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CONFIDENTIAL SAN SALVADOR 7003

E. O. 12356: DECL: 08/24/88

TAGS: PINS, SHUM, PINT, ES

SUBJ: (U) ARREST OF SUBSECRETARY OF EDUCATION SERRANO'S WIFE

REF: A) SS 6866; B) SS 6970

1. (C-ENTIRE TEXT.)

2. SUMMARY: THE "SERRANO CASE", AS THE ARREST OF THE SUB-SECRETARY OF EDUCATION'S WIFE HAS COME TO BE CALLED, HAS GENERATED SHARP ATTACKS ON THE SUBSECRETARY AND ON THE PDC. SUBSECRETARY SERRANO HAS BEEN PUBLICLY ACCUSED OF BIGAMY AND HAS RESIGNED FROM HIS POST. MEANWHILE, HIS WIFE IS STILL IN JAIL. END SUMMARY.

3. AS EXPECTED THE ARREST OF THE SUBSECRETARY OF EDUCATION'S WIFE, MARIA LYDIA ESCALANTE DE SERRANO, HAS SPARKED SHARP ATTACKS ON THE PDC AND ON SERRANO. THE LEVEL OF PERSONAL
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ATTACKS ON SERRANO HAS DETERIORATED TO MUOSLINGING. FOR

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EXAMPLEY, LOCAL NEWSPAPERS HAVE PUBLISHED REPORTS THAT CLAIM THE SUBSECRETARY IS GUILTY OF BIGAMY.

4. ATTACKS ON THE PDC HAVE ALSO BEEN VICIOUS. AN ACCUSATION MADE BY AN ARENA DEPUTY DURING A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY MEETING THAT PDC PARTY MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES MANY KNOWN SUBVERSIVIES SET OFF A TENSE EXCHANGE OF INSULTS AND DESK POUNDING DURING WHICH SOME DEPUTIES APPARENTLY MADE MOVES TOWARD THEIR PERSONAL WEAPONS. THE FAR RIGHT WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION "CRUZAO PAS Y TRABAJO" TOOK OUT A FULL PAGE AD IN THE ULTRA-CONSERVATIVE EL DIARIO DE HOY ON AUG. 20 IN WHICH IT CLAIMS THE RIGHT TO ASK THE "MAXIMUM AUTHORITIES" TO CLEANSE THE EDUCATION MINISTRY OF PERSONS WHO TEACH THE DOCTRINES OF COMMUNISM, MARXISM, OR COMMUNITARIANISM (COMMUNITARIANISM IS A DURATE DOCTRINE).

5. PDC MEMBERS TOLD EMBOFFS THAT SERRANO LEFT HIS WIFE, MARIA LYDIA ESCALANTE A FEW YEARS AGO AND MOVED IN WITH ARHIDA FUENTES. SERRANO AND FUENTES PROCREATED TWO CHILDREN. SERRANO THEN LEFT FUENTES AND MOVED BACK IN WITH HIS WIFE. FUENTES IS NOW ACCUSING SERRANO OF BIGAMY. ACCORDING TO PDC MEMBERS SERRANO NEVER LEGALLY MARRIED FUENTES.

6. ON THE MORNING OF AUGUST 24 PDC SECGEN REY PRENDES AND DR. ORALES EHRlich TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT SERRANO WOULD EVENTUALLY RESIGN FROM HIS POST. THE PDC IS COMFORTABLE WITH THIS DECISION. SERRANO HAS INDICATED THAT IF HIS WIFE IS RELEASED (APPARENTLY THERE IS SOME CHANCE OF THIS) HE WILL LEAVE THE COUNTRY WITH HIS ENTIRE FAMILY. THE PDC REPS SAID THAT THE PARTY WOULD CONTINUE TO SUPPORT SERRANO PUBLICLY UNTIL HE RESIGNS BECAUSE THEY FEEL THAT HE IS BEING
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UNFAIRLY TREATED BY BOTH THE TREASURY POLICE AND THE PRESS, WHO ARE SUING THE INCIDENT TO ATTACK THE PDC. EMBASSY COMMENT: SERRANO RESIGNED FROM HIS POST AT THE REQUEST OF PREISDENT MAGANA ON THE EVENING OF AUGUST 24.

7. COMMENT: PDC OPPONENTS BELIEVE, AND ARE ANXIOUS TO BELIEVE, THE CHARGES AGAINST MRS. SERRANO AND THE OTHER ARRESTED PERSONS. OTHER OBSERVERS SUSPECT THE ARRESTS ARE A CALCULATED ATTACK ON THE PDC, AND THAT MRS. SERRANO AND MOST, IF NOT ALL, OF THE ARRESTED PERSONS ARE INNOCENT

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OF EVERYTHING EXCEPT POSSIBLY BELONGING TO THE LEFTIST-
ORIENTED BUT LEGAL ANDES TEACHER'S UNION. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] THUS FAR, THE PDC HAS
TAKEN A WAIT-AM POSITION, SUSPECTING THAT COL. MORAN
MUST HAVE SOME EVIDENCE JUSTIFYING THE DETENTION OF AT LEAST
SOME OF THE DETAINEES. (FIVE OF THE DETAINEES HAVE SIGNED
CONFESSIONS OF SUBVRSIVE ACTIVITY). OTHERS AMONG THE
DETAINEES ARE APPARENTLY INNOCENT. AN AUGUST 23 PRESS
RELEASE BY THE TREASURY POLICE MENTIONS THE POSSIBLE
RELEASE OF SOME OF THE SUSPECTS.
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