

HIT 026/2

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APR 1994



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British High Commission  
Belmopan

23 March 1994

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Useful report. Pl circ  
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Dear [redacted]

THE ROYAL VISIT TO BELIZE (22-24 FEBRUARY)

1. Here is the more detailed report promised in my telno 37 of 27 February.

The Programme

/ 2. I enclose a copy of the official programme. The main features of a crowded 2 1/2 days were large open-air welcoming ceremonies in Belize City, San Ignacio and Punta Gorda each with a basically identical format consisting of a speech by the Mayor followed by dancing and musical displays; a special sitting of both Houses of Parliament at which the Speaker welcomed the Queen who delivered an Address (copies enclosed), which was her only speech during the visit; a State Dinner for 50 and Reception for 500 in Government House in Belize City; a short visit to one of Belize's many Mayan archaeological sites (Cahal Pech near San Ignacio); meetings with British Forces and the Belize Defence Force (BDF) at Airport Camp and Rideau Camp, where she had lunch in the Officers Mess. The Queen also lunched with 100 leading citizens in the main hotel in San Ignacio. There was a short farewell ceremony in Belize City before she left at which Esquivel spoke.

3. San Ignacio and Punta Gorda were chosen as the two district centres to be visited partly because they had not been included in the 1985 visit and partly because they were the centres nearest the border with Guatemala and therefore most affected by the withdrawal of the garrison and most in need of reassurance.

4. The Duke of Edinburgh accompanied the Queen throughout except at the welcome ceremony in Punta Gorda, the visit to Cahal Pech and the lunch at Rideau Camp. He undertook some separate engagements: he presented awards to young people participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (known here as the Governor-General's Award Scheme) on two occasions, visited the Returned Servicemen's League in

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Belize City where he met veterans of both World Wars; visited the Belize Zoo and Wildlife Education Centre and was briefed by officials and NGOs involved in conservation and the environment; and spent two hours at a scientific and education project in the rainforest in the south (the Jason Project at Blue Creek).

5. The level of public interest everywhere the Queen went was extraordinary. To greet her on arrival an estimated 90% (45,000) of the population of Belize City either lined the route from the Airport or were at Memorial Park for the welcoming ceremony. For her visits to San Ignacio and Punta Gorda, which were first ever visits in both cases, people crowded in from all over the surrounding districts.

6. Belizeans are very sensitive to the reactions of visitors and quick to sense if the visitor likes them and their country and is interested or is fundamentally bored and unimpressed. The Queen was definitely seen to fall into the former category. Commentators and others delighted in noticing her animated reactions at various points in the public ceremonies and the fact that at several points she was seen to be laughing with pleasure. A general feeling has developed here that the Queen and Belize have a mutual rapport. Members of the Royal Household told me at various points how much The Queen and Prince Philip were enjoying the visit.

Organisation

7. The visit was very well organised by the Belizeans and the programme went off without any major hitches or awkward incidents. This was due mainly to the efficiency of Carlos Perdomo the Permanent Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office who was in overall charge of the arrangements and the point of contact with the staff of Buckingham Palace. Under his overall supervision a network of committees was set up covering each event and comprised of leading citizens under the chairmanship of a local Permanent Secretary or Minister.

8. The organisation was quite different to the Queen's visit in 1985 when the Governor-General took complete control of everything herself with virtually no involvement by the Government, and with I think a level of involvement by the High Commission that was no doubt necessary at that stage so soon after independence but which would have been quite inappropriate now.

[REDACTED]

/choice





[REDACTED]

9. At a time of economic austerity the Government were careful not to lay themselves open to charges of extravagance and waste in the preparations for the visit. The budget for the visit was kept down to BZ\$ 200,000 (65,000 pounds) and most of that was spent on improvements to public places which will be of benefit to the community.

[REDACTED]

10. I was told by the Household staff that the Queen and the new Governor-General Dr Colville Young, who spent a lot of time together during the visit, got on very well. Dr Young whom the Queen made a GCMG during the visit

[REDACTED] He is Belize's foremost musician and composer and wrote the words and music of the official Calypso-style song of welcome which was performed at the arrival ceremony in Belize City. It contains excellent words about the value of the monarchy and the Commonwealth. When the performance began the Governor-General was seen to have left the platform and to be performing with the steel band himself to the Queen's evident delight. She noted in her speech to Parliament that this was the first occasion in which she had been welcomed by a song both written and performed by a Governor-General.

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Press Coverage

11. I reported on this in my letter of 1 March. The fact that a large number of journalists from the US and neighbouring countries covered the visit was a useful boost for Belize's profile in the region and for tourism here.

/ Republicanism

Republicanism in Belize

12. I was quite surprised at the very small amount of republican opinions which were expressed during the visit mainly on radio talk shows which are a national pastime here. I heard Said Musa summing up at the end of one such talk show on the eve of the Royal Visit by saying that on the evidence of the questions put to his panel Belizeans were content with the present monarchical constitutional position and do not see any need for change. This is correct. There are a few people here - mainly black Creole "intellectuals" in Belize City - who see the monarchy as irrelevant or as a positive hindrance - but they are a very small minority. The vast majority see no reason to change the present position and many value the link with Britain which the monarchy provides and see this as offering additional security - in the sense that in the event of a re-emergence of a military threat from Guatemala the fact that Belize was a Realm is seen as an additional reason why Britain would be likely to help. For this reason no Government of Belize is likely to take the lead in encouraging a move to a Republic in the foreseeable future. This is not to say that Belize would not follow the pack if a general move towards Republican status were to develop among the Caribbean Realms in future.

*Yours ever,  
David*

David Mackilligin

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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FAX NO. 501823889

P. 01



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

CLERK'S OFFICE

Belmopan,  
Cayo District, Belize  
Central America.

24th February, 1994

Mrs Jones  
British High Commission Office  
Belmopan

Attached are copies of speeches delivered by the  
Speaker and Her Majesty the Queen on 23rd February,  
1994 at the National Assembly in Belmopan.

*Clerk*  
FOR: Clerk, National Assembly.



*Speakers Speech*

Your Majesty and Your Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh.

It is a great honour and privilege for me as the Speaker of the House of Representatives to welcome Her Majesty and the Duke on this Royal joint visit to Belize.

In 1964 Belize attained Self-Government with a view of working towards early Independence. Unfortunately due to the Guatemalan territorial claim to Belize achieving independence was a hard and arduous uphill battle entailing extensive lobbying in order to gain international support for Belize's right to Self-Determination, Independence and Territorial Integrity.

It was not until September 1981 when, with the support of most member countries of the United Nations, Belize achieved its Independence.

As Speaker of this House, I would like to express to your Majesty, the appreciation of the Government of Belize for the support and guidance that Belize has received over the years and continues to receive from the Government, and the people of Great Britain.

The laws and rules of our House of Representatives are based on the Westminster model and our House provides a forum for the elected Representatives of the people to discuss and debate in an atmosphere of freedom, all laws and issues by which the people of Belize will be Governed and I do believe Your Majesty that the young Nation of Belize has through its Parliamentary System, set a glowing example to the world that peoples of varying culture and creeds can live together in an atmosphere of peace and harmony.

Your presence in this Honourable House of Representatives intensifies our faith in the principles of constitutional

democracy, which are the pillars of Your Majesty's Government in Belize, and which guide the deliberations of this National Assembly.

So once again we welcome Your Majesty's presence in this our noble House of Representatives.

It is an honour and a privilege for me to invite Her majesty to kindly address the National Assembly of Belize.

*(ending of speaker's speech)*

QUEEN'S SPEECH

BELIZE

Mr. Speaker,

Thank you for your welcome. Prince Philip and I are very pleased to be back in Belize.

By coincidence, this visit, like my first in 1985, comes in the aftermath of a general election, during which the Belizean people have demonstrated once again that their democracy, though young, is robust. As your Sovereign, I am proud to associate myself with your determination that social justice and personal freedom should flourish under the rule of law.

It is always dangerous, however, to be complacent and to assume that democratic values will look after themselves. Vigilance in protecting them is needed. We must, for instance, train and educate young people to comprehend their proper rights and responsibilities. Decisions which can be painful in the short-term sometimes have to be taken for beneficial long-term ends. Most of all, democracy is safeguarded by team-work - the individual wills of all citizens, each pulling together towards the same objective.

Successive generations like to say that they live in an era of unprecedented and violent change. We certainly believe that to be true today. Many of the changes which we have witnessed are to be applauded and encouraged: many have helped the disadvantaged to achieve their proper place in society. But some, the increase in crime being an obvious example, have done damage to society, and it is up to us to keep that society strong enough to withstand any assault from whatever quarter.



It is never enough to treat symptoms alone. Such measures as the strengthening of law enforcement agencies and criminal justice systems are worthwhile, but we must, simultaneously, look at the real roots of the disease. That often means a process of honest, and sometimes uncomfortable, self-examination by a nation as a whole.

But Belize is capable of that. You have achieved so much already. You are admired for your ethnic harmony, your respect for democracy, your care for the environment and your cultural heritage, and your nurture of the young in terms of training and education.

It is not surprising that so many visitors love coming to Belize. In our case, you have, by the wonderful welcome you gave us in Belize City last night, made us feel truly at home again. It was, by the way, the first occasion on which Prince Philip and I have been welcomed by a song both written and performed by a Governor-General!

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to address this honourable House for the first time, and to see another example of thriving democracy in our Commonwealth of nations. We greatly look forward to our travels, and to enjoying more of the diversity of this remarkable country.

I pray that Belize may set a proud example in the years ahead, by continuing to tread, as you do now, the path of peace and democracy.

