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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: OTRA, OREP, PREL, PGOV, CE (GALBRAITH, PETER)
SUBJECT: SENATE STAFF (PETER GALBRAITH) VISIT TO
SRI LANKA

REF: COLOMBO 902

1. CONFIDENTIAL-ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE STAFFER PETER GALBRAITH HAD A USEFUL AND STIMULATING VISIT TO SRI LANKA FEBRUARY 6-10. HE HEARD GENERALLY COMPATIBLE AND CONSTRUCTIVE ANALYSES OF THE PEACE PROCESS UNDER THE JULY 29 ACCORDS FROM PRESIDENT JAYEWARDENE AND INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER DIXIT, THE PRINCIPAL ACTORS ON THIS MATTER IN COLOMBO. MEETINGS WITH LEADING UNP FIGURES AND SLFP LEADERS SIRIMAVO AND ANURA BANDARANAIKE PROVIDED FURTHER SINHALESE VIEWS ON THIS SUBJECT AND ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION, AS DID DISCUSSIONS WITH SMALL PARTY LEADERS: VIJAYA KUMARATUNGA OF THE SLMP, A.C. GOONERATNE AND RUKMAN SENANAYAKE OF THE ELUP, AND RAJIVA WIJESINHA OF THE LIBERAL PARTY. THE TAMIL POINT OF VIEW WAS PRESENTED BY KUMAR PONNAMBALAM OF THE TAMIL CONGRESS, YOGENDRA DURAISWAMY OF THE COUNCIL OF HINDU ORGANIZATIONS, AND BALA TAMPOE OF THE CEYLON MERCANTILE (LABOR) UNION. GALBRAITH ALSO SPOKE BRIEFLY TO MR. P. SOOSAITHASAN OF THE TULF. FEBRUARY 10 WAS SPENT IN JAFFNA WITH SRI LANKAN AND INDIAN MILITARY LEADERS TO SEE THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND. END SUMMARY.

3. CONVERSATION WITH DIXIT WAS REPORTED REFTEL. PRESIDENT JAYEWARDENE BEGAN HIS FEBRUARY 9 MEETING WITH WARM GOOD WORDS ABOUT INDIAN PRIME MINISTER RAJIV GANDHI, WHOM HE HAD JUST SEEN IN NEW DELHI. J.R. CONTRASTED THE PROGRESS NOW BEING MADE WITH THE TUMULTUOUS AND CONFUSED PRE-JULY 29 SITUATION (WHEN HE SAID, HE HAD TWICE ORDERED HIS FORCES TO TAKE JAFFNA--"BURN THE PLACE TO THE GROUND"--AND THEY HAD TALKED HIM OUT OF IT ON THE GROUNDS OF UNACCEPTABLY HIGH CASUALTIES). HE MADE CLEAR THAT HE SHARED THE GOI'S IMPLACABLE HOSTILITY TOWARD PRABAKARAN CALLING THE LTTE LEADER "A MAD FELLOW." HE STRESSED, THOUGH WITHOUT OBVIOUS BITTERNESS, THAT NONE OF HIS OUTSIDE FRIENDS WOULD HELP HIM, SO HE HAD HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO MAKE A DEAL WITH INDIA. HE SAID HE WAS PROUD OF NOT HAVING LOST THE

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INITIATIVE IN LEADING HIS COUNTRY AND ASKED GALBRAITH TO MAKE CLEAR TO THE CONGRESS THAT HE WAS "DOING THE BEST HE COULD." HE WAS SPECIFIC IN HIS COMMENT THAT THERE WOULD BE PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS IN A FEW MONTHS, ALTHOUGH HE DID MENTION THE POSSIBILITY OF HOLDING THEM IN SEVEN (I.E., THE SINHALESE) PROVINCES BEFORE THE OTHER TWO (I.E., TAMIL). ON PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN SRI LANKA, HE WAS MORE EVASIVE, INSISTING SIMPLY THAT HE HAD NOT YET DETERMINED WHAT TIMING WOULD BE BEST.

4. J.R.'S VIEWS WERE GENERALLY ECHOED IN MEETINGS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER SHAHUL HAMEED AND MAHAWELI MINISTER GAMINI DISSANAYAKE. THE FOREIGN MINISTER VOLUNTEERED THAT HE WAS "SATISFIED WITH THE ACCORDS." HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE SIDE LETTERS OF THE JULY 29 ACCORDS REQUIRED NO CHANGE IN U.S.-SRI LANKAN RELATIONS. VOA, PORT CALLS, AND THE ISRAELI INTEREST SECTION OF THE U.S. EMBASSY WERE UNAFFECTED. "ALL IS WELL IN U.S.-SRI LANKAN RELATIONS," SAID HAMEED. ABOUT RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN, HE DENIED THAT THE ACCORD AFFECTED RELATIONS AND NOTED THAT SRI LANKA WAS STILL BEING ASSISTED BY ISLAMABAD WITH MILITARY TRAINING. HE DEBUNKED THE IDEA THAT SRI LANKA HAD COME UNDER INDIAN DOMINATION, MENTIONING (BUT NOT NAMING) SEVENTEEN SPECIFIC DISAGREEMENTS (PRESUMABLY UN VOTES AND SUCH) BETWEEN INDIA AND SRI LANKA SINCE THE ACCORDS. ON THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION, HAMEED FOCUSED ON THE PROBLEMS OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY AND BEMOANED THE FACT THAT POLITICAL PRESSURES WERE PUSHING MODERATES IN SRI LANKA TO THE WALL. HE ADDED THAT SLFP OPPOSITION TO THE JULY 29 ACCORD WAS BASED PRIMARILY ON A DESIRE TO FORCE OUT THE IPKF FOR THE PURPOSE OF SUBJECTING THE UNP GOVERNMENT TO THE UNPOPULARITY THAT WOULD RESULT FROM ITS REASSUMPTION OF THE MILITARY BURDEN OF SUPPRESSING THE TAMIL MILITANTS.

5. MAHAWELI MINISTER DISSANAYAKE EXPRESSED GRATITUDE FOR THE U.S. CONTRIBUTION TO THE PRINCIPAL NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AND DISCUSSED ITS UTILITY IN REESTABLISHING COMMUNAL HARMONY. HE INDICATED THAT HE EXPECTED LITTLE TO COME OF THE SOVIET OFFER OF 75.
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MILLION DOLLARS FOR MAHAWELI WORKS, INSISTING THAT HE COULD NOT GET THE RUSSIANS TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE COMMERCIAL CREDITS (WHICH WERE ALL THEY WOULD OFFER) WERE NOT ENOUGH. ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT, GAMINI SEEMED POSITIVELY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF DEVOLUTION IN THE SINHALESE PROVINCES ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT WOULD SWITCH POLITICAL POWER OUT OF COLOMBO TO THE RURAL AREAS WHERE THE SRI LANKAN PEOPLE REALLY LIVED. ALTHOUGH HE HAS HAD A KEY ROLE IN DISCUSSIONS WITH INDIA, DISSANAYAKE LIMITED HIS REMARKS ON THE PEACE PROCESS TO AN EXPRESSION OF HOPE THAT THE U.S. WOULD NOT BE DISTURBED BY ANY CRITICISMS IT RECEIVED FOR SUPPORTING THE JULY 29 ACCORDS. IF A CRUNCH CAME, HE SAID, HE HOPED THAT THE U.S. WOULD SUPPORT ITS FRIEND SRI LANKA. (THE IMPLICATION SEEMED TO BE THAT A PROBLEM MIGHT DEVELOP IN GETTING THE IPKF OUT.)

6. AT A LUNCH WITH UNP PARTY STALWARTS, M.P. PAUL PERERA OPINED THAT THE SURVIVAL OF DEMOCRACY IN SRI LANKA REQUIRES THAT PRESIDENT JAYEWARDENE STAY IN OFFICE BEYOND HIS PRESENT TERM. UNP SECRETARY GENERAL RANJAN WIJERATNE DISCOUNTED THE STRENGTH OF MINOR PARTIES AND SAID ANY UPCOMING ELECTION WOULD BE A TEST BETWEEN THE UNP AND THE SLFP. HE WAS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE ABILITY OF UNP LEADERS TO EDUCATE AND PERSUADE THE VOTERS

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OVER THE COURSE OF AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN. PERERA, WIJERATNE, AND DEPUTY MINISTER HARINDRA COREA WERE ALL CRITICAL OF U.S. TEXTILE QUOTAS AS DEPRESSING SRI LANKAN DEVELOPMENT.

7. IN SEPARATE BUT BACK-TO-BACK ONE HOUR PRIVATE MEETINGS WITH MRS. SIRIMAVO BANDARANAIKE AND PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION LEADER ANURA BANDARANAIKE FEBRUARY 9, THE SLFP LEADERS DOWNPLAYED THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE JULY 29 ACCORDS. ANURA NOTED THAT HE WAS NOT MUCH CONCERNED ABOUT DOMINATION BY INDIA AS SUCH, BUT HE WAS VERY MUCH WORRIED ABOUT INIMICABLE ACTIVITY BY AND IN TAMIL NADU. THUS, THERE WAS A NEED TO AMEND THE JULY 29 SIDE LETTERS TO PROTECT AGAINST SUCH ACTIVITY BY TAMIL NADU. HIS MOTHER RAISED ADDITIONAL OBJECTIONS TO THE ACCORD, SAYING SHE WOULD NOT DENOUNCE IT BUT WOULD DEMAND AMENDMENT IF SHE CAME TO POWER. THE PROVISION FOR EVEN TEMPORARY UNITY OF THE NORTH AND EAST WAS UNACCEPTABLE, SHE SAID. TOO MUCH POWER WAS GIVEN TO THE PROVINCIAL POLICE; THAT WOULD HAVE TO BE CHANGED ALSO.

8. MRS. B. CONFIRMED THAT HER PARTY HAD SELECTED HER AS A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE AND INDICATED THAT SHE WOULD RUN IF GIVEN A CHANCE. ASKED WHAT SHE WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY FROM THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION IF ELECTED, SHE SAID THAT SHE WOULD RESTORE LAW AND ORDER AND AMEND THE ACCORDS AS INDICATED. SHE FLATLY DENIED A RUMOR THAT SHE WOULD END U.S. DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE BUT REFUSED TO COMMIT HERSELF ON ANOTHER QUESTION ABOUT HER RUMORED INTENTIONS TO THROW OUT THE PEACE CORPS. ON THIS, SHE SAID, SHE WOULD MAKE UP HER MIND WHEN THE TIME CAME. SHE WENT ON TO ASK A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT THE PEACE CORPS WAS DOING AND INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO RECEIVE A BRIEFING ON IT. SHE CRITICIZED U.S. TEXTILE QUOTAS AS DENYING SRI LANKA A CHANCE TO DEVELOP MUCH-NEEDED INDUSTRIES. DESCRIBING THE SLFP'S ECONOMIC POLICY BOTH SIRIMAVO AND ANURA DENIED ANY INTENTION TO "RENATIONALIZE" BUT INDICATED THEIR INTENTION TO RESTRICT IMPORTS TO PROTECT LOCAL INDUSTRIES-- "LIKE YOU DO." AT THE END OF THE MEETING, MRS. B. HELD GALBRAITH FOR SOME TIME ASKING ABOUT THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AND INDICATING KEEN INTEREST IN SOVIET INTENTIONS THERE.

9. ON DOMESTIC POLITICS, BOTH MOTHER AND SON EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT IF THERE WAS A FREE ELECTION NOW, THEY WOULD WIN IT. ANURA'S JUDGMENT, AFTER SPECULATING ON VARIOUS "DODGES" J.R. MIGHT UNDERTAKE TO AVOID ELECTIONS, WAS THAT THE CONSTITUTIONALLY REQUIRED PARLIAMENTARY AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS PROBABLY WOULD BE HELD. HIS MOTHER WAS LESS OPTIMISTIC, ALTHOUGH SHE RULED OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF J.R.'S TRYING TO DECLARE MARTIAL LAW "BECAUSE THE MILITARY WOULDN'T STAND FOR IT." ANURA'S ANSWER TO THE QUESTION OF WHAT HE WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY IF HE WERE PRIME MINISTER WAS PRIMARILY A PARLIAMENTARIAN'S DISCUSSION OF HOW IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO PREVENT THE PRESIDENT'S AVOIDING RESPONSIBILITY TO PARLIAMENT BY HOLDING KEY MINISTRIES HIMSELF. BOTH

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BANDARANAIKES (AND, INCIDENTALLY, ALL THE UNP POLITICIANS DISCOUNTED THE POSSIBILITY THAT EITHER THE NEW OR THE OLD MINOR PARTIES WOULD HAVE A DECISIVE EFFECT ON ELECTION RESULTS.

10. AS USUAL, TAMIL SPOKESMEN PRESENTED A MIXED PICTURE IN THEIR DISCUSSIONS WITH GALBRAITH. KUMAR PONNAMBALAM OF THE TAMIL CONGRESS PARTY SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN IN

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CONTACT WITH TIGER LEADERS AND THAT THEY SEEMED DETERMINED TO CONTINUE THEIR FIGHT. YOGENDRA DURAISWAMY OF THE COUNCIL OF HINDU ORGANIZATIONS TOLD GALBRAITH IT WAS IMPORTANT THE UNITED STATES KEEP PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA TO ABIDE BY THE TERMS OF THE ACCORD, SPECIFICALLY CARRYING OUT THE DEVOLUTION OF POWER TO PROVINCIAL COUNCILS WITHOUT SECOND THOUGHTS. BALA TAMPOE, PRESIDENT OF THE CEYLON MERCANTILE UNION, INSISTED THAT THE CURRENT COMMUNAL PROBLEMS IN SRI LANKA WERE NOT THE PRODUCT OF CENTURIES OF ANIMOSITY, BUT THE RESULT OF THE PAST 40 YEARS OF DIVISIVE POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING.

11. IN A PIECE OF FORTUITOUS TIMING, GSL DEFENSE SECRETARY ATTYGALLE OFFERED THE AMBASSADOR A TRIP TO JAFFNA THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 8 TO MEET WITH SRI LANKAN MILITARY LEADERS AT PALALY AIRPORT. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE GSL COULD NOT GUARANTEE SAFETY BEYOND THE AIRPORT BECAUSE THE IPKF WAS CONTINUING MILITARY OPERATIONS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE PENINSULA. INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER DIXIT THEN UNDERTOOK TO ARRANGE MEETING WITH IPKF LEADERS AND A TOUR OF JAFFNA UNDER THEIR AUSPICES. THE GSL PROVIDED A PLANE TO PALALY, AND THE AMBASSADOR, ACCOMPANIED BY MR. GALBRAITH AND EMBASSY POLOFF JOHN DE VLEMING, SPENT FEBRUARY 10 IN THE NORTH, BEING BRIEFED AT PALALY BY SRI LANKAN REGIONAL COMMANDER BRIGADIER J. JAYARATNE AND HIS STAFF, FLOWN BY HELICOPTER TO JAFFNA FOR A TOUR OF THE TOWN, TAKEN ABOUT THERE BY IPKF BRIGADIER KALHON, AND HOSTED TO LUNCH BY MAJOR GENERAL S.C. SARDESHPANDE, NEW IPKF COMMANDER AND HIS STAFF.

12. WHILE VERY CONSCIOUS OF THEIR SEPARATENESS (THE SRI LANKAN ARMY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PALALY AND THE TOWNS OF KANKESANTURAI AND POINT PEDRO, WHILE THE INDIANS HANDLE THE REST OF THE PENINSULA), THE TWO SERVICES CLEARLY ARE GETTING ON WELL TOGETHER--AT LEAST AT THE COMMAND LEVEL. BRIGADIER JAYARATNE VOLUNTEERED THAT "THE IPKF IS DOING A JOLLY GOOD JOB IN JAFFNA," AND SAID THAT THE IPKF AND THE SLA WERE "GETTING ALONG FAMOUSLY, LIKE A HOUSE ON FIRE." HE DENIED ANY KNOWLEDGE OF THE DETAILS OF IPKF ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS, BUT LATER OBLIGINGLY DROVE THE AMERICAN PARTY SLOWLY BY THE DETENTION CENTER WHERE THE IPKF IS HOLDING AND INTERROGATING LTTE PRISONERS. THE IPKF OFFICERS WERE WARM AND RESPONSIVE IN THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE AMERICAN VISITORS, WITH THE TOWN COMMANDER, BRIGADIER KALHON, FREQUENTLY REMINISCING ABOUT "THE BEST YEAR OF HIS LIFE" WHICH HE ENJOYED IN FORT LEAVENWORTH IN 1981. THE IPKF ESCORTS (INCLUDING 10 JEEP LOADS OF HEAVILY ARMED JAWANS) WERE RECEIVED CASUALLY AT THE TWO SCHOOLS WHICH THE PARTY VISITED. THE INDIANS GOT AN OCCASIONAL CHEERFUL WAVE FROM SCHOOLBOYS ON THE STREETS, ALTHOUGH MOST PEOPLE APPEARED TO RESPOND TO THEM INDIFFERENTLY.

13. IN CONTRAST TO THE AMBASSADOR'S LAST VISIT TO JAFFNA IN AUGUST 1987, THE CENTER OF THE TOWN WAS BUSY, WITH SHOPS OPEN AND RELATIVELY WELL-STOCKED, PEOPLE IN THE STREETS, AND MOTOR VEHICLES ON THE ROADS. THERE WAS NO SIGN OF THE GANGS OF YOUNG MEN IN COMMANDEERED VEHICLES AND THE UBIQUITOUS LTTE POSTERS AND MEMORIALS WHICH HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN COMMON. A GOOD DEAL OF WAR DAMAGE COULD BE SEEN, AND THE IPKF OFFICERS FREQUENTLY WENT INTO DETAILED EXPLANATIONS OF HOW CAREFUL THEY HAD BEEN IN TAKING THE CITY TO KEEP DAMAGE TO A MINIMUM. BRIGADIER KALHON DESCRIBED IN DETAIL HOW HE HAD LOST MEN, BECAUSE HE HELD OFF TAKING JAFFNA HOSPITAL AND EXERCISED UTMOST CAUTION WHEN HE FINALLY LED HIS TROOPS IN. (HE INDICATED THAT THE HOSPITAL HAD BEEN TURNED

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INTO AN LTTE REDOUBT WHEN THE IPKF DID A PINNACLES MOVEMENT INTO THE SOUTHERN SECTION OF THE TOWN ALONG THE COAST ROAD.) HE AND HIS ENGINEER COMMANDER, BRIGADIER DHILLON, ALSO WENT INTO IMPRESSIVE DETAIL ON THE RECONSTRUCTION WORK THE IPKF IS UNDERTAKING TO REESTABLISH BASIC FACILITIES IN THE TOWN. ALL IN ALL, IN THE PARTS OF JAFFNA VISITED BY THE AMERICAN PARTY, THERE WAS C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 04 OF 04 COLOMBO 01005

NO SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER AMOUNT OF WAR DAMAGE VISIBLE THAN HAD BEEN THE CASE IN AUGUST BEFORE THE IPKF STORMED IN. ALTHOUGH THE IPKF INSISTED ON HELICOPTERING THE PARTY FROM PALALY TO JAFFNA TOWN AND BACK AGAIN, GROUND TRAFFIC COULD BE SEEN MOVING ON THE CONNECTING ROAD BELOW.

14. COMMENT: GALBRAITH'S VISIT PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A SERIES OF BIOPSIES OF AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO US HERE. IT IS PROBABLY TOO EARLY IN BOTH THE PEACE AND POLITICAL PROCESSES TO DRAW GENERAL CONCLUSIONS FROM WHAT WAS SEEN AND SAID. HOWEVER, A FEW THINGS STAND OUT: FIRST, J.R., THOUGH BELEAGUERED AND ISOLATED FROM MANY ELEMENTS IN SRI LANKA, IS STILL DEVOTED TO MAKING THE PEACE PROCESS WORK AND SEES HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. AS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN DOING SO. ALSO, HE IS STILL VERY MUCH IN CONTROL OF DAY TO DAY EVENTS. HE HELD AMBASSADOR AND GALBRAITH FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY PERIOD OF MORE THAN ONE HOUR PRIMARILY, IT APPEARED, TO MAKE THESE POINTS. SECOND, THE BANDARANAIAKES HAVE NOT GIVEN UP THEIR HOPES OF COMING TO POLITICAL POWER AND ARE BEING CAUTIOUS IN TAKING POSITIONS WHICH MIGHT MAKE THINGS DIFFICULT FOR THEM LATER. THIRD, THE IPKF AND THE SRI LANKAN FORCES ARE GETTING ON WELL TOGETHER, AND, FOURTH, THE SITUATION IN JAFFNA, WHILE STILL FAR FROM NORMAL, IS GRADUALLY IMPROVING. SPAIN
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