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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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Approved in S
3/31/61

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: March 22, 1961

SUBJECT: Guatemalan Foreign Minister's Call on the Secretary.

PARTICIPANTS:

The Secretary
His Excellency Jesus UNDA Marillo, Minister of Foreign Relations
of Guatemala

His Excellency Carlos Alejos, Ambassador of Guatemala
ARA - Wamberley Coerr, Deputy Assistant Secretary
OAP/G - Richard A. Godfrey, OIC Guatemalan Affairs
L/S - Donald Barnes, Interpreter

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The Foreign Minister explained that he had come to see the Secretary mainly to get acquainted and to extend greetings personally and in behalf of President Ydigoras. The Foreign Minister had been under the impression that he had met the Secretary in 1957 or 1958 in Chile when he was the Guatemalan Ambassador there and the Secretary with the Rockefeller Foundation. It was agreed that it had been a namesake of the Secretary whom the Minister had met.

The Secretary expressed appreciation for the message of greetings and requested the Foreign Minister to inform President Ydigoras that both he and President Kennedy have a special personal interest in the problems affecting our relations with Latin America. This interest was entirely apart from the issues of the "cold war" and was based on a desire to convert into a mutually fruitful reality the friendship between the United States and Latin America. Also, the upsurge of interest being shown by Americans, especially by our young people, was quite apart from matters connected with the Cuban problem.

The Foreign Minister thanked the Secretary and stated that Guatemala shared this desire for closer and more cordial relations. Guatemala also shared the deep concern of the United States over current world problems, especially those affecting the Caribbean area. The Central American countries, and especially Guatemala, appeared to be a special target for Communist infiltration. Guatemala had already been subjected to a Communist government and "Che" Guevara himself had resided for a time in Guatemala during that period. The establishment of a Castro-type government in Central America would help Castro stay in power, since his popularity throughout Latin America, even in Cuba, is declining.

Source: *Ex-Secretariat S/S-S*
Stet. Miroslava Doc. from [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]
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Guatemala fully supported United States policy in these matters.

The Secretary then stated he wished to express certain views to the Foreign Minister, since he would not want a colleague of his to feel any uncertainty as to the United States viewpoint on world affairs. In public exchanges between the United States and the Soviet Union since the inauguration of the present Administration a period of civility had prevailed. In spite of this the Secretary was under no illusion that the basic issues had disappeared or been resolved, as could be seen by the situation in Laos, Cuba, the Congo, Berlin, and elsewhere in the world. The Sino-Soviet Bloc continues its great efforts to infiltrate the less-developed areas of the world, such as Latin America, Africa and Asia. There was no indication that international Communism was prepared to stabilize the situation according to the terms of the United Nations Charter, for example. The Secretary said the United States was concerned because of a number of Latin American countries did not see the threat from Communism as clearly as did the Foreign Minister, or else these countries felt certain restraints in dealing with it. While we understood the circumstances affecting these governments, the United States is very disturbed over the present lack of unity of the American States with respect to the nature of the threat to the Western Hemisphere.

The Foreign Minister said that he shared the views expressed by the Secretary, and he was especially heartened by the firm position the United States has now adopted. If unity could be achieved in the Latin American bloc, and if, by whatever circumstances, the present Cuban regime could be eliminated, then a heavy blow would have been dealt to international Communism. Guatemala has continuously pressed for firm action against the Castro threat and had felt that the San Jose Meetings should have taken drastic measures to isolate this menace. The Foreign Minister felt that the indecisive attitude of many Foreign Ministers at San Jose had been influenced by the fact that the United States was also indecisive on the matter. He said that the Foreign Ministers had asked him how he expected them to adopt a firm position if the United States had not done so? He said that now, however, public statements by President Kennedy and the Secretary had had a marked effect on Latin American public opinion and had succeeded in changing it.

The Foreign Minister again expressed his pleasure at the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with the Secretary and requested the Secretary to transmit to President Kennedy the cordial greetings of President Ydigoras.

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