

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LA PAZ 04777 251126Z

53

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BL

SUBJ: BANZER ANNOUNCES ELECTION TIMETABLE

1. IN A SPEECH TO THE NATION ON THE EVENING OF JULY 23, PRESIDENT BANZER ANNOUNCED THAT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD IN THE SECOND HALF OF OCTOBER 1975, WITH THE FORMAL INAUGURATION OF A NEW PRESIDENT TO OCCUR IN DECEMBER OF THAT YEAR. BANZER ALSO REVEALED THAT THE NEW NATIONAL COUNCIL ON STRUCTURAL REFORMS, CREATED ON JULY 23, WILL PRESENT A SERIES OF MAJOR PROPOSALS TO THE NATION BY JANUARY 23, 1975. THESE PROPOSALS, INCLUDING A "PROGRAM OF NATIONAL OBJECTIVES", A REVISED CONSTITUTION, A SERIES OF ADMINISTRATIVE, ECONOMIC AND JURIDICAL REFORMS, A POLITICAL PARTIES LAW AND AN ELECTORAL STATUTE, WILL BE SUBMITTED TO A NATIONAL REFERENDUM ON MARCH 23, WHATEVER THE RESULT OF THE REFERENDUM, ELECTIONS WILL STILL BE HELD IN LATE OCTOBER 1975, EITHER UNDER THE OLD CONSTITUTION OR UNDER THE NEW CONSTITUTION AND LAWS TO BE PROPOSED BY THE COUNCIL.

2. COMMENT: THE NEWLY-CREATED COUNCIL ON STRUCTURAL REFORMS HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF WIDESPREAD SPECULATION SINCE IT WAS FIRST ANNOUNCED IN EARLY JULY. DESPITE THE BREADTH OF THE COUNCIL'S MANDATE AND THE SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME IN WHICH IT MUST PREPARE THE NEW CONSTITUTION AND OTHER IMPORTANT NEW LEGAL PROCEDURES, ONLY THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LA PAZ 04777 251126Z

APPEARS TO HAVE ANY CLEAR IDEA OF THE NATURE OF THE REFORMS TO BE

PROPOSED BY THE COUNCIL, AND HE IS NOT REVEALING HIS THINKING AT THIS TIME. CLEARLY, HOWEVER, THE COUNCIL'S RECOMMENDATIONS WILL REFLECT A CONSENSUS OF VIEWS HELD BY LOYAL PRO-GOVERNMENT ELEMENTS: THE THIRTY-MEMBER COUNCIL WILL REPORTEDLY CONTAIN FOUR REPRESENTATIVE S EACH OF THE MNR, FSB, FUERZAS REVOLUCIONARIAS BARRIENTISTAS, CAMPESINOS AND ARMED FORCES, THEREBY ASSURING THE GOB OF A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY IN THE COUNCIL'S INTERNAL DELIBERATIONS.

3. BANZER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS ALSO COME AT A PSYCHOLOGICALLY-IMPORTANT MOMENT, SINCE MANY OF THE GOVERNMENT'S CRITICS HAVE RECENTLY BEGUN TO CHARGE THAT THE LACK OF AN ELECTION TIMETABLE WAS EVIDENCE OF A GOB PLAN TO FURTHER POSTPONE ELECTIONS BEYOND 1975. OPPOSITION SPOKESMEN PRESUMABLY WILL NOW CONCENTRATE THEIR FIRE ON THE BANZER GOVERNMENT'S REFUSAL TO PROCLAIM A GENERAL POLITICAL AMNESTY OR TO ALLOW SUCH EXILED OPPOSITIONISTS AS WALTER GUEVARA ARCE AND PDC CHIEF BENJAMIN MIGUEL TO RETURN TO BOLIVIA. STEDMAN

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