

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM  
RELEASE AS SANITIZED

2003

VIA AIR POUCH

RYBAT

DISPATCH NO. [ ] 7661

EBSUCCESS

~~SECRET~~  
CLASSIFICATION

TO : LINCOLN

DATE: 11 JUNE 1954

FROM : [ ]

INFO: CHIEF, WHD

SUBJECT: General - Operational Matters.  
Specific - CANESSA Views Toward ERRATIC.

REF: [ ] 1069; DIR 04155.

1. Attached hereto is a copy of a meeting between Minister of Foreign Relations Roberto E. CANESSA and U.S. Ambassador Michael J. McDERMOTT.
2. The memorandum was called [ ] by Ambassador McDERMOTT 10 June 1954 when he was questioned in reference to DIR 04155.
3. The Ambassador reiterated his reluctance to see President OSORIO until he had some answer to OSORIO's request for arms assistance.
4. The attached copy implies that CANESSA is the chief Salvadoran Government supporter of ERRATIC and does not necessarily speak for OSORIO.

[ ]  
PHILIP L. PURWELL

INCLOSURE:

Memo..CANESSA/McDERMOTT Conversation..2 pages.

10 June 1954  
PLP/hdw

12 JUN 1954

DISTRIBUTION:

- 2-LINCOLN w/encl as noted above in duplicate.
- 2-Washington w/encl as noted above in duplicate.
- 2-Files w/encl as noted above in single copy.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

June 3, 1954

Participants: Minister of Foreign Affairs Roberto ~~LA~~ CANESSA;  
Ambassador Michael J. ~~LA~~ McDERMOTT.

I called at the Foreign Office this afternoon and left with Minister Canessa a copy of the document entitled "Soviet Communism in Guatemala". He pointed out that there was no identification of the source of the document and asked whether there was any objection to his having it translated and copies sent to the Salvadoran Ambassadors in Central America. I said I regretted I did not have copies in Spanish; that I would appreciate it if he would have it translated and see that the President got a copy, and that I saw no objection to his sending it to the Salvadoran Ambassadors. I remarked that a great deal of work had gone into the preparation of the document; that it was sure to have involved the work of a good many people. He remarked: "You people do these things very well; we just don't have the personnel or facilities for doing such studies."

I then impressed upon the Foreign Minister the importance of each country's immediately preparing its case to show how it was threatened by international communism in Guatemala and the special threat involved by the fact that Guatemala is getting direct arms shipments from behind the Iron Curtain. I said preparation of Salvador's case would be very important; that I hoped he would keep in touch with me on it and if I could be of assistance, just to call on me.

I suggested to Canessa that he knows the Central American people and reactions better than I could ever hope to, and I wondered how he thought the Guatemalan Government would defend itself in a consultative meeting of the OAS. He said the Guatemalans would follow the same tactics they did at Caracas; that they would play to the grandstand; they would charge that United States imperialism was being imposed upon them; that the United States was seeking the help of other countries to impose it; that the whole thing was a threat to Guatemalan sovereignty; that it was threatened only by the United States and not by Russia. These tactics will get some support for them in Guatemala. Mr. Canessa called it grandstanding and said both Guatemala and Nicaragua will play to the grandstand to divert the thoughts of their people from their local troubles and put the blame, in the case of Guatemala, on the United States and in the case of Nicaragua, on the communists.

Canessa said that although "we" do not like dictators, it is most important for stability in Central America that SOMOZA continue in office in Nicaragua. He said: "We know what he is and where he stands and we do not know what would take his place if he were removed." He said Somoza has gone very far; that if he continues in the course he is

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

- 2 -

following, terror will reign in Nicaragua. He said he knows Somoza very well and he wished that President OSORIO would send him to talk to Somoza. He would advise Somoza to try those whom he thinks guilty, sentence them to death and then pardon and exile them, thus demonstrating compassion; then things would settle down. I said it appeared to me Somoza was giving FIGUERES a nerve treatment. Canessa said that was true and he could continue to do it if he wished; that things would quieten down if he stopped frightening his own people. He said he would like to visit both Somoza and Figueres. I said: "You mean mediation." He said no, it would not mean mediation; it would mean a feeling out.

I then asked the Foreign Minister whether he thought the United States proposed resolution goes far enough. He said it did not; that it would not cure the situation in Guatemala. I asked him how far he thought we could go and have the support of the other Latin American countries. He said he didn't know; that what we propose is a step and as such it would probably be approved. He then said the United States has spent millions of dollars in Europe and Asia and could easily spare \$5,000,000 to cure the situation in Guatemala. I asked him how we could proceed. He said YDIGORAS Fuentes (he brought up the name) needs money; that all he needs is money to buy arms and to buy the support of Guatemalan army officers. He could arrange for me to meet General Ydigoras. I said I had met him briefly when I first came here but that I really didn't know much about him. I asked whether he was dependable. Canessa said Ydigoras has many good sources of information in Guatemala and that sometimes things have happened in the morning in Guatemala and Canessa has heard of them from Ydigoras by noon. He said he thought 80% of the information that had come from Ydigoras was correct. I said I understood the Guatemalan exiles didn't pull together very well and that there was a split. Canessa then said there were Colonel CASTILLO ARMAS and Ydigoras--just two. He said there were just these two men with whom we could deal and why not deal with both of them. When they had chased the commies out of Guatemala, let them then decide who was going to run things. I asked how Ydigoras could get arms, if he had them, into Guatemala. Canessa said there are a number of small ranches up on the border where arms could be concealed until needed. I asked him if the President would go along with the idea he had just indicated that arms might be smuggled across the Salvadoran border. He said there was no question in his mind that the President would oppose it.

He stressed that this conversation was just between the two of us and not to say anything of it and not to use his name, especially in El Salvador. Consequently, a copy of this memorandum is being sent only to the Department.

M. J. McDERMOTT

~~SECRET~~