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FM COLOMBO

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 770

OF 110500Z DECEMBER 85

AND TO IMMEDIATE UKMIS NEW YORK

MY TELNO 746: SRI LANKA/UNGA FALKLANDS VOTE

1. LAST NIGHT AT A STATE BANQUET FOR PRESIDENT ZIA, PRESIDENT JAYEWARDENE DREW ME ASIDE AND SAID THAT HE WAS SHOCKED AT SRI LANKA'S VOTE ON THE ARGENTINE RESOLUTION. HE HAD INSTRUCTED THAT HIS DELEGATION SHOULD VOTE WITH BRITAIN. LATER IN HIS SPEECH AT THE BANQUET HE DEPARTED FROM HIS PREPARED TEXT AND, IN THE CONTEXT OF SRI LANKA BEING FAITHFUL TO ITS FRIENDS, HE APOLOGISED TO ME FOR THE SRI LANKAN ABSTENTION ON THE ARGENTINE RESOLUTION, AND SAID THAT HE WAS INVESTIGATING HOW THIS HAD HAPPENED AGAINST HIS INSTRUCTIONS. AFTER DINNER I WAS APPROACHED BY THE SRI LANKAN FOREIGN SECRETARY (PUS) WHO SAID THAT SRI LANKA'S ABSTENTION ON THE SUBSTANTIVE RESOLUTION HAD BEEN AGREED WITH OUR DELEGATION AND THAT THEY HAD NOT BROKEN THEIR COMMITMENT TO ME (PARA 1 OF TUR) BUT HAD GONE ALONG WITH WHAT OUR DELEGATION AGREED.

2. THE PRESIDENT'S PUBLIC INTERVENTION IS LIKELY TO CAUSE SOME CONTROVERSY HERE AND THE MFA ARE ANGRY ABOUT IT. I SHOULD BE GRATEFUL IF UKMIS COULD TELL ME WHAT EXACTLY TRANSPIRED BETWEEN THEM AND THE SRI LANKAN DELEGATION, AS IT IS LIKELY THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL RAISE THE MATTER AGAIN AT PRESIDENT ZIA'S OWN BANQUET ON FRIDAY 13 DECEMBER.

COMMENT

3. THE PRESIDENT'S INTERVENTION IS QUITE UNPRECEDENTED HERE (AND INDEED ALMOST ANYWHERE). IT HAS NOT YET BEEN REPORTED IN THE PRESS OR RADIO WHICH ONLY CARRIED THE TEXT OF HIS PREVIOUSLY DISTRIBUTED PREPARED SPEECH, BUT FROM CONVERSATIONS WITH THE CORPS AND SRI LANKAN OFFICIALS AFTER DINNER LAST NIGHT IT IS CLEAR THAT THE MATTER WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO REST. SUBJECT TO YOUR AGREEMENT I PROPOSE TO PLAY THE MATTER DOWN AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE AND NOT TO INITIATE ANY FURTHER DISCUSSIONS ON THE MATTER WITH THE PRESIDENT.

STEWART

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