

AIR POUCH

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HGG-A-784

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LINCOLN

12 March, 1954

Chief of Station, Guatemala

INFO: Chief, WHD.

SYNCRAP Activities

Morale in opposition circles.

Enclosed for the information of Lincoln and Headquarters is one copy of a memorandum prepared by William L. Krief, Counselor of Embassy and dated 11 March 1954, concerning morale in opposition circles.

Without revealing the source Counselor Krieg stated he considered his source to be fairly reliable and well informed.

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE IN FULL

2003

Clara M. Heagey

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MEMORANDUM

FROM: William L. Krieg

DATE: March 11, 1954

SUBJ: Morale in Opposition Circles.

A young Guatemalan who has previously volunteered information regarding the organized opposition to the Arbenz Administration, informed me this morning that around the end of February the organization had been alerted, presumably on orders from Colonel CASTILLO Armas, and informed that a movement against the Government was to be gotten under way within the next ten days. Subsequently, the order was cancelled and they were told to wait for a further period.

My informant stated that this order and its subsequent cancellation had drastically lowered morale in the organization; that individuals were under great strain and fear of apprehension by the Government; and that several of them were losing heart in the eventual success of the movement and were considering making their peace with the Government.

He said that the brother of Colonel Roberto BARRIOS Peña, who is in exile in El Salvador, had been spreading word that Colonel Castillo Armas had sold out to the Government and that he was deliberately delaying any move against it. My informant apparently did not accept this story literally, but he pointed out that Colonel Castillo Armas has large sums of money at his disposal and despite this fact has done nothing. Expenses were mounting because a number of "our best people" had been forced into exile recently and that in addition to maintaining them they were also maintaining a sizable number of former Guatemalan Army sergeants who were presumably in training for an eventual assault.

As an example of the practical difficulties involved in maintaining the organization in a constant state of alert, he said that they had been instructed on occasion to contact specified Army officers; in some instances the officers agreed that they would deliberately misfire if called upon to fight the uprising and would join it at the earliest possible moment. He pointed out that such officers were in mortal terror because they knew the opposition

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organization was infiltrated by Government spies and that a horrible fate awaited them if they were denounced to the authorities. The temptation was to run to the authorities first and reveal the plans, thereby gaining substantial rewards.

Concluding this phase of the conversation, my informant stated that he was completely fed up and about ready to throw in the sponge. He said he had received a number of feelers from Government sources, and he expressed some interest in the idea of "infiltrating" the Government parties with an organized group of persons who would secretly be opposed to the Communist tendencies of the present regime.

I suggested that the infiltration technique seemed to offer little prospect of success even over a long period of time. I pointed out that whenever members of the Government parties had in any way opposed the Communists they had been shunted to one side and cited the case of Carlos GARCIA Bauer.

In a joking way, I inquired whether he was taking asylum in the Salvadoran Embassy as had the opposition Deputy José Luis ARENAS. He said that he was not and added that Arenas had gone into the Salvadoran Embassy because he too had believed that action was imminent and wanted to be in a safe place when the movement actually started. He expressed himself in very harsh terms regarding Sr. Arenas.

COMMENT: I do not know how much of my informant's discouragement is personal and how much reflects the views of other persons with whom he is associated. I do not believe that he is likely to withdraw from the movement much less join forces with the Government, but he is obviously beginning to question the effectiveness of the movement's leadership, in strong contrast with his former high opinion of Colonel Castillo Armas.

WLKrieg:rd

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