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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY: Colombia
SUBJECT: Review of the Book, "Economía Social Colombiana"

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- "It is rather difficult to evaluate the publication of this book [Economía Social Colombiana] by Carlos Mario Londoño...because of several surrounding factors. A book such as this written and published by an independent individual would mean one thing. The same book published by the secretary to the President of Colombia is another thing.
- "Carlos Mario Londoño, the author of 'Economía Social Colombiana,' is at present general secretary to the President of Colombia...He is a young man in his thirties who has had rather peculiar accomplishments...During the presidency of Laureano Gómez, Londoño was instigator and agitator of the 'guerrilla' warfare...in Antioquia, the capital of which is Medellín. The mayor of Medellín in this time was Bernal Restrepo, brother of Martín Bernal Restrepo, general manager of Echavarría Cubo. The activities of Londoño are well authenticated and tend to make Colombians believe that the civil strife during the time of Laureano Gómez was fomented by the army in order to create a situation in which [it] would have to take over to maintain the peace. There is apparently considerable justification for believing that the pacification of Colombia, which took place immediately after the overthrow of...Gómez, took place simply because the army was now in control and had no further desire to incite...civil strife. The well authenticated background of Londoño and his appearance as secretary general made the publication of this book of particular importance.
- "The book received practically no publicity in Colombia while I was there, all critics being apparently afraid to touch it. Of particular interest is the dedication on the second page...which translates as follows: 'To my son Carlos Alberto and His Excellency Senor Presidente of the Republic, Lieutenant General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, in the assurance that he will put into effect the social Christian revolution in Colombia.' On page 8...is reproduced a handwritten copy of Rojas Pinilla's comments... 'He has grasped with vehemence and correctness the thesis of Social Catholicism whose merits no one who knows Colombia can deny as being the only thesis that presents practical and definite solutions of the economic necessities of the Colombian people.'"

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4. "The prologue is written by Mariano Ospina Pérez, who apparently is enough of a practical politician to swim with the tide if he cannot find a way to resist it. The index practically summarizes the book. The first two chapters cover the discussion of private ownership, placing emphasis on the fact that private property must be administered for the benefit of all. The next three chapters are an attack on the wealthy groups of the country. This attack is made regardless of the effects of this group on the productivity of the country.
5. "The second part of the book concerns itself with how to convert Colombia from Capitalism to 'Catholic Socialism'. It includes some old and some new wrinkles. The idea of division of the land so that all will have their share is not new, nor is the idea of taxing the rich to redistribute the wealth new. The idea of changing industry to cooperatives, of course, patterns itself after recent loose thinking in Germany and has been heard in the States. Here they are proposing a percentage of the earnings to go to the workers to be used to buy stocks of the companies and finally to be owned by the workers through cooperatives (presumably controlled by the state). The book also emphasizes the idea that banks should be owned by the state and loan money at little or no interest to the individual, and that they are not for the needs of the wealthy. The book, while stating that it is not necessary to nationalize the banks, nevertheless by implication points to that end.
6. "It makes every effort to put a Catholic background to its propositions because of the power of the Catholic Church in Colombia. There are quotations throughout the book from Catholic authorities that are taken out of context at times and misinterpreted at other times....
7. "It could be, as most people seem to believe in Colombia, that this government is only attempting to imitate Perón. This seems more logical than any [other] interpretation. There are, though, some aspects which perhaps need to be questioned. The April 9 1948 riots...while spontaneous to a certain extent, nevertheless were agitated by an organization presumably traced to the Russian Embassy. The ... Embassy was officially thrown out of the country but as far as I know nothing has been done by the underground group fomenting the riot. L.M. Currie and several others of his ilk were prominent in the economic councils of...Ospina Pérez. Without attempting to judge present criticisms against Currie, the socialistic ideas which he and others like him have sponsored find ready adherents because of political expediency [on the part of] those attempting to gain power. The economic advisers who have been sent by various international organizations to these countries have left something to be desired from the point of view of the US.
8. "Upper classes of Colombia seem to feel that their strong Catholic faith reaches down into the lower classes and protects them from Communism, forgetting that the lower classes are Catholics only by force of pressure from above. It is too early to estimate whether Colombia will go down the path of Argentina and Guatemala in the years to come. Colombia cannot afford this type of nonsense if the slightest decline takes place in the price of coffee. This would...lead to...inflation, controls, and demagogic appeal to the lower classes, blaming wealth and the US for the difficulties created by their own incompetence...
9. "This may seem to be jumping at shadows but the shadows seem a little real down here. I was rather interested in reviewing correspondence I had in September 1950 regarding Chile. I felt at that time I was seeing the dark side and maybe being too pessimistic. I'm wondering now.
10. "It is difficult to forecast the future for Colombia under the rather confusing picture...today. From my point of view, the following facts stand out:
- a): The Government of Rojas Pinilla shows no sign whatsoever of returning the country to normal political life. It can be presumed that he will retain power until thrown out by physical means. This is proven by various statements he and his subordinates have made in speeches. This means either a strong dictatorship or a series of revolutions. Neither political party has any physical power. They also seem to be morally and spiritually bankrupt. Rojas Pinilla personally is assuming all the rather vainglorious customs and forms of a dictator. His cohorts and family are acquiring wealth rapidly...

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- b): The budget is going to be high for 1954/7. Taxes will jeopardize the economy...A very high percentage of the budget will be for the army, though perhaps this will be hidden in various categories not usually associated with defense projects.
- c): 50% of all Government funds are required to be deposited in a newly-created Banco Popular which will be a bottomless hole of loans to workers, etc. This will place a severe strain on credit...Loss of ill-advised loans, etc., can also create the necessity for additional taxes.
- d): The book...appears to be for the purpose of preparing the masses of people for...changes in the economic and political life of Colombia. Without this preparation it is possible the oligarchic upper classes could frustrate or prevent the efforts of this government to achieve a permanent hold upon the country. Because the existing two-party system is vertical in its distribution...the present authorities are attempting to create a third party, a labor party with the usual class frame of mind against the wealthy...The methods and patterns are known and it should not be difficult for them to do this...
- e): In a very short time, 1 to 3 years, Colombia will face a greatly reduced dollar income because of additional coffee production in other parts of the world. Therefore, the timing of these problems is difficult for Colombia.
- f): The large textile mills of Coltejer and Fabricato and the oligarchic families seem to be the particular targets of the present government. Colombia may be a good market for us through 1954, but, barring a revolution, and with almost certain lower prices for coffee in 1955 because of coming production in other regions (Africa), difficulties can be foreseen. At present I would not place too much dependence on forecasts beyond early 1954...Statistical data from the present government must be considered misleading...unless it can be checked by other sources."

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