



## OFFICE OF THE HISTORIAN

### FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1969–1976, VOLUME E–11, PART 1, DOCUMENTS ON MEXICO; CENTRAL AMERICA; AND THE CARIBBEAN, 1973–1976

#### 370. Telegram 1925 From the Embassy in Guyana to the Department of State<sup>1</sup>

Georgetown, October 29, 1974, 1330Z.

1925. Subject: Prime Minister Blasts United States Government.

*Summary:* Burnham lambasted U.S. and Reynolds as Guyana's enemies at public rally backing bauxite levy and nationalization, while warning of aid cutoff. Motivation obviously to curry internal political support by creating foreign threat, perhaps to justify move toward one-party state.

*Begin unclassified.*

1. Prime Minister Burnham unreservedly linked USG and Reynolds as enemies of Guyana in public rally evening October 27 in Georgetown sponsored by ruling PNC Party and designed to drum up support for bauxite levy and nationalization. Address was subsequently broadcast and both local dailies October 28 headlined excerpt that PM warned U.S. aid may be cut off.

2. Burnham said quote there is reason to believe not only that all American aid to Guyana will be cut off as was a certain program when we entered into diplomatic and trade relations with Cuba last year, but there also is reason to believe that certain influences will be brought to bear even at the level of the World Bank [garble] preclude Guyana from getting loans from the World Bank end quote. He also referred to U.S. attempt to block (sic) World Bank loan in 1971. Other comments on USG reaction to Reynolds dispute included quote what we are facing today from the Leviathan of the Western Hemisphere is what other countries have faced and are facing in other parts of the developing world end quote. Quote let us not imagine however that either techniques and (sic) tactics will be limited to the withholding of aid and influencing of would-be aid donors end quote. Four times consecutively, with voice dripping exaggerated sarcasm, Burnham reiterated that U.S. is friendly government, and closed by exhorting audience quote this is war, this [Page 961] is not fun, this is not spoof. This is a war. It is a war in which victory will spell not merely the emotional satisfaction of being masters of our land, but also survival of Guyana as an economic entity and the survival of our country, a country of free and independent men. Let those who think they can frighten us or would teach us a lesson understand that we will teach them a lesson in the same way they taught the British a lesson during the American Revolution end quote.

3. References to Reynolds, described as ruthless, were more insulting but subsidiary to attack on USG as main enemy. Burnham interjected racism in one attack on Reynolds when he referred to headquarters in Virginia and main installations in Arkansas quote southern states where niggers are lynched end quote. He stated that alternatives to bauxite as raw material for aluminium are a matter for the far and distant future. *End unclassified.*

4. Rally was carefully staged, with orderly marchers organized by ruling PNC including band and uniformed school children (less than one thousand in all) marching on route deliberately designed to pass by all USG offices in Guyana and Ambassador's residence. EmbOff present at rally estimated approving but unenthusiastic crowd at maximum of four thousand. Prime Minister had sounded similar but more muted theme at previous day's convention of his Guyana labor union, where he also called on trade unions to reduce international ties and formally affiliate with PNC.

5. *Comment:* This seems to be far the strongest public attack on U.S. by responsible GOG spokesman in several years but is in line with earlier GOG tendency to portray U.S. and Western DCs as its enemies despite large-scale Western and U.S. economic aid. Burnham is of course clearly attempting to fabricate a confrontation in the minds of his listeners on what he sees as a popular issue of national pride. He also is seeking public support by identifying any opposition to PNC policies as aiding a foreign enemy. We do not yet know (Burnham may also not yet know) whether the Yankee devil is being incarnated only to undercut criticism of GOG economic policies, shortages, political interference with faculty appointments at the university, corruption, etc; or whether he intends to use this deliberately manufactured emergency as an excuse to make a quantum jump toward one-party state. We also do not know how far he intends to take confrontation in actions against general U.S. interests or personnel (one threat in speech was to quote remove from among us the weak and rascal agents of our enemy end quote). Thus far, the public seems to approve of the bauxite levy and of nationalization, but there is no mood of excitement or of indignation against either Reynolds or the United States. Personal relations of Embassy personnel with Guyanese are unchanged and we detect no significant increased threat to personal security. Burnham is fully aware that any prospective U.S. sanctions are not against [Page 962] nationalization per se, but concern compensation and the linkage with the levy, but he deliberately confuses the issue and has his ministers encourage the belief that sanctions have already begun. PNC official and former Minister Elvin McDavid, for example, in an October 26 public address charged that Guyanese must not be surprised to learn that their relatives enjoying temporary residence in the U.S. are being deported because of the Reynolds issue. Another spokesman has charged that visas are being refused for the same reason, while still another claimed that IBRD refusal to modify the terms of an electricity loan is because of U.S. pressure. Our discreet remonstrations on such inaccuracies are either interpreted as aiding Reynolds, met with an embarrassed shrug of that's politics, or excused as misquotes (even though published as direct quotes in GOG official bulletin).

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1. Summary: The Embassy reported that Burnham had lambasted the United States as an enemy of Guyana in a public speech intended to rally support for the nationalization of the bauxite industry. The Embassy noted that the speech seemed to be the strongest attack on the United States by a Guyanese Government official in several years.

Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy File, D740307-1005. Confidential; Immediate. Repeated to Port of Spain, Kingston, Santo Domingo, Canberra, Paramaribo, and USCINCSO for POLAD. All brackets are in the original except those indicating garbled text. In telegram 244753 to Georgetown, November 6, the Department reported that Shlaudeman was calling in Ambassador Talbot to inform him that Guyanese officials' anti-U.S. rhetoric created an unfavorable atmosphere for resolving the Reynolds compensation negotiations. (Ibid., D740319-0505)

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