

Headquarters

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VIA: AIR
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DISPATCH NO. HGG-A-635

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TO : Chief, WHD
FROM : Chief of Station, Guatemala

File

DATE: 11 January 1954

SUBJECT: GENERAL— PBSuccess
SPECIFIC— Intentions and Views of CASTILLO Armas Opposition Group.

1. Attached are a copy of a letter from the American Ambassador to Mr. Raymond G. Leddy of the Department of State dated January 11, 1954, and copies of each of the attachments thereto.
2. This material is being rushed into the current pouch, which does not afford time for comments thereon.

[Kenneth S. Givloch]

Enclosures: as noted

11 January 1954

Distribution:
3 - Washington w/encl
2 - Lincoln w/encl
1 - Files w/encl

**CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE AS SANITIZED**

2003

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C O P Y

American Embassy,
Guatemala City, Guatemala
January 11, 1954

OFFICIAL - INFORMAL

~~SECRET~~ - SECURITY INFORMATION

Dear Ray:

Enclosed is a memorandum prepared by a reliable contact of the Embassy who last week visited Salvador where he had two interviews with Luis CORONADO Lira who is active in the anti-Communist group supporting CASTILLO Armas. Not only is Coronado high in this group but between the two interviews he sent a special messenger to Tegucigalpa to consult with leaders of the movement there and brought back certain written replies from them. These written replies were subsequently destroyed but their contents is included in the attached memorandum.

The second memorandum was prepared by a member of the Embassy staff on the basis of information given him verbally enlarging upon the contact's written memorandum.

Sincerely yours,

John E. Peurifoy

Raymond G. Leddy, Esquire,
Officer in Charge,
Central America and Panama Affairs,
Room 4103, New State,
Department of State,
Washington, D. C.

~~SECRET~~ - SECURITY INFORMATION

ABWardlaw:mn

Verbal Explanations and Additions to Attached Memorandum of January 9, 1954, regarding the Plans of CASTILLO Armas

The London Pact mentioned in the first paragraph was an agreement between Idigoras and certain of the anti-Communists to make Idigoras the candidate of a unified opposition, and in the event, foreseen as a certainty, of his being defrauded of the election, to overthrow the Guatemalan Government. This agreement was the result of negotiations carried on for one month in London where Idigoras was serving as Guatemalan Ambassador. However, Idigoras greatly disappointed his supporters during the campaign by his spineless activity. When his arrest was ordered by the Government he should have stood out boldly and challenged the authorities to arrest him. His supporters assured him that even if the authorities should arrest him, they would not dare kill him, and his popular appeal would be greatly increased by the persecution. Instead, he went into hiding, and did not carry on a vigorous campaign.

In preparation for the uprising to follow Idigoras' defeat, the anti-Communists collected considerable funds in Guatemala with which they purchased arms. After the election, Idigoras, Jorge Toriello, and Idigoras' son-in-law who is a Scotsman named Munn and lives in El Salvador and British Honduras, sold the arms to President Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, and kept the money for themselves. The anti-Communists would have forgiven Idigoras this betrayal if he had shown any real leadership while in exile, but while in El Salvador he has displayed neither courage or leadership.

(This story is interesting in view of a report given the Embassy some months ago that Bernardino, the former Dominican Consul General in New York who was acting as Trujillo's contact man with one group plotting an attempt in Guatemala, stated that Trujillo was not disposed to give more money to Idigoras or Munn, since money which he had given them earlier had been used to buy a finca for Munn in Salvador.)

The incident involving a high Salvadoran official and Arbenz which led President Osorio of El Salvador to give his backing to Castillo Armas rather than Idigoras was as follows: Some months ago, Osorio wishing to learn Arbenz' views on the two opposition leaders, sent a high official to complain to Arbenz about a Salvadoran exile who was operating a radio station in Quezaltenango from which he was daily attacking Osorio. The Salvadoran official suggested that if Arbenz would do something about the man in Quezaltenango, Osorio might do something about some of the Guatemalan exiles living in El Salvador. Arbenz replied that he was not interested in Idigoras, that Osorio could give Idigoras all the arms and money he wanted and it would not bother Arbenz, but that Arbenz would

be very much interested in getting his hands on Castillo Armas. That decided the matter for Osorio, and he has since backed Castillo Armas.

Osorio's backing of Castillo Armas' followers is such that if they complain of the presence of a Guatemalan spy in El Salvador, Osorio immediately arrests and deports him.

My informant was not able to get any information about the size of the forces in exile which Castillo Armas has at his command. He also had no information as to how far Castillo Armas considered the Guatemalan Army neutralized, or how many Guatemalan Army officers were believed to be loyal to him.

My informant reported that his contact indicated that the organization had no satisfactory contact with the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa, the headquarters of the Castillo Armas movement.

My contact said that he was informed that the Castillo Armas group would be delighted if the sale of Guatemalan coffee in the United States would be blocked. He said, however, that this should be done almost immediately so that it would go into effect before the movement takes place and so that it would apply while large stocks of coffee still remain on hand in Guatemala, December through March, being the months of heaviest shipments.

Although my informant was given no information as to when the group would expect to strike, he stated that he assumed that they would like to do so as quickly as possible, depending on when they could deliver the necessary money and materials to agents in Guatemala, but in any case would try to move in February.

My informant said that his contact had warned that the leaders of his group felt that the Embassy should be a "fortress" at the time of the uprising. The informant said that the reason for this belief was not explained to him, but that the warning was repeated several times in the course of the conversation.

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Memorandum Prepared by Reliable Contact on Intentions and Views of CASTILLO
Armas Opposition Group, January 10, 1954

1/ Organization:

Recent newspaper reports and publications in "La Hora" by the former prominent Idigiristas to the effect, that general Idigoras is not the supreme chief of the movement is now fully confirmed. All the opposition home and abroad, including all the factions in exile - with the exception of "Poncistas", who are tainted with memories of short-lived, corrupt and brutal regime under general Ponce - is now firmly united and recognizes Castillo Armas as their supreme commander. The organization is complete, compact and cohesive, and full of purpose; even the most devoted Idigoristas submit cheerfully to his leadership and there is no doubt as to his courage, determination and abilities as a leader in such a situation as this.

Idigoras is lonely, sulking, voiceless and without influence abroad; the only people still with him there are Putzeys, Garcia and one or two others, while Barrios Pena is sitting on the fence. In the country the movement has not lost any former Idigoristas, on the contrary: it has gained all such elements which formerly hesitated to support a man intimately connected in the past with Ubico's despotism.

It is obvious that both governments (Honduras and Salvador) are very pleased with this development and that C. A. has their complete, unstinting support. Headquarters of the organization are now definitively in Tegucigalpa. Its counterpart inside the country is tight, selected, extremely careful, contains all desirable elements of the population inclusive the Army and is in complete cooperation and harmony with Tegucigalpa, from where the signal will come; it must be concluded that action, when it comes, will start from both sides, coordinated and under on command.

2/ Arms & Ammunition:

Organization abroad is most excellently and completely equipped and lacks nothing. They have been and are sending some of it, by whichever route available, to the country, but this is becoming increasingly difficult. In this respect they need help urgently and they are asking for it. Tegucigalpa needs to know as early as possible if this help will be given, and which types and how much of each so that they would not duplicate. This side of the picture is even more acute owing to the fact that it is virtually impossible today to purchase in the City or in provinces even a small caliber arm and respective ammunition, while it is widely known that large numbers of communist party members and any amount of GTCists are well armed, some of them even with light machine guns and hand-grenades.

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3/ Funds :

Organization abroad has ample means and does not require help in this respect, while inside the country more funds are needed. Again here they urge that some help be given through AFS; and if so, Tegucigalpa wishes to know how much, so that they will not need to get it in here from there. It is apparent that such a vast organization as this needs large sums.

Note: All these answers must be considered as from C.A.'s own mouth; a special courier flew to Teguc to obtain them for me.

Apart from that, they requested an accelerated and intensified anticommunist and antigovernment campaign on the part of local opposition newspapers; this matter will be dealt with through local leaders.

One cannot but be impressed with the quality of this movement, its unity, its background and backing, its discipline and its utmost discretion; the secretiveness and care with which matters are dealt with affords assurance and would seem to presage that such cannot fail. The leadership is at the same time anxious to exploit the present highly favourable circumstances fairly soon; It is being pointed out above all that delay could bring a change to unfavourable in certain soft spots and there is no desire to await the outcome of the Caracas conference, since communist Front forces all over Latin America are intensifying to counteract USA leadership and influence.

There is one more concern strongly on the minds of this group: courageous as they are, they do not think so much of the perils to themselves when the action starts, but they are concerned about the fate of the population in this City - the middle class here, which might be subject to terror, savagery and massacre similar to Bogota or worse, by elements full of class hatred, invited and incited by their leaders to take revenge. It is a known fact that Arbenz himself at least on one occasion insinuated this sinister threat, and it must be remembered that even in the Police Force most men are brutal, vile characters with criminal record. The city population is increasingly sensing this anxiety and danger and few families have even sent their children away already. And hope is being expressed widely by the people in the city that Americans will not permit this to happen. USA reluctance to intervene directly is fully realized and comprehended, but it is being argued that the USA, a Good Neighbour, could not very well stand by idly and watch atrocities being committed anymore than a simple neighbour would allow children being murdered in a neighbouring house, if he know of it. It is being also said that surely the USA could and should have at least a symbolic force of a couple hundred of men standing by in Salvador, Teguc or Pelize, ready to fly into the city after the trouble has started; such action would be warmly applauded and lauded even abroad and would win undying gratitude, admiration and even greater popularity for the USA by the sectors thus helped, while neglect to act and help under such circumstances would be considered almost cynical. It is further pointed out by many that under certain circumstances, USA would be legally entitled to afford protection to their own nationals and their properties, and that such show of force, when it becomes known, would by itself help to prevent recurrence of Bogota here.

*Alejandro Arenales,

, Miguel Comacho.