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 SUBJECT: ESTONIA SEEKS ADVICE FROM NATIVE SONS

State

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: HARRY MANNIL, AN ESTONIAN-BORN VENEZUELAN BUSINESS TYCOON, SAYS HE IS AMONG A HANDFUL OF ESTONIAN EXPATRIATES INVITED TO TALLINN MAY 17-19 BY THE ESTONIAN GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE ADVICE ON HOW TO PROCEED TOWARD GREATER INDEPENDENCE. MANNIL SPENT SIX DAYS IN ESTONIA IN MARCH AS THE GUEST OF HIS FRIEND VAINO VYALYAS, FORMER SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN VENEZUELA AND NICARAGUA AND SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF ESTONIA BEFORE ITS RECENT DIVISION. MANNIL'S "ADVICE" WILL BE TO COOL IT. HIS TRIP IN MAY IS ENDORSED BY CURRENT SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO VENEZUELA VLADIMIR GONCHARENKO.
 END SUMMARY.

SEE RIO SHEET

3. MANNIL PROVIDED ME WITH A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF HIS MARCH VISIT TO MOSCOW AND ESTONIA DURING A ONE-ON-ONE BREAKFAST MAY 7. MANNIL, WHO LEFT HIS NATIVE ESTONIA IN 1943 TO AVOID THE ADVANCING RED ARMY AND SETTLED IN VENEZUELA, IS ONE OF VENEZUELA'S MANY FOREIGN-BORN SUCCESS STORIES, A VERY WEALTHY BUSINESSMAN REKNOWNED FOR HIS MAGNIFICENT COLLECTION OF PRE-COLUMBIAN ART. MONEY IS NO OBSTACLE TO MANNIL WHO IS ABOUT TO LEAVE FOR PARIS ON AN ANNUAL JAUNT TO CELEBRATE HIS BIRTHDAY THERE ON MAY 16. HE HAS JUST LEARNED THAT THE NEW ESTONIAN GOVERNMENT HAS INVITED HIM AND FOUR OR FIVE OTHER ESTONIAN EXPATRIATES TO TALLINN MAY 17-19, BUT HE WILL BE ARRIVING LATE BECAUSE HE MUST MEET ALCOA'S BRAZILIAN DIRECTOR IN PARIS MAY 17: BUSINESS BEFORE PLEASURE.

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3. MANNIL, WHOSE CREDENTIALS WERE APPARENTLY RATHER FAR TO THE RIGHT IN 1943 ESTONIA, NEVERTHELESS BECAME A GOOD FRIEND AND CONTACT OF VAINO VYALYAS, WHO WAS IDEOLOGICAL SECRETARY OF THE ESTONIAN COMMUNIST PARTY UNTIL HE AND HIS WIFE MAI WERE SENT TO CARACAS AS AMBASSADOR IN 1981 OR 1982, REPLACING VLADIMIR KAZIMIROV. THEY SPOKE TO EACH OTHER IN ESTONIAN. (VVALYAS HAD LITTLE CHOICE: HE HAD BEEN KICKED OUT OF ESTONIA KNOWING ONLY ESTONIAN AND RUSSIAN, ALTHOUGH HE EVENTUALLY LEARNED A FAIR AMOUNT OF SPANISH HERE AND LATER IN MANAGUA, ACCORDING TO MANNIL). THE VIVACIOUS MAI DID HIS INTERPRETING, AND AFTER VVALYAS WENT TO NICARAGUA, SHE MAINTAINED WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE WITH MANNIL UNTIL THE DAY THE TWO FAMILIES COULD GET TOGETHER AGAIN ON A VISIT TO COSTA RICA. AMONG OTHER THINGS THEY DISCUSSED WAS THE POSSIBILITY THAT MANNIL COULD VISIT HIS NATIVE ESTONIA,

DESPITE WHAT MUST HAVE BEEN IN SOVIET EYES A RATHER SUSPICIOUS BACKGROUND.

4. MANNIL HAS ALSO MAINTAINED CLOSE TIES TO SOVIET AMBASSADOR VLADIMIR GONCHARENKO, WHO SUCCEEDED VYALYAS IN OCTOBER 1986 IN CARACAS. THROUGH GONCHARENKO, THEY KEPT TALKING ABOUT THE TRIP TO ESTONIA, WHERE VYALYAS HAD RETURNED TO BE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY, REPLACING ONE (FNU) VAINO. IT FINALLY MATERIALIZED IN MARCH 1990 WHEN MANNIL WAS ABLE TO COUPLE HIS FIRST-EVER TRIP TO MOSCOW WITH A SIDE-JAUNT TO ESTONIA. IN MOSCOW, TOO, MANNIL WAS WELL RECEIVED. HE WAS INVITED TO A PRIVATE LUNCH BY YURI PAVLOV IN THE SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTRY GUEST HOUSE, FETED BY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND MFT REPRESENTATIVES AND EVEN GOT TO MEET AMB. MATLOCK IN DOM SPASSO). MANNIL HAD MET PAVLOV WHEN THE LATTER WAS AMBASSADOR IN COSTA RICA; HE COMMENTED THAT PAVLOV HAD BEEN FAR MORE COMMUNICATIVE WHEN OUTSIDE THE SOVIET UNION THAN DURING THEIR MEETING IN MOSCOW. NEXT MANNIL WAS INVITED TO TALLINN BY VYALYAS. HE DESCRIBED IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL HAVING VYALYAS' SUMPTUOUS AND WELL EQUIPPED (COMPUTERS, ETC.) PRIVATE CAR WHICH WAS HITCHED TO THE MOSCOW-TALLINN TRAIN. IN ESTONIA, HE SAYS, HE WAS ASSIGNED ONE OF THE FIVE MERCEDES AUTOMOBILES IN THE REPUBLIC DURING HIS SIX DAY VISIT, WHERE ASIDE FROM A COUPLE NOSTALGIC ENCOUNTERS WITH OLD FRIENDS, HE WAS WINED AND DINED BY THE TOP LEVEL OF THE PARTY AND THE GOVERNMENT. HIS FRIEND AND HOST, VYALYAS, HOWEVER, WAS IN THE DUMPS BECAUSE OF THE COLLAPSE AND DIVISION OF THE PARTY, WITH MANY FORMER COMMUNISTS SEEKING NEW LABELS AS REFORMERS AND DEMOCRATS. EVEN VYALYAS' OWN SON HAD BECOME A DEMOCRATIC MILITANT WHO WAS DEEPLY OFFENDED BY THE WEALTH AND PERQUISITES ENJOYED BY PEOPLE LIKE HIS FATHER. VYALYAS WAS WORRIED THAT THINGS WERE GETTING OUT OF HAND. MANNIL SAID HE STRONGLY SUGGESTED THAT VYALYAS BE THE "INTERMEDIARY" BETWEEN GORBACHEV AND THE ESTONIANS, BUT IT WAS UNCLEAR WHO WOULD ACCEPT HIM IN THAT ROLE. VYALYAS, HIMSELF, SAID LITTLE TO MANNIL, BUT MAI TOLD THE LATTER THAT A MAJOR REASON FOR THE DISASTER WHICH BEFELL THE COMMUNISTS IN ESTONIA WAS THE WORK OF SECRETARY GENERAL VAINO, WHO WAS BLAMED FOR ALLOWING SO MUCH RUSSIAN IMMIGRATION INTO THE REPUBLIC.

5. VYALYAS' TOP CONCERN WAS THE "HOTHEADS" WHO WANT TO MOVE TOO SWIFTLY TOWARD INDEPENDENCE. MANNIL WAS CONSULTED BY HIS ESTONIAN INTERLOCUTORS, AND HE SAID HE WARNED THEM OF THE PERILS OF GOING TOO FAST. THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE BALTIC STATES WAS NOT HIGH ON THE PRIORITY LIST OF ANY MAJOR POWER, MANNIL COMMENTED, AND TO SURVIVE WITH THE SOVIET UNION IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO ACT LIKE THE FINNS IN 1944. MANNIL WAS ALSO UNIMPRESSED WITH ESTONIA'S PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPING TRADE WITH THE WEST. HE SAID HE TOLD THEM FRANKLY THAT THEY COULD NOT HOPE TO SELL THEIR SHODDY MANUFACTURED WARES IN ANY WESTERN COUNTRY.

6. MANNIL MAKES A FAVORABLE IMPRESSION. HE IS NOT A USEFUL FOOL, AND HE NEEDS LITTLE FROM THE COMMUNISTS EXCEPT A CHANCE TO SEE THE HOMELAND. THE ELEGANT RECEPTION OF COURSE GOT HIS ATTENTION, BUT HE IS USED TO LIVING VERY WELL INDEED WHEREVER HE GOES (SUCH AS PARIS FOR HIS BIRTHDAY). IN TURN, HE APPEARS TO HAVE IMPRESSED THE NEW AUTHORITIES IN TALLINN ENOUGH TO WANT HIM TO COME BACK (HE SPECULATED THAT HIS CONNECTIONS WITH MAJOR SWEDISH BUSINESS FIRMS HAD MUCH TO DO WITH IT). IN ANY CASE THE NEW HEAD OF GOVERNMENT SENT HIM AN INVITATION TO JOIN A HANDFUL OF OTHER ESTONIAN-EXILES ABROAD IN A KIND OF ADVISORY COUNCIL WHICH WOULD CONVENE IN TALLINN MAY 17-19 TO COUNSEL THE NEW AUTHORITIES AS TO HOW TO PROCEED. MANNIL PRUDENTLY CONSULTED AMBASSADOR GONCHARENKO IN CARACAS, AND GONCHARENKO TOLD HIM TO GO TO ESTONIA. MANNIL PLANS TO DO IT, ON MAY 18. HIS ADVICE TO HIS ESTONIAN FRIENDS WILL BE TO COOL IT, TO ADVANCE WITH CAUTION. MANNIL DOES NOT SEE INDEPENDENCE IN THE CARDS FOR THE BALTIC STATES, AT LEAST NOT NOW. THERE MIGHT BE SOME FORM OF "AUTONOMY", HE THOUGHT, PERHAPS WITH AN ESTONIAN CURRENCY, BUT HE WONDERED HOW MUCH EFFECT THAT COULD HAVE. GORBACHEV'S GAME, HE SAID WITHOUT SIGN OF FEELING, IS TO STALL FOR TIME, TO DELAY THINGS INDEFINITELY. THIS WOULD PROBABLY BE WHAT WILL HAPPEN, IN HIS VIEW. (SINCE VYALYAS AND GONCHARENKO KNOW MANNIL'S CAUTIOUS OUTLOOK RATHER WELL, THEY PRESUMABLY WOULD LIKE IT IF HE CAN PERSUADE THE NEW ESTONIAN AUTHORITIES NOT TO ROCK THE BOAT.)

7. MANNIL SAID HE HAD LEARNED FROM MAI VYALYAS THAT VLADIMIR KAZIMIROV REALLY HAD BEEN SENT AS AMBASSADOR TO ANGOLA AS PUNISHMENT. HIS FRIEND VYALYAS IS APPARENTLY ALSO BEING OFFERED A DIPLOMATIC WAY OUT - HE HAS TURNED DOWN THE SOVIET MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS IN GENEVA (A WISE DECISION SINCE HE SPEAKS NO ENGLISH, FRENCH OR GERMAN) AND ANOTHER EMBASSY, ACCORDING TO MAI. APPARENTLY GORBACHEV SEES HIM VYALYAS AS LESS THAN INDISPENSABLE IN TALLINN.

8. MANNIL PROMISED TO REPORT HIS EXPERIENCES IN TALLINN WHEN HE RETURNS TO CARACAS IN TWO WEEKS.

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