



Mr Coles

Alvaro de Soto, a chef de cabinet to Pérez de Cuellar, telephoned yesterday evening from New York. He used to be the Peruvian ambassador to the conference on the Law of the Sea, and the leader of the Group of 77 at that conference. He is an acquaintance of mine but has not been in touch before in this way. His (new) wife is Argentinian!

He said what a tragedy it was that two countries should be going to war when agreement on all the main issues was so close. Surely with a little more effort some kind of settlement could be reached. He said that the existing Argentinian and British papers did not represent the real agreement possible. Concessions had been made by both sides e.g. we had accepted that it would be impossible to go back to the status quo ante. I said I knew nothing of the details but I had the impression that our main points had not been accepted by the Argentine.

Señor de Soto said that the Secretary General had been hoping to put forward a working paper indicating possible solutions. But, he had, said señor de Soto, been "pre-empted" by the paper which we had put forward and which had a time-limit, now past. This had led to the violent Argentinian reaction which doubtless would be published sooner or later and which meant less than it seemed. The Secretary-General had, said Señor de Soto, been hoping to send a representative to Buenos Aires to try and persuade them to accept his ideas, and had wished, for form's sake, to send a similar person to London, if only to explain what the Secretary-General had been thinking.

Hugh Thomas

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