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MAR 22 1968

GUATEMALAN SEIZURE LAID TO RIGHTISTS

Archbishop's Kidnaping Organized By 'White Hand,' Suspects Say

By ARNOLD R. ISAACS
(Sun Staff Correspondent)

Guatemala City, Guatemala, March 21—The national police said today the kidnapers of Archbishop Mario Casariego of Guatemala City were members of the extreme right-wing terrorist organization known as La Mano Blanco (the White Hand). Archbishop Casariego, the country's highest Catholic cleric, had been missing since late Saturday afternoon. He returned to Guatemala City last night in an Air Force helicopter after his captors abandoned him unharmed in Quezaltenango, about 120 miles west of the capital.

The kidnaping was apparently connected with an unsuccessful plot to overthrow President Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro. Informants said the President received an ultimatum Monday in the form of a note saying the Archbishop would be killed unless he resigned within 24 hours. He decided to reject the ultimatum, the informants reported, and allowed the 24-hour period to expire. The plot was never officially confirmed.

Alejos Also Named

In an official bulletin this morning, the police gave the names of three of the suspected kidnapers who were arrested in Quezaltenango yesterday morning. According to the bulletin, the three told police interrogators that Raul Estuardo Lorenzana, the chief of La Mano, organized the kidnaping.

They also named Roberto Alejos as one of the planners, the police said. Alejos, a wealthy coffee planter whose farm was used as a base for the CIA-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion force in 1961, is a vocal adherent of right-wing causes.

Calm Prevailed

Earlier this year, Alejos was imprisoned for several weeks after he was quoted by a foreign journalist as charging that several members of the Guatemalan Government were Communists.

Archbishop Casariego, who has taken a relatively progressive stance on both church and social issues, has condemned both rightist and leftist violence.

La Mano is one of several clandestine right-wing groups operating in Guatemala's political underworld. It may have hoped to stir up large-scale disorders by kidnaping the Archbishop, but the country remained calm during the four days he was missing.

Monday night, the Government proclaimed country-wide martial law. The decree remains in effect.

In a taped broadcast late last night, Archbishop Casariego said his captors had treated him well. He related how he was seized, together with a chauffeur, just after leaving the residence of the Papal Nuncio, but he gave no hint of the motives of his abductors, adding: "It would not be worthwhile to say more."

Car Was Spotted

According to announcements from both the Army and the police, the first break in the case came yesterday morning, when a car identified as belonging to the kidnapers was spotted in Quezaltenango.

Three of its occupants were arrested, but a fourth escaped, the Army said, and presumably made his way to the house where the Archbishop was being held in time to warn the rest of the band.

They fled before the police arrived, leaving the prelate and his chauffeur in the house. Archbishop Casariego went to the local cathedral and from there managed to get in touch with Government authorities. A Guatemalan Air Force helicopter was sent to bring him back to the capital.