT BECAUSE SUCH BEHAVIOR WAS ALIEN TO THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF GUYANESE. THE MASSES WOULD NOT  
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TAKE KINDLY TTO THE DEATH OF INNOCENT VICTIMS. SUCH TACTICS WOULD BE SELF-DEFEATING.

10. (S) COMMENT: DESPITE POINTING UP GUYANESE DISTASTE FOR TERRORISM DIRECTED AT INNOCENT VICTIMS, RODNEY ADDRESSED HIMSELF ONLY TO THE SHORT-TERM PROSPECTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST FOREIGN DIPLOMATS AND WOULD NOT COMMENT ON THE LONG-TERM PROSPECTS. THIS MAY HAVE BEEN A NOT SO SUBTLE PLOY TO GIVE U.S. POLICY MAKERS PAUSE IN ALLOCATING FUTURE ASSISTANCE TO GUYANA. RODNEY'S FAVORABLE (TO THE U.S.) COMMENT ABOUT THE IRANIAN HOSTAGE SITUATION AND THE NECESSITY, AS HE SAW IT, FOR MAINTAINING A STABLE ATMOSPHER FOR DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, SUGGESTED THAT HE WOULD NOT HAVE MUCH STOMACH FOR TERRORISM DIRECTED AT DIPLOMATS. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE MAY HAVE ONLY BEEN SUGGESTING THAT HE COULD NOT SPEAK FOR THE LONG-TERM TENDENCIES OF THE MORE RADICAL WPA MEMBERS.

11. (S) THE UPCOMING ARSON TRIALS OF DR. OMAWALE, AKA DR. WALTER GREEN, DR. RUPERT ROOPNARINE, AND HIMSELF, RODNEY, WERE COMENTED ON BRIEFLY. RODNEY AVERRED THAT WHETHER THE THREE OF THEM WERE GUILTY OF BURNING THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BUILDING OR NOT, GOVERNMENT EVIDENCE WAS SO SHODDY THAT IT COULD NOT CONVICT ANYONE IN A FAIR TRIAL. UNFORTUNATELY, SOME WITNESSES WERE LYING, WHICH COMPLICATED MATTERS, BUT IN SPIE OF THIS, GOG EFFORTS TO GET AROUND LEGALITIES WOULD MAKE THE PROCEDURE NULL AND VOID. ON THE DATE OF THE TRIAL, PROMINENT LAWYERS FROM THROUGHOUT THE CARIBBEAN WOULD BE IN ATTENDANCE AND WOULD MAKE AN ISSUE OF THE PROCEDURE IF IT DID NOT CONFORM TO ACCEPTED LEGAL PRACTICE.

12. (S) ON THE SUBJECT OF CUBA, RODNEY WAS RATHER UNCOMFORTABLE

BUT MADE A HALF-HEARTED EFFORT TO DEFEND THE CUBAN ECONOMIC MODEL. HE DID NOT THINK THAT THE CUBAN MODEL HAD NECESSARILY  
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FAILED; NOT YET AT LEAST. HE COMPARED THE INVASION OF THE PERUVIAN EMBASSY TO THE MASS MIGRATION OF PUERTO RICANS PRECISELY AT THE TIME WHEN PUERTO RICO WAS ACCOMPLISHING ITS SO-CALLED ECONOMIC MIRACLE. EMBOFF POINTED OUT THAT THE CASES WERE NOT SIMILAR. THE CUBAN ECONOMY HAD CLEARLY FAILED DESPITE A GENERATION OF SACRIFICE AND SOVIET SUBSIDIZATION OF ABOUT 25 PERCENT OF CUBA'S GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT. RODNEY TRIED TO MAINTAIN HIS POSITION BY SAYING THAT THE CUBAN REFUGEE PROBLEM WAS NOT SO IMPORTANT AS WHETHER CUBA COULD MANAGE TO FREE ITSELF OF THE SOVIET YOKE.

13. (S) RODNEY DESCRIBED THE WPA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BISHOP REGIME IN GRENADA AS QUITE GOOD. HE HAPPILY POINTED TO THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WARM RECEPTION THE PRG GAVE WPA REPRESENTATIVES TO THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION WHILE GOG REPRESENTATIVES WERE LARGELY IGNORED.

14. (S) AS TO SURINAME, RODNEY DID NOT APPEAR TO BE WELL INFORMED AS TO THE PLAYERS. HE DESCRIBED THE REASONS FOR THE COUP AS "RATHER SPECIOUS". THE WPA HAD HAD LONG-STANDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH ROBIN "DOBRU" RAVALES AND THE ECONOMIC ADVISOR TO THE NMC, WHOSE NAME HE COULD NOT REMEMBER. EDWARD BRUMA, WHOSE NAME HE PRONOUNCED INCORRECTLY, WAS SUSPECTED OF MALFEASANCE IN OFFICE, APART FROM THE FACT THAT BRUMA WAS FRIENDLY WITH BURNHAM. THE NET IMPRESSION WAS THAT RODNEY HAD NOT FOCUSED ON SURINAME. HE DID TAKE THE TIME, HOWEVER, TO DESCRIBE THE DUTCH "GOLDEN HANDSHAKE" AS MERELY AN ACT WHICH ENRICHED ABOUT SIX LEADING SURINAMESE FAMILIES UNDER THE AARON ADMINISTRATION. AS FAR AS DEVELOPMENT WAS CONCERNED, RODNEY CLAIMED THE AID PACKAGE DID NOT HELP SURINAME IN THE LEAST.  
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