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FORM 31-57c

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SPECIAL NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

NUMBER 2476

Soviet (Czechoslovak) Alliance

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OFFICE OF SPECIAL INTELLIGENCE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

FORM 31-57c

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

13 August 1970

SUBJECT: SNIE 81-1-70: SECURITY CONDITIONS IN MEXICO

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the likelihood of an incident that would embarrass or endanger President and Mrs. Nixon during their visit to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, on 20-21 August 1970.

CONCLUSION

Given the relatively stable political conditions in Mexico and the generally friendly attitude of the Mexican people toward the US, the chance of an incident which would embarrass or endanger the President and Mrs. Nixon appears small. The Mexican

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Government and its efficient internal security forces have cooperated well with US officials in making security arrangements for numerous US presidential visits in the past and should have little difficulty in keeping anti-US elements away from the relatively remote resort area of Puerto Vallarta.

DISCUSSION

1. The political situation in Mexico is stable. To no one's surprise, the generally peaceful Federal elections in July confirmed the continuity and effective monopoly of power held by the Institutional Revolutionary Party. After an extensive nationwide campaign which enhanced his political stature, President-elect Luis Echeverría is not likely to encounter any serious difficulties in taking over in December. Meanwhile, President Diaz Ordaz can be expected to keep a firm hand on the government and to avoid actions which might upset the relative political calm or complicate unnecessarily the job of his successor.

2. Student unrest, aggravated by the bloody confrontation between students and the government in October 1968, continues to

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simmer. But firm government controls combined with steps to ameliorate some of the causes of the trouble have inhibited disorders during the past year. During the President's visit Mexican students will be on vacation, reducing further the chances of a demonstration in Mexico City or other student centers. Anti-US student leaders would find it particularly difficult to organize any action in or near the remote and well-secured Puerto Vallarta area.

3. Anti-US sentiment remains strong among political and intellectual groups on the left and far left, including the small Communist Party, the larger Popular Socialist Party, and various extremist groups. But the limits of political dissent are well recognized in Mexico, and none of these groups is likely to invite the wrath of the government by openly organizing anti-US demonstrations during the visit of President and Mrs. Nixon. Government surveillance of organizations likely to cause trouble has already been stepped up, and swift preventive action by the security forces is likely to inhibit any organized effort to infiltrate disruptive elements into the Puerto Vallarta area.

4. To cap his record of close and mutually beneficial cooperation with the US during his term of office, Diaz Ordaz

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will wish to arrange a warm and cordial reception for the Presidential party in Puerto Vallarta. As compared to Mexico City, security arrangements in the resort area should present few problems. Land access to the area is limited to a single road from Guadalajara; the only other approaches are by sea and the airport just north of the town. The Mexican Government is experienced in handling security preparations for the visits of foreign dignitaries and will substantially strengthen its security forces in the Puerto Vallarta area during the Presidential visit. It will thus be able to ensure a high degree of personal safety for President and Mrs. Nixon.*

5. In recent months growing numbers of political exiles and malcontents -- including political prisoners released by other Latin American governments and some anti-establishment drop-outs from the

* In addition to an honor guard of from 800 to 1,000 armed members of Diaz Ordaz' Presidential Guard at the airport to receive President and Mrs. Nixon, Mexican security forces for the occasion will include an air force fighter squadron at the airport, three naval units plus four fast boats in the bay, several hundred members of the Presidential Guard or army in civilian clothes along the route to be taken by President Nixon, and a uniformed army marksman every 50 yards along the tops of the cliffs above the town. During the visit all military forces in the area will be on full alert, a roadblock will control traffic on the road from Guadalajara, and the airport and the bay will be denied to all but official craft.

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US -- have found haven in Mexico. One or more of these individuals might seek to embarrass the US Government or damage US-Mexican relations by some harassment or propaganda action, possibly in Puerto Vallarta itself. Such an action is unlikely to find any popular support or organized backing. Furthermore, the ability of the Mexican security forces to control the Puerto Vallarta area greatly reduces the chance that such elements would be able to carry out any significant action against the Presidential Party.

6. In sum, we believe the chances of an incident which would embarrass or endanger the President and Mrs. Nixon during their visit are small. At this time there are few issues likely to feed an anti-US protest. Organized demonstrations against the visit are thus unlikely; should they be attempted, the Mexican Government can be expected to move quickly to isolate and neutralize them. A danger which cannot be ruled out is that of an attempt at violence by a fanatic or psychopath. But Mexican security arrangements are likely to be so effective as to make this possibility rather remote.

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