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RELEASE IN FULL

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ACTION ARA-15

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AID-07 EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /085 W
-----093284 170203Z /64

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Richard Zorn,
Senior Reviewer

R 121422Z MAY 80
FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2466
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 2212

E.O. 12065: GDS 5/9/86 (DWYER, RICHARD A.) OR-M
TAGS: PINT, GY
SUBJECT: SPRINGTIME POLITICS-NOTABLE FOR THEIR ABSENCE

1. (C-ENTIRE TEXT)

2. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE PREVAILING POLITICAL TRANQUILITY IN GUYANA IS A CAUSE OF GENERAL COMMENT. THE PRIME MINISTER IS SUFFICIENTLY AT EASE TO SPEND ELEVEN DAYS OUT OF THE COUNTRY, BUT HE HAS NOT YET PROMULGATED THE MUCH TOUTED NEW CONSTITUTION OR SET A DATE FOR NATIONAL ELECTIONS. THE OPPOSITION IS ALMOST EQUALLY BECALMED, ALTHOUGH ONE SEGMENT TALKS OF TERRORISM SHOULD ITS LEADERS, AS EXPECTED, BE FOUND GUILTY OF POLITICALLY MOTIVATED ARSON. SWEEPING CABINET CHANGES ARE RUMORED, AND THEY WOULD IN FACT NOT BE SURPRISING. CRIMINAL VIOLENCE, AND THE INCREASING USE OF FORCE BY POLICE TO COUNTER IT, ARE ON THE UPSWING. THE POLITICAL CALM IS FRAGILE, HOWEVER, AND CONFRONTATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT, PEACEFUL OR VIOLENT, MAY WELL CENTER ABOUT NATIONAL ELECTIONS WHEN ONCE A DATE IS SET. END SUMMARY.

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3. THE RULING PEOPLES NATIONAL CONGRESS (PNC) APPEARS TO STILL BE RECOVERING FROM ITS ALL OUT AND GENERALLY SUCCESSFUL CELEBRATION OF THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REPUBLIC LAST FEBRUARY (GEORGETOWN 0752). BOTH PRO- AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT OBSERVERS SUGGEST THIS MAY BE ONE FACTOR FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S RECENT LACK OF POLITICAL INITIATIVE, WHICH HAS BEEELY NOTED. GUYANA WAS TRANQUIL POLITICALLY DURING PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM'S LATE APRIL ELEVEN DAY AFRICAN TOUR. THE PRIME MINISTER'S

MAY DAY SPEECH CONCENTRATED ON ECONOMIC ISSUES, SAVE FOR ONE COMMENT THAT SHOULD THE GUYANESE PEOPLE CHOOSE TO BELIEVE THE "LIARS" WHO SHOUT THAT INCREASED SALARIES AND CONSUMPTION ARE COMPATIBLE WITH INCREASED PRODUCTION, THE VOTERS COULD THROW HIM OUT OF OFFICE AT THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS (GEORGETOWN 2078). BURNHAM DID NOT MENTION, HOWEVER, WHEN THE NEW CONSTITUTION WOULD BE PROMULGATED SO THAT THESE ELECTIONS MAY BE HELD.

4. ONE CREDIBLE THEORY WHICH A REASONBALBY GOOD SOURCE ATTRIBUTES DIRECTLY TO THE PRIME MINISTER IS THAT THE NEW CONSTITUTION WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY MAJOR CABINET CHANGES WHICH HAVE AS YET NOT BEEN FULLY WORKED OUT. DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER REID, MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS MINGO, MINISTER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HOYTE, AND MINISTER OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT NARAIN ARE SAID TO DISIRE TO RETIRE, ACCORDING TO THIS THEORY. MINISTER OF HEALTH, HOUSING AND LABOR GREEN ON THE OTHE HAND, WOULD BE DISMISSED. HOYTE AND PARTICULARLY MINGO AND NARAIN HAVE HAD RECENT SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEMS, WHILE THE PROLONGED ILLNESS OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER REID'S WIFE IS KNOWN TO BE A CAUSE OF CONCERN TO HIM. HAMILTON GREEN, HOWEVER, EXUDES YOUTHFUL HEALTH, ENERGY, AND OVERWEENING AMBITION.
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5. RUMORS OF GREEN'S REPLACEMENT HAVE ABOUNDED FOR MORE THAN TWO YEARS. HIS DISMISSAL WITHOUT APPOINTMENT TO ANOTHER POST OF EQUAL STATURE WOULD BE STARTLING, ESPECIALLY AS GREEN IS GENERALLY BELIEVED TO HAVE AT HIS DISPOSAL A GROUP OF PNC TOUGHS PERSONALLY LOYAL TO HIM. BUT OVERALL, FORBES BURNHAM SEEMS CONFIDENTLY, EVEN ARROGANTLY IN CONTROL, AND HE REMAINS THE ONLY INDIVIDUAL WHO MAKES THE IMPORTNT DECISIONS.

6. THE OPPOSITION HAS CONFINED ITS PUBLIC ACTIVITIES TO DENUNCIATIONS OF PNC-SPONSORED LATION MODIFYING JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS (GEORGETOWN 1536) AND THE PNC'S AUSTERE BUT PROBABLY OVERLY OPTIMISTIC BUDGET (GEROGETOWN A-6). THE MOSCOW-ORIENTED PEOPLES PROGRESSIVE PARTY (PPP), RESOUNDINGLY OUTMANEUVERED IN LAST YEAR'S MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS (79 GEORGETOWN 1977), OPTED THIS YEAR TO FOREGO PARTICIPATION IN THE TRADE UNION COUNCIL SPONSORED CELEBRATIONS IN FAVOR OF ITS OWN FESTIVITIES IN NINE RURAL AREAS WHERE IT IS POLITICALLY STRONG.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 2212

7. THE WORKING PEOPLES ALLIANCE (WPA), ONE OF WHOSE LEADERS, KWAME APATA, WAS SENTENCED APRIL 28 TO TEN MONTHS IN JAIL FOR THE ILLEGAL POSSESSION OF A PISTON AND SIX ROUNDS OF AMMUNITION, IS GIRDING ITSELF FOR THE SUMMARY TRIAL IN EARLY JUNE OF THREE OF ITS SENIOR LEADERS (WALTER RODNEY, OMAWALE, AND RUPERT ROOPNARINE). THEY ARE ACCUSED OF ARSON IN THE JULY 1978 BURNING OF THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PNC PARTY HEAD-QUARTERS. ALTHOUGH THE WPA MAINTAINS THAT WHAT LITTLE CASE THE GOVERNMENT HAS WILL BE BASED UPON THE PERJURY OF GOVERNMENT WITNESSES AND THAT OUTSIDE LEGAL OBSERVERS, INCLUDING AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, WILL BE IN ATTENDANCE, WPA MEMBERS ARE PROBABLY NOT SANGUINE ABOUT THE CHANCES OF AN ACQUITTAL. INDEED, THE WPA LEADERSHIP IS REPORTED TO BE DISCUSSING POSSIBLE REACTIONS TO A VERDICT OF GUILTY, WHICH THEY WOULD INTERPRET AS GOVERNMENT PERSECUTION. TERRORISM IS AMONG THE POSSIBLE REACTIONS DISCUSSED (GEORGETOWN 2004). THE MORE RADICAL WPA SENTIMENTS APPEAR TO BE REFLECTED IN AN UNATTRIBUTED MIMEOGRAPHED SHEET CALLED "MAYDAY" WHICH APPEARED FOR THE FIRST TIME ON MAY 1. MAYDAY PREACHED THE FORMATION

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OF CLANDESTINE CELLS AMONG THE WORKERS, WHO WERE URGED TO ORGANIZE TO UNDERTAKE ECONOMIC SABOTAGE FOR THE PURPOSE OF OVERTHROWING THE BURNHAM GOVERNMENT

8. VIOLENT CRIME, SOME OF WHICH MAY HAVE POLITICAL ORIGINS, IS AN INCREASINGLY SERIOUS PROBLEM IN GUYANA. ROBBERIES ARE NOW BEING CONDUCTED WITH AUTOMATIC WEAPONS. THE INCIDENCE OF MURDER HAS INCREASED ALARMLY. POLICE

REACTION HAS ALSO BEEN INCREASINGLY FORCEFUL, AND IT HAS INCLUDED SWEEPS SUCH AS THAT WHICH SAW THE ARREST OF 154 "LIMERS" (I.E., IDLERS) IN BERBICE TWO WEEK-ENDS AGO. MORE DISTURBING, HOWEVER, IS THE DEFINITE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF SUSPECTS KILLED BY THE POLICE IN THE COURSE OF ARREST. SPORADIC BURNINGS OF SUGAR CANE ARE BEING ATTRIBUTED TO WPA AND PPP SABOTAGE BY THE GOVERNMENT, ALTHOUGH SUGAR COMPANY SECURITY OFFICIALS ARE INCLINED TO DOWNPLAY THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE INCIDENTS. (THE LATTER NOTE THAT THE BURNINGS HAVE NOT SERIOUSLY AFFECTED PRODUCTION AND THAT BURNINGS AT THIS TIME OF YEAR ARE NOT UNEXPECTED AS WORKERS ATTEMPT TO PROLONG THE GRINDING SEASON AND HENCE THEIR SEASONAL EMPLOYMENT.)

9. THE AVERAGE HARASSED GUYANESE NOTHELESS TAKES SOME SATISFACTION IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THE JAMAICANS ARE ACHIEVING A MORE RAPID NEGATIVE GROWTH RATE, THAT THE OIL RICH TRINIDADIANs ARE DOING NO BETTER WITH REGARD TO ELECTRICITY, WATER, AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE PROBLEMS, AND THAT WHILE CUBANS ARE FLEEING THEIR ISLAND IN SMALL CRAFT ACROSS OPEN SEAS, THE GUYANESE FOR THE MOST PART CAN STILL, WITH A LITTLE LUCK OR FRAUD IN THE MATTER OF VISAS, LEAVE FREELY BY PAN AMERICAN. THUS IT MAY BE THAT THE SPECTACLE OF OTHERS AS BADLY OFF OR WORSE, SOME OF WHOM ARE NEIGHBORS, MAY HELP ACCOUNT FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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THE RELATIVE TRANQUILITY OF RECENT GUYANESE POLITICS.

9. IN SUM, GUYANA FOR THE MOEMENT IS CALM POLITICALLY. IT IS A GRAGILE CALMNESS, HOWEVER, WHICH COULD EASILY BE BROKEN BY ANY ONE OF A VARIETY OF FACTORS. NATIONAL ELECTIONS, WHEN ONCE SCHEDULED, WOULD SEEM TO BE THE MOST NATURAL FOCUS OF CONFRONTATION WITH THERNMENT, EITHER PEACEFUL OF VIOLENT. IN THE INTERIM, TRADITIONAL GUYANESE POLITICAL APATHY IS WEARING SOMEWHAT THIN. ROBERTS

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