

INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY Guatemala

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SUBJECT Press and University Activities and the Communist Party

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SOURCE A US national who met Alvar Contreras Velez, editor-in-chief of the Guatemala City Prensa Libre, on his recent visit to the US under State Department auspices.

Source, who is fluent in Spanish and has proved competent and reliable in past, says Contreras is 33, married, and the father of four. In addition to his Prensa Libre post, he also is an Associated Press correspondent, director of the daily radio broadcast "La Hora Latinoamericana" and director of the monthly magazine "Campanillas". The information below is given as Contreras presented it to source.

1. "There are a total of 19 newspapers in Guatemala City. Only eight have a circulation of over five thousand and only five have a circulation of over 10 thousand. Three of these newspapers are Government-owned and all three have a circulation of less than five thousand. The "Prensa Libre", of which I am editor-in-chief, was started three years ago. Six of us put up a capital of US\$2,000 apiece. To do this, I had to sell my car, my radio and other property. My paper now has a circulation of 40 thousand and is the second largest daily newspaper in Guatemala. The paper with the largest circulation is "El Imparcial" with 60 thousand. This is run by the party which is in opposition to the Government. My newspaper is not a political one. Each year since the newspaper started we have put the money we have earned back into the business so that now we own all of our machinery and the paper is worth approximately US\$150 thousand. There is still freedom of the press in Guatemala and so far we have not had any difficulties with the Government.
2. "I have known the President, Arbenz, for many years and was formerly a friend of his but since I have been head of our newspaper, I no longer have this relation. For the last several years the Communist Party has been spending money on university students. It is very expensive for a student to go through medical school unless he is very wealthy and it takes nine years for a student to become a practising physician after graduating from college. Two years ago the Communist Party selected 20 students who were starting in at medical school and promised to finance them until they started practising, paying them US\$60 a month in addition to their tuition the first year and increasing this amount from year to year. The Communist Party has awarded two scholarships that I know of in the dental school of the university. Although many students are anti-Communist and are against the Government, the incentive provided by these scholarships has influenced many students to support the present Government.

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3. "I have known Guillermo ~~Toriello~~, head of the Guatemalan delegation at the Caracas conference, for many years. He is a member of a very rich and aristocratic family in Guatemala, but always has been very ambitious to make a name for himself. He was the attorney for many Germans during World War II and when Arbenz took control, Toriello's brother Jorge was one of the leaders in the revolution. Guillermo, not wishing to be over-shadowed by his brother, has been pushing hard ever since to get ahead of him and as part of his efforts to surpass his brother managed to obtain appointment as chief of the Guatemalan delegation. His activities at Caracas have made him widely known throughout Latin America. I am strongly of the opinion that he is a complete opportunist and not to be trusted."

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