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VIA Air Pouch

DISPATCH NO. [ ] 1702

PBSUCCESS/RYPAT #100

TO Chief of Mission, Lincoln

DATE 13 April 1954

FROM [ ]

INFO: Wash.

SUBJECT General - KUGOWN/PBSUCCESS

Specific - Fabricated Story

REFERENCES a) DIR-45538 dated 8 April 1954  
b) 952-CMCMWU dated 22 July 1952

*LINC 1485*

In accordance with the request made in reference  
(a), enclosed herewith is the attachment to reference (b).

[ ]

**CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM  
RELEASE AS SANITIZED**

**2003**

Enc.

cav

cc: 1 - Linc. (w/attach.) ✓

3 - Wash "

1 - Files "

9 April 1954

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Amsterdam, Holland -- It has been reported that representatives of Guatemala's Arbenz government have been holding talks with Dutch gem merchants in the hope of arranging the sale of a number of famous and valuable Catholic religious ornaments. One such religious object is described as being 1.5 meters tall, made of heavy gold, and incrustated with precious gems. It is known as a "custodia," and will be transferred to Holland from Guatemala's Church of the Recollection, if the sale is consummated. Its value is estimated at hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Another valuable religious object being offered for sale by the Guatemalan government is the crown of the Virgin of the Rosary, also of heavy gold, and set with diamonds, rubies, and other precious stones.

During the presidency of Juan Jose Arevalo, attempts were made to steal the "custodia", but the priests were advised in advance of the efforts, and only a copy was stolen. This copy was offered for sale by the Arevalo government in Buenos Aires, where the agents were advised of the imitation.

The renewed efforts of the Guatemalan government to sell these valuable religious objects may be an unintentional commentary on Guatemala's financial situation. Following a pro-Communist policy of persecuting private enterprise and land expropriation, the Guatemalan government has suffered a tremendous decline in the production of its main export--coffee. There has been a notable reluctance on the part of customer nations to buy even the available part of the Guatemalan coffee crop, since such purchases would tend to assist the pro-Communist government in remedying its desperate financial plight.

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