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Lincoln
DISPATCH NO. HGG-A-682

JAN 27 1954

TO : Chief, Lincoln

DATE: _____

FROM : Chief of Station, Guatemala []

INFO: Washington

SUBJECT: GENERAL— PBSUCCESS

SPECIFIC— Psychological Barometer Report (Period Ending 23 January 1954)

Reference - (a) HGG-A-658
(b) HGG-A-613

1. Reference (b) noted that "the feeling of expectancy previously noted is defin spreading" and "widespread hopelessness and apathy have, by no means been enti dissipated, but there has been a significant change in recent weeks. It appe that the majority still feel that external forces will be the deciding factor any movement designed to remedy existing conditions."

The above description of prevailing attitudes is still pertinent, except that feeling of expectancy and resulting tension is more pronounced. This does nc essarily mean that immediate anti-government action is anticipated. However, opposition and pro-government elements appear convinced that such action is i table in a matter of weeks or a few months. One reliable source with a large ber of well-informed indigenous contacts stated that "the place is sizzling w rumors" of impending anti-government action. His statement fairly well summa the prevailing situation: expectancy, tension.

2. Other factors of importance are cited in the following sub-paragraphs:

- a. The sudden departure of Alfonso MARTINEZ, head of the Agrarian Department for Switzerland on 18 January 1954 has caused widespread speculation. Some sources allege that he has been exiled as a consequence of recently reported conflicts arising from application of the agrarian reform and especially because of the recent illegal invasions of land in the Escuint Guatemala, area (those invasions having been encouraged by Carlos Manuel PELLEGER, leading communist agitator). However, most sources believe the MARTINEZ went to Switzerland for the purpose of depositing large sums of money there for himself and/or President ARBENZ. An important implicatio of the latter view is that MARTINEZ, ARBENZ, et al, may be caching money abroad in anticipation of a successful movement to depose them.
- b. Unexpected government action against opposition personalities during this period is another factor of major importance. One person has been arrest another's home has been searched, and a third is reportedly in hiding to avoid arrest. (All were previously identified in SGUAT 015.) It seems

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highly possible that such action will serve to deter overt opposition to the government since a show of force has previously engendered fear and suspension or diminution of anti-government activity. On the other hand, such action may also demonstrate that the government is determined to resist and suppress opposition regardless of the consequences. Government leaders may also entertain the belief that they are capable of defeating whatever forces may be mounted against them. Such confidence and determination could, of course, reflect greater government support than had been anticipated and lead to unexpectedly strong resistance when and if the long rumored counter-revolution is initiated by opposition forces.

- c. It is believed highly significant to quote a portion of a statement by Ramon X BLANCO, manager of the independent daily newspaper El Imparcial, which appeared in that paper on 19 January 1954:

" I do not figure in the ranks of the anti-communists because . . . it has been proven that those ranks do not have political content. They are simply 'anti', nothing more. They clamor for the extirpation of the communist threat in our country, without offering any form of government. The majority of the 'antis' favors a return to dictatorship I am not anti-communist because I favor a government of the center, which the communists as well as the 'antis' abhor "

In addition to the foregoing statement which reflects a significant attitude for psychological barometer purposes, it is deemed important to report on the experiences of Eliot P. RAZMARA since he returned to Guatemala.

It will be recalled that RAZMARA previously served in this country. Since his arrival on 15 January 1954 he has unavoidably met numerous persons whom he knew during his previous tour of duty here. Many of these persons were students in 1950-51; now they are members of the professional classes, teachers, self-employed, etc. Also, according to RAZMARA, these persons were previously strongly anti-government; some reportedly participated in anti-government manifestations and activities. Now, however, these same persons are pro-government and strongly opposed to the elements that seek to overthrow the present regime. This does not mean that they are pro-communist, but it does mean, according to RAZMARA, that the opposition has failed to convince a considerable segment of the population that a change of government is necessary or desirable. These persons reportedly cited certain positive accomplishments of the Arbenz government, future plans for economic improvements, etc., and compare these facts with the negative program (or total lack of program) of the oppositionists which consists of nothing more than "anti-communism."

According to RAZMARA, these persons strongly approve of the agrarian reform, highway and port construction, control of foreign enterprises, etc., as necessary to the economic, political and social progress of Guatemala. Although basically anti-communist for ideological reasons, they have not responded to negativism (i.e., mere anti-communism which to them connotes a return to stagnant dictatorship).

STATION COMMENT: Manifestations of this anti-communist but pro-government attitude have been noted in the past, but the foregoing data suggests that the percentage of the population entertaining such views may possibly be larger and more significant than we had previously thought.

- d. "Anti-intervention" propaganda and attacks against OAS meeting at Caracas, Venezuela, continue without let-up in the official and/or communist press in an obvious effort to rally pro-government sentiment. Except for the possible conversions noted in sub-para. 2c above, it has been impossible to measure the efficacy of this propaganda. However, it is reasonably certain, as previously reported, that it does serve to encourage the unity of pro-government individuals and groups.

[
George L. Tranger
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26 January 1954

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