

AIR

RYBAT/PBSUCCESS/SECRET

Washington

HGG-A-860

Chief, Lincoln

Chief of Station, Guatemala []

APR 6 1954

INFO: Washington

KUGOWN Operations

Comedores y Guarderías Infantiles

1. Enclosed is a copy of the most recent official (1950) report covering the activities of the subject organization.
2. Also enclosed is a three-page report regarding the organization as written by ESOTROPE.
3. It appears that both enclosures may contain exploitable information for PBSuccess/Kugown purposes. Certain items that may lend themselves to such exploitation are underlined. Example: page 3 of Esotrope's report - while hospital facilities suffer from lack of supplies the subject organization (the pet project of the "First Lady") enjoys special support from the government.
4. If this material is exploited in any way, the information supplied by Esotrope should be paraphrased.

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE AS SANITIZED

2003

George L. Tranger

Encl: as noted

2 April 1954

Distribution:

- 2 - Lincoln w/2 encl
- 2 - Washington w/1 encl (Esotrope report)
- 1 - Files w/1 encl (Esotrope report)

RYBAT/PBSUCCESS/SECRET

C O P Y

March 29, 1954

Re: Comedores y Guarderías Infantiles
(Children's Dining rooms and day nurseries)

A copy of the official report covering the activities of the above-mentioned organizations, during years 1948 and 1949, is being submitted with this memorandum.

The report was published in 1950 and it is the last one of its kind, pertaining to the children's dining rooms and day-nurseries, that has been issued.

A new report, data for which is being compiled, should be issued some time during the year 1954 and it will contain statistical information, accounts, etc., for the years 1950, 1951, 1952 and 1953. The reason given for the delay in issuing this report is that when Dr. Arevalo's term as President of Guatemala came to a close in March 1951, Colonel Arbenz succeeded him, the Presidency of Comedores and Guarderías passed from Mrs. Elisa Martínez de Arevalo to Mrs. María Vilanova de Arbenz and the period of readjustment that ensued has been prolonged due to a series of complications that are referred to below.

The report submitted gives the "official" version of the origin and beginnings of the children's dining rooms and day nurseries and your attention is called to pages 19, 20 and 21, where under the caption of Primeras Reuniones (First Meetings) and Llamamiento a Diversos Sectores Sociales (Invitation to Various Social Groups) unfavorable mention is made of the attitude shown by ladies of higher social standing

The truth - if it were told - would prove that the initiative of Mrs. Elisa Martínez de Arevalo met with enthusiastic acclaim and full support from ladies of social position and solid financial background, but Mrs. Arevalo quickly discouraged and destroyed all possibility of a joint effort and she, personally, chose to work with teachers, market women and people who were ready to cater to her and in whom she was sure to find complete subservience.

There were two major reasons for this attitude on the part of the then First Lady of Guatemala: 1) a marked inferiority complex. Mrs. Arevalo is a woman of humble origin whose life story is well known; she was an elementary school teacher in Tucuman Argentina; she had little, if any, social contact, she did not know how to dress or act when she was suddenly elevated to the rank of a president's wife, and she resented the company of people whom she was not prepared to meet on equal terms. 2) a tremendous jealousy of her husband. Mrs. Arevalo made a point of surrounding herself with women whose physical appearance, conversation and general qualifications were inferior to hers. She carefully removed from her side anyone whom her husband could compare with her and, possibly, find agreeable.

Under these circumstances, and using her natural privileges as First Lady as a shield, Mrs. Arevalo set out to deliberately insult local dowagers from whom she need not fear competition on a strictly personal basis, and to discourage the young more attractive women, from finding the social welfare work to their liking. Her success was immediate. Respectable dowagers were summoned to meetings "officially" through the Ministry of Education or Public Health, Mrs. Arevalo wilfully failed to

show the slightest courtesy and cunningly arranged to hold "mixed" gatherings and favor the word and the suggestions of lower class women whom, naturally, took full advantage of the encouragement they received and literally "grabbed" the direction and future destiny of the budding organization.

The growth of the children's dining rooms and day nurseries is not surprising because both services are rendered entirely free of charge and mistakes were immediately covered by the corresponding disbursements. The organizations were administrated according to the whims of Mrs. Elisa de Arevalo and, at the time of the change of presidents - March 1951 - conditions were such that the incoming First Lady, Mrs. Maria Vilanova de Arbenz, found herself with a mountain of mistakes to face and a political hot iron to handle. Mrs. Arbenz, with her acknowledged intelligence and calm "purged" the board of the family group that was making an easy living from organization funds, appointed questionable people to positions where they could not spy on her activities, and called in qualified personnel.

The change-over from a top-heavy, disorganized twin institution to a complicated, politically minded first rate bureaucracy has been arduous and it has proven that Mrs. Arbenz knows how to exploit a situation to the fullest advantage. At the present time, and although, as previously stated the official report of the institutions for the last four years is under preparation, and it will, undoubtedly, be doctored to suit the purpose for which it is intended -(prove that the second government of the revolution takes care of women and children and provides a much needed service)- the truth is that expenses have doubled or even trebled and that the institutions have had and continue having their share of labor problems.

The institutions, as they exist to-day, are a tremendous drain on government funds but they continue to be supported because the mothers of the children who are benighted by their existence may be counted upon as sure voters and it is expected that the children's dining rooms and day nurseries will continue to thrive as long as Mrs. Arbenz is First Lady. It is questionable, however, that another First Lady will have the patience and the skill to preside over a conniving board and successfully manage the hundreds of employees who, singly or collectively, expect everything and are disposed to give little - if anything - in return.

Although since the time of Mrs. Elisa de Arevalo the institutions have made a point of teaching children some religion and they have images or pictures of saints in the bedrooms and class rooms, this is no more than a gesture.

It is impossible to combat this type of organization on a purely religious basis because, outwardly, it serves two religious principles: feed the hungry and clothe the naked. There is no question that a good percentage of the mothers who take their children to these institutions are not government sympathizers, but where else are they going to get a free meal for their large families and where else can they leave their young while the mother goes out to work? What other organization is large enough and sufficiently staffed to compete with these government institutions? What independent group is financially able to give free food, medical service and elementary lessons to some 300,000 children? Another phase to consider is that a government institution is less apt to have serious labor trouble than an independent organization and that, therefore, an autonomous institution of this sort can grow only in relation to its income and its estimated ability to meet the many problems that arise in working with ever increasing groups of people who are encouraged to demand costly services, rendered entirely free of charge.

In referring to the "complications" that have had to be met by Mrs. Arbenz, as successor to Mrs. Elisa Martinez de Arevalo, your attention is called to page 279 of the report. The children's hospital at Puerto Barrios, had an estimated cost of Q116,000.00 in 1950. It was inaugurated, though not completely equipped, during the latter part of 1950 or early part of 1951; it has proven to be a terrible - and very costly - mistake, but it can not be closed down because the staff refuses to be transferred. The hospital is supposed to operate at a tremendous deficit.

Another gross miscalculation was the Iying-in Hospital (Ref. P. 185) which is said to have been "transformed" at a cost of Q30,000.--. Actually, the equipment for this maternity hospital was bought by a representative of the organization personally appointed by Mrs. Arevalo. The representative (Dr. Carlos Manuel Monzon Malice) bought the equipment from supply houses in the States (part of it was visibly second hand, reconstructed equipment); and is said to have done well by himself while complying with this assignment. The hospital had a very high overhead, the staff quickly became organized and, after considerable trouble and disputes, plus heavy disbursements and compensation pay, was "converted" from a maternity hospital to an infant's observation center, to be opened to the public shortly. The original idea was to close the establishment and send part of the equipment to several out-patients clinics operated in combination with day nurseries in the departments, but the doctors, nurses and hired help ganged up on the organization board and refused to be transferred. The administration had to give in to them.

Mrs. Arbenz has had to work very hard and very ably to continue operating these institutions. On page 261 it is stated that the cost per child per year is (was in 1948-1949) Q165.00. Each day nursery had an original government subsidy of Q600.00 per month. A member of the present board has stated that a fair guess would indicate that the subsidy is twice that amount at the present time.

It is interesting to note that whereas the General Hospital, the Hospital San Jose (cancer and other similar cases), Hospital San Vicente (T.B. Hospital, Asilo La Piedad (Leprosarium), etc., are constantly reported as lacking medicines, clothing, food and first aid articles, such as cotton, iodine, etc., the vast, costly organization, known as Guarderias and Comedres Infantiles does not have financial problems and actually thrives and grows. The organization is said to be more staffed than the Ministry of Public Health and, although the exact amount that it receives from the government, through various accounts, is not known, it is very substantial. Mrs. Gloria Bruni de Shaw, who used to be vice-president under Mrs. Elisa de Arevalo, but is now chief administrator of the organization, draws a monthly salary of Q500.00 and she has a car, gasoline and chauffeur. This service is not limited to week-days; the car and chauffeur are available at all times and for all personal services. Mrs. Shaw's son, Donald Shaw, works in the statistics department and he is reported to receive a salary of some Q225.00 to Q250.00 and the younger son, Sidney Shaw, works in the "technical department" (laundry service) and draws a salary also estimated at between Q225.00 and Q250.00. These appointments and salaries are not disclosed to the board and the "management" of the organization and actual status of accounts, etc., is a closely guarded secret known to Mrs. Arbenz and Mrs. Shaw.

Under the sub-title of "Organization" on pages 264, 265 and 266 you will find additional unfavorable reference to the better class women of Guatemala. This text was written by Mr. Rodolfo Figueroa Guillen, read and approved by Mrs. Elisa Martinez de Arevalo and inserted in the report with her full knowledge and consent.