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THE PRESIDENT: Very good. I think it would be advantageous if we were to keep expectations low regarding the number that would attend so that the public would be more surprised at the number in attendance. I am sure that if we stated that twenty Presidents were to come, and only 14 showed up in Washington, D.C., the next day the headlines would read: SIX PRESIDENTS REFUSE TO GO TO WASHINGTON, D.C. On the other hand, if the expectations are kept low, and 14 Presidents and 6 Foreign Ministers attend the ceremonies, the press and media would focus on that in a positive manner. Therefore, I feel that public statements should be of such a nature as to maintain expectations low, so that with the large number in attendance, public opinion would be favorably impressed.

TORRIJOS: I completely agree with you. I believe that there is a political feeling in Latin America, and it might be the case with you also, whereby the number of Presidents attending might be thought of in terms of the goals scored in a soccer match. It will be good to keep expectations low in statements to the press. I do have a question though. That is, how many have already confirmed their acceptances?

THE PRESIDENT: First, let me say that I do not know yet. I believe about six have already made definite plans. However, they have been somewhat hesitant because the formal invitations have not been extended yet, and no official date has been set yet. However, now that you and I have agreed, I will undertake to make a maximum effort to contact directly the Presidents inviting them to witness the ceremony of the signing of the treaty, as well as to come to Washington to conduct other business. We are also preparing a banquet at the White House on the 7th of September, after the signing of the treaty, which I believe will provide a delightful end to that day. During the two days thereafter, we will have a chance to follow up in our talks with the various Heads of State present. At this point, I think we have good indications that eight Heads of State will be coming. We will keep your Ambassador informed of the responses we get, and you could do the same with our Ambassador regarding those leaders that you talk to who indicate that they will be attending the treaty signature.

TORRIJOS: Fine. I think it is important that you make a statement in the sense that certain leaders, without specifying their numbers, have been invited and will attend, and that you announce the date. I have a suggestion to make also. That we invite Canada. Prime Minister Trudeau enjoys great popularity in Latin America.

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THE PRESIDENT: Yes, it would be a great pleasure to do so. He also enjoys great popularity in the United States, and I believe he should be included. We feel that this is so important that it be publicized throughout the country to the people that we are planning to have the ceremony covered on live television in our country. We have not approached the networks yet, but the possibility exists. I would like to know whether you would have any objection to this?

TORRIJOS: Absolutely no objection. The moment is of great significance for the Americas, and I think it would be very advantageous to provide for TV coverage throughout the Continent.

THE PRESIDENT: I would like to suggest that some key White House staffers go to Panama with your Ambassador to arrange the details with you.

TORRIJOS: That would be fine.

THE PRESIDENT: To conclude, I want to tell you that I greatly appreciate the spirit of cooperation that has been shown by your Negotiators and by you. My wife and I are looking forward to your visit to the White House. Rosalyn was delighted with the complimentary remarks that you made while she was on her trip of Central and South America.

TORRIJOS: Thank you, President Carter. I want to tell you that you have shown great moral courage by the way you have faced the problems at hand. It was only with great moral courage that our ends could be achieved.

THE PRESIDENT: I am proud of the progress we have made. There are a number of things that you and the leaders of Latin America can do to help us, and we are also eager to help you get your people to approve the treaty. I hope your visit will allow us to establish ties of personal friendship and understanding that will assure the approval in the Senate and by the people of Panama. It is very important that our citizens know that you and I have consulted and are ready to cooperate in the future.

TORRIJOS: I agree. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Conversation ended at 4:30 pm.

Drafted by: Anthony J. Hervas, Interpreter;cl