

VIA AIR
(Specify Air or
Sea Pouch)

DISPATCH NO. HUL-A-635

~~SECRET~~
PBSUCCESS/RYPAT
CLASSIFICATION

5 MAY 1954

DATE _____

TO PBSUCCESS, Headquarters

FROM LINCOLN

SUBJECT { GENERAL Operational
SPECIFIC Transmittal of Contact Report

Attached hereto is Contact Report #57: Visit of Robert C. JOHNSON with
[] 29 and 30 April 1954. A copy of the attachment was handcarried to
Washington by PLAYDON on 3 May 1954.

[]

WILLIAM D. PLAYDON

WDP/FTM/sgw

3 May 1954

Distribution:

- 3 - WASH
- 2 - LINC

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE AS SANITIZED

2003

~~SECRET~~
PBSUCCESS/RYPAT
CLASSIFICATION

CONTACT REPORT

DATE: 1 May 1954

PLACE: []

SUBJECT: Visit of Robert C. Johnson with [] 29 and 30 April 1954

1. Upon arriving at [] house and exchanging the usual pleasantries, I stated that my first interest was his health and the result of the [] examination. [] advised that for all practical purposes he was in excellent health except that within approximately two months he would need a minor gallstone operation. I discovered that he had been extremely worried about the possibility of cancer and seemed to be particularly relieved to know that he had no traces of cancer and that his heart, lungs and entire digestive tract were in perfect order. He currently is recuperating from the aftereffects of an operation involving the removal of an infected tooth root but by the middle of the coming week, the last necessary treatment will be completed. His violent upset stomachs and long periods of nausea were caused by his nervous system. His doctor said that only a more tranquil life would eliminate reoccurrences of these violent stomach disorders.

2. At this point, I told him of the real purpose of my visit, which was to advise him that the Group could not accept his resignation and that they were willing to take necessary steps to allow him to reconsider his resignation. I advised him that I personally took his resignation letter to Pancho to obtain his reaction. I told [] that Pancho's reaction, without any prompting or pressure on my part, was precisely the same as that of the Group-- that is, his resignation would not be accepted. I told [] that Pancho was very much disturbed and that he said any problems other than [] health could be solved. I said that although Pancho, in his letter to [] had suggested a conference, it would be extremely difficult for Pancho to be absent from his Headquarters. Nevertheless, if a conference is necessary to ensure [] return, it could be arranged.

3. [] advised that he was most appreciative of the Group's opinion regarding his capabilities but that he was certain other people could do the job. He stated that he had reservations on a ship sailing to Spain on 3 June for himself and his family. I then changed the conversation to advise him of the current progress being made inside and outside Guatemala. I first explained the situation at Pancho's Headquarters. I told him that the enthusiasm in the movement was high. Many men had already been trained and returned to Tegucigalpa. The last of the military leaders were being tested by the lie detector team. The training on all of the military people was going ahead. Both [] and [] had given full reports of their activities and were now resuming their duties inside Guatemala. I outlined the important activities that had happened at LINCOLN, making careful note of all positive progress accomplished during his absence. In connection with the progress being made by the radio writing team at [] I advised him that [] had seen fit to leave the safe house and return to [] After explaining the circumstances and details of [] departure, [] agreed that [] would be more useful away from LINCOLN. I advised him that I thought [] would still have been writing voluminously and productively had [] remained at LINCOLN.

~~SECRET~~
PBSUGGESS/RHBAT

4. I again asked when we could expect [] back. Although he did not reply directly, it did appear that he was weakening a bit. At this point, I told [] that perhaps the Group had slightly neglected the fact that his family, particularly his wife, had never been advised how useful and how important [] was to the movement and that perhaps we could better explain his long absence by pointing out how important he was to the Group and to Guatemala. [] replied: "It is I who gives orders in this house." There was no further discussion on that point. I felt that I had neutralized the unspoken fact that his wife had been influencing him to cease his political activity. []'s much improved health undoubtedly had a very stimulating effect on his wife, who appears to be in the best of spirits.

5. I again brought up the question of his return to take care of the many important tasks which must be done. I said perhaps it would be better to review what was needed to be done. I referred to his written statement that his position of responsibility was illusory. I said that this unavoidably occurred as a result of actions taken which were not strictly in accordance with our previous plans, but which had taken place because of the way in which the operation had progressed. I stated that delay in communications between [] and Pancho had made it more difficult for him to directly control the propaganda and intelligence setup. I advised that when faced with a need for immediate action, Pancho had to act in a hurry. I stated that he could appreciate such immediate action after his Mexican trip. I stated that he was very definitely needed for the political program and its ramifications in the economic and social spheres in Guatemala. The Church campaign, which had been started by him and which was so important, would doubtless suffer greatly without his personal supervision. Again, I advised him of his duty to remain with the cause when victory was in sight within a few weeks. I said his departure from the movement at such a time, in spite of his health, would leave a very bad impression with the many friends he had personally involved in the movement. In view of this, I asked that we again review his specific reasons for leaving to whether we could not now resolve them.

6.

a. In the ensuing conversation, [] brought out the following points of contention:

- 1) The responsibility but not the authority for propaganda and intelligence matters;
- 2) His health and worries about cancer;
- 3) His Mexican trip and the opposition group which received direct aid from the Group in New York.

b. We went into these points in great detail. I agreed with the above points in general and in particular with his responsibility without authority, stemming from the Group's weakness in making available the facilities we promised him, the lack of which had resulted in independent action on Pancho's part. I advised him that remedial steps were being taken regarding the Mexican group. I stated that fullest support was

being given to [] and intimated strongly that aid was being taken from the other group. I did not make a fast, hard statement in the latter respect, but I did state that the position of the other group would become weaker and weaker until they could no longer effectively criticize the Pancho [] group. I stated that it was impossible for us to explain the ~~past attitude~~ [] had assumed. I acknowledged [] wish not to see [] but explained that in deference to obtaining cooperation temporarily during the Anti-Communist congress, we thought such a visit would be necessary. I stated, however, that his contact and subsequent success with [] had more than overshadowed any other failures. We branched out into a long discussion as to how this work could be more adequately exploited. [] showed me a memorandum he had prepared on this matter. I advised him that if he did not return, it would be impossible to predict the effectiveness of his campaign.

7. Returning to the subject of the future plans of the country, [] said that it would be necessary to study the problem with a great deal of care. I asked whether he felt that Pancho was adequately trained and whether he had the calibre of advisers surrounding him necessary to devise and carry out a sound political program. [] said he doubted that Pancho could accomplish the task alone. I asked what would be gained by leaving Pancho at such a critical moment. I pointed out the example of Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina and how the responsible and conservative elements of the government had not agreed with Perón on many points and therefore, instead of seeing these points through, had left their political or advisory posts. In turn, I explained, this left only the alternative of turning to people of second calibre. I stated that I had no intentions of drawing the comparison between Pancho and Perón; however, I stated that the possibility always exists that when one man, no close advisors of high calibre, he is prone to seek those who are closest to him. [] agreed immediately. Specifically, he said he was interested not only in developing a political program but also in developing the structure of the temporary government which Pancho would head. I stated that most certainly the Group would give very serious consideration to any structure which would prevent strong-man government and which would facilitate democratic government.

8. Again I asked [] what day of the week he would return to [] [] replied that in view of all the information that I had imparted, the conciliatory attitude on our part and the great demonstration of loyalty, it was now necessary for him to demonstrate his loyalty not only to the Group and to Pancho but also to the many individuals whom he personally involved in the movement. I repeated that these people would be greatly distressed to learn of his departure. We then agreed that he would return to [] to take up three primary duties:

- a. to develop a political program and to outline the governmental structure of the temporary Junta;
- b. to direct the propaganda campaign of the Catholic Church;
- c. to act as a symbol of confidence to the many friends in the movement (which would, of course, mean many letters of confidence and direction not only to people in Guatemala but also to those in the surrounding countries) and to boost morale and provide assistance to the writing teams etc. []

9. I stated that I would return the following day with [] who was going to Pancho's Headquarters later in the next day and that news [] decision to remain with the organization could be taken down by [] in addition to any specific points regarding the campaign of the Church. [] voiced his appreciation and stated that he would be glad to continue discussions the following day.

10. [] returned with me from [] late the following morning and we discussed many of the foregoing points, dwelling on how to remedy the several things which have bothered []. He again pointed out his lack of authority and dramatically stated that his Mexican trip placed him in a very bad light. In addition to these points, [] and [] discussed matters which were irrelevant to the purpose of this meeting, but which were necessary for [] visit with Pancho.

11. [] advised that he would return to [] on Thursday, 6 May. In the meantime, he said he would prepare several letters to further the Church campaign. He was interested in [] activities and was advised he would be telephoned regarding the arrival of [] in the United States.

[]
ROBERT C. JOHNSON