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TEXT

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TAGS: SOPN, OFDP, CI
SUBJECT: NY TIMES EDITORIAL ON AMBASSADORIAL NOMINEES
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1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF NY TIMES EDITORIAL OF APRIL 20, 1984.

BEGIN TEXT:

NOT DIPLOMACY BUT PROVOCATION

FOR GOOD REASONS, THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS REJECTED TWO PROPOSED AMBASSADORS FROM LEFT-WING AND RIGHT-WING LATIN AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS, UNUSUAL CASES THAT MAKE THE SAME IMPORTANT POINT. - - -

IN NAMING ENVOYS, DISCRETION IS THE BETTER PART OF DIPLOMACY. WHEN A SENDING COUNTRY DECIDES ON AN AMBASSADOR, IT REQUESTS AGREEMENT - ASKS THE RECEIVING COUNTRY IF THE PERSON IS ACCEPTABLE BEFORE SAYING ANYTHING IN PUBLIC. WHEN SOMETHING LEAKS OUT FIRST, THAT USUALLY MEANS SOMETHING QUITE UNDIPLOMATIC IS GOING ON. WHICH BRINGS US FIRST TO NORA ASTORGA, NICARAGUA'S DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER. SHE'S THE WOMAN, IT WILL BE REMEMBERED, WHO ENTRAPPED A GENERAL OF THE SOMOZA REGIME IN A FATAL BEDROOM AMBUSH. NICARAGUA NOW SAYS, PUBLICLY,

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THAT IT WANTS HER TO BECOME AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES.

BECAUSE OF HER INVOLVEMENT IN THE 1978 KILLING, SHE WAS PLAINLY A CONTROVERSIAL CHOICE TO BEGIN WITH. SHE THEN MADE THINGS WORSE BY ANNOUNCING HER APPOINTMENT BEFORE THE CUSTOMARY INFORMAL SOUNDINGS WERE MADE.

GRANTED, NICARAGUA HAS HAD ITS AMBASSADORIAL PROBLEMS IN WASHINGTON. TWO OF ITS ENVOYS HAVE DEFECTED. UNLIKE THEM, MISS ASTORGA IS A COMMITTED SANDINISTA. EVEN SO, HER DESIGNATION SEEMED LESS A DIPLOMATIC ACT THAN A POLITICAL GESTURE MEANT TO PROVOKE REJECTION. THE STATE DEPARTMENT WAS RIGHT TO REJECT HER.

THE DEPARTMENT WAS EQUALLY CORRECT TO REBUFF CHILE IN A PARALLEL CASE. THE RIGHT-WING PINOCHET DICTATORSHIP RECENTLY MADE AN INSULTING AMBASSADORIAL PROPOSAL: MARIO BARROS VAN BUREN, FORMER EDITOR OF AN ANTI-SEMITIC MAGAZINE. ARROGANCE, RATHER THAN DESIGN, PROBABLY EXPLAINS THIS PECULIAR CHOICE BY A GOVERNMENT ALREADY NOTORIOUS FOR SHELTERING WALTER RAUFF, A NAZI WAR CRIMINAL.

WHEN THE NOMINEE'S NAME BECAME KNOWN, THE ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE EXAMINED HIS WRITINGS AND CALLED FOR HIS REJECTION. HE WAS DENIED AGREEMENT, THOUGH FOR THE RECORD, STATE, TRUE TO THE CODE OF DISCRETION, WILL NOT CONFIRM THAT FACT.

THE DEPARTMENT IS AS RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS DENIAL OF AGREEMENT TO PROPOSED AMERICAN AMBASSADORS. AT LEAST TWO EXCELLENT REAGAN ADMINISTRATION CHOICES HAVE BEEN REJECTED: MORTON ABRAMOWITZ, PROPOSED FOR INDONESIA, AND BRANDON GROVE, WHO WAS UNACCEPTABLE TO KUWAIT BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN AN AMERICAN CONSUL IN ISRAELI-RULED JERUSALEM. NO ONE WILL SAY WHETHER THERE ARE OTHER INSTANCES. TO DO SO WOULD VIOLATE DIPLOMACY'S UNION RULES.

SUCH DISCRETION MAKES SENSE BECAUSE IT PROTECTS THE INTERESTS OF BOTH SENDING AND HOST COUNTRIES, A PART OF THE FABRIC OF INTERNATIONAL CIVILITY. WHEN AN AMERICAN ENVOY TO FRANCE WAS HUMILIATED IN 1798, PRESIDENT JOHN ADAMS ANGRILY INFORMED CONGRESS: "I WILL NEVER SEND ANOTHER MINISTER TO FRANCE WITHOUT ASSURANCES THAT HE WILL BE RECEIVED, RESPECTED, AND HONORED AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF A GREAT, FREE, POWERFUL AND INDEPENDENT NATION."

THE CODE THAT INSURES SUCH RESPECT WORKS BOTH WAYS. IT'S HARD TO TAKE SERIOUSLY ANY DIPLOMACY THAT BEGINS BY PROPOSING DIPLOMATIC APPOINTMENTS THAT ARE CERTAIN TO PROVOKE.

END TEXT. DAM
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