

~~SECRET~~

SUBJECT: Comments on a Military Defection Program

SOURCE: SOCCER

INFO DATE: 1 April 1954

1. During the three years that SOCCER served in Guatemala he made some very close friends among the officers of its armed forces. During the last year of his stay, many of his friends spoke in complete frankness about their stand toward the ARBENZ government. They had the utmost confidence in SOCCER's discretion and were certain that he would not divulge their identity. They came to him because they were in need of guidance and a shoulder to cry on.
2. SOCCER believes that, at the time of his departure from Guatemala (June 1953) approximately 80% of the Guatemalan officers would have been willing to lend a hand in an armed revolt against President ARBENZ, in order to break the Communist stranglehold.
3. An intermediary, approaching ranking Guatemalan officers with a view toward defecting them, should be someone in whom they repose confidence and respect. It should be someone who can talk to them direct, without the assistance of an interpreter, so there will be no misunderstanding as to the meaning of words. That is most important, because the intermediary should be able to talk right off the shoulder and in complete frankness. This person, who should have an intimate knowledge of the psychology of Latin Americans and of their language, should prepare himself carefully. SOCCER knows of no one in Guatemala besides himself who could do the job.
4. The officers selected as defection targets have to be convinced that they are going on the right track and that they are acting in the higher interests of the Guatemalan armed forces. They must be given some assurance that they will be given better equipment, better arms, better airplanes. Once this issue has been satisfactorily settled, the military can present President ARBENZ with a tangible political platform which he can either accept or decline. In the latter case, it would be he who drives a wedge between himself and the Army, rather than some outsider. SOCCER realizes that there is an element of serious risk involved in holding out the inducement of military equipment, but cannot conceive of any other method to win over the allegiance of the officers' corps.
5. SOCCER considers President ARBENZ the key to the situation. He believes that ARBENZ can best be reached through the military, because he himself is an officer first and foremost, attaching more importance to his military rank than to that of his presidential position (witness the fact that he wears a uniform at most official functions).
6. The following officers may still be able to get close to President ARBENZ and extricate him from the Communist embraces: Colonel DIAZ, chief of the Armed Forces, Colonel GERRERA Asturias, and Colonel FUNES, San Salvadorian Ambassador to Guatemala. By far the best solution would be to try and reach him through Colonel DIAZ. SOCCER reasons that there is an unspoken

~~SECRET~~

- 2 -

understanding between Latin American officers which sometimes even transcends international boundaries and which may be very helpful in the attainment of our objectives.

7. When President ARBENZ came to power, everybody in Guatemala believed that he would clear out the Communists in at most three months. By now it is widely known how the Communists succeeded in bringing ARBENZ under their sway. This notwithstanding, SOCCER believes that at least attempt should be made to win him over to an anti-Communist stand. This would have to be done in a very careful manner, i.e., under circumstances not involving the United States Government as the sponsoring party. SOCCER is convinced that ARBENZ actually wants to stay out of entanglements with the Communists and the opposition. He wants to bring about a reform in Guatemala and the only people rendering him effective help happen to be the Communists.

8. SOCCER doubts whether President ARBENZ could be suborned financially. ARBENZ' father died a dope addict and there have been rumor current that ARBENZ himself partakes. ARBENZ suffers from a very pronounced inferiority complex, partly brought about by his lack of a good formal education. He was limited to military school, which is the equivalent of a high school in the United States. ARBENZ is a very proud individual and any approach would have to take account of that fact. SOCCER would not rule out that ARBENZ might be responsive to an offer of military support on a sufficiently large scale, plus a magnanimous sop to help him save face with his followers, such as a \$100,000 grant for a training school to help in the implementation of the Agrarian reform and assurance of complete freedom in re-negotiating the Guatemalan contract with the United Fruit Company.

Graham PAGE/gfb
6 April 1954

~~SECRET~~