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SECURITY CONDITIONS IN MEXICO

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Concurred in by the

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

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Authenticated:

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The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Defense, the NSA, FBI, and the United States Secret Service.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

7 April 1966

SUBJECT: SNLE 81-66: SECURITY CONDITIONS IN MEXICO

THE PROBLEM


To estimate the likelihood of incidents which would endanger or embarrass Mrs. Johnson and Secretary Rusk during their visit to Mexico City.

CONCLUSION

The political situation in Mexico is considerably more stable than in most Latin American countries. The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) maintains a virtual monopoly over national and local politics. The security forces in Mexico City are experienced and effective in controlling demonstrations. In recent years the Mexican Government has cooperated willingly with the US in eliminating certain longstanding issues in US-Mexican relations and in controlling others. Nevertheless, there are

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anti-US elements in Mexico which might attempt to create incidents designed to disrupt US-Mexican relations. While there can be no absolute guarantee against such an incident, we believe that the Mexican Government will take security precautions which will be adequate to protect Mrs. Johnson, Secretary Rusk, and their party.

DISCUSSION

The Political Situation

1. The political situation in Mexico is considerably more stable than in most Latin American countries. The official party, the PRI, has dominated Mexican politics for nearly four decades. It encompasses groups ranging from the far left to the extreme right and exercises a virtual monopoly over political offices from national to local levels. While President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz has followed a course to the right of his predecessor's, there is no substantial opposition to his administration.

2. Confident of its ability to control the situation, the Mexican Government has permitted Mexico City to become a haven for political exiles from other countries, mostly Communists and other leftist extremists, but including also anti-Castro Cubans. Mexico City is a major center for



Communist activities in Latin America. The Mexican Government, however, maintains some surveillance over the activities of these various extremist and exile groups. Even before the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, moderate and conservative elements in the PRI were exerting pressure to restrict the influence of Castroites, Communists, and other extremists.

3. The Mexican Government still maintains diplomatic relations with Cuba and the USSR, but it has sharply limited pro-Castroite and other anti-US activities. There are still some Communists and other anti-US elements in the bureaucracy, the educational system, peasant groups, and labor unions, but their ability to create disturbances has been curtailed by the administration's coercion and harassment. The orthodox Mexican Communist Party (PCM), the Marxist Popular Socialist Party (PPS) led by Lombardo Toledano, and other extremist movements exist only on official sufferance and have only a very limited ability to rouse public support. The once-touted Movement of National Liberation (MLN), an anti-US and pro-Cuban mass organization founded in 1961, has lost much of its early support and has been weakened by disagreement among its leaders. The recent efforts of the PCM and PPS to stage anti-US demonstrations in support of the North Vietnamese were an almost complete failure.

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The Mexican Government's Position on the Visit

4. President Díaz Ordaz, who has placed special emphasis on Mexico's foreign relations, will be concerned to prevent any incident that would impair his government's prestige abroad. His administration also is aware that it needs outside aid in carrying out economic and social reform in rural Mexico, where nearly half the population is receiving few, if any, tangible benefits from the Mexican Revolution. The US, by committing funds under the Alliance for Progress, has already indicated its willingness to assist the Mexican Government's efforts in this field.

5. We believe that the Mexican Government will take effective security precautions, in cooperation with US officials, to prevent or control any hostile demonstrations during the visit of Mrs. Johnson and Secretary Rusk. While Minister of Government (1958-1964), President Díaz Ordaz increased the capabilities of the various civil police organizations in the Federal District; he demonstrated his ability to control would-be troublemakers during President Kennedy's visit in June 1962. The Federal District police, which number about 10,000 men, are experienced in detecting and detaining subversives and extremists. They have been effective in controlling demonstrations in the Federal District. If needed, there are also at least 11,000 well-trained and reliable army troops quartered in Mexico City and the immediate vicinity. The army and police forces are anti-Communist and fully responsive to the orders of the Díaz Ordaz administration.

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6. Mexico's extremist elements know that the government would crack down hard on any organized agitation during the visit of Mrs. Johnson and Secretary Rusk. The major Communist groups would also feel that any serious incident would bring to an end the freedom they have enjoyed for their propaganda and other overt activities. The most likely source of such an incident would be the radical student groups at the National University, where there is already considerable unrest reflected in a student strike. The approaching anniversary of the US intervention in the Dominican Republic would provide a likely theme for a student demonstration. However, Mexican authorities customarily use detention, coercion, and other warnings to keep such potential troublemakers in line.

Prospects

7. We believe that the Mexican Government will take security precautions which will be adequate to protect Mrs. Johnson, Secretary Rusk and their party from manhandling by an angry mob and to minimize the possibility of a seriously embarrassing demonstration. However, the possibility of an assassination attempt by an individual can never be excluded. The Mexican Government might be less able to ensure security outside of Mexico City.