

15/11/13 Clon~~THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN~~

MEMORANDUM

22552

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

October 7, 1970

A. M.

SECRET

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger *HK*

SUBJECT: Bolivia

MIP

The military rebellion by moderate and conservative military officers which ousted President Ovando yesterday appears to have collapsed. The military junta which took over yesterday has disintegrated.

General Juan Jose Torres, the radical and ultranationalist former armed forces chief, who had himself been forced out of the government last spring, appears to be filling the vacuum. Latest reports indicate that he has assumed "leadership" of the country and military units loyal to him have taken over the presidential palace and seem to be in control of La Paz itself.

Shortly after the capitulation of President Ovando to Army Chief General Rogelio Miranda on the morning of 6 October, General Torres began his move to take over the country. He assumed control of the air base outside La Paz and military units based there. He launched a campaign to win support of labor and student groups. Proclaiming himself the leader of the "revolution" that had been led by Ovando and was now threatened by General Miranda, he received a steady stream of visitors at the base during the day. By yesterday evening he had apparently succeeded in solidifying a coalition that included practically the entire labor movement, important peasant groups, the leftists student elements of La Paz and a number of military units, including the crack para-troop battallion (US trained and MAP supported) at Cochabamba. Torres supporters proclaimed a general strike in the early morning hours today.

Faced with an ultimatum last night and following a strafing flight by three planes from Torres' base, the junta collapsed. One member joined Torres, the other two resigned. Miranda is still at his headquarters but apparently with a rapidly diminishing force under him.

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The situation in La Paz this morning is described as explosive.

violence against Americans or the Embassy is not impossible.

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- 2 -

This situation resulted from the almost incredible incompetence and indecisiveness of those who initiated the rebellion Sunday. They refused to act on several occasions when it was clear they had the power to nail down their position. They refused to isolate Torres' base and cut off his visitors. As late as last night, they apparently had sufficient force to move on the airbase and capture Torres' headquarters, but they refused to move. They were apparently afraid to risk bloodshed and the rapid coalescing of labor and student support behind Torres may have frightened them. General Torres meanwhile seems to have been the only principal figure in the drama who has acted decisively and with calculated risk-taking.

A Torres' regime will most probably be ultranationalistic, leftist and anti-US. Some of the leftists, supernationalist former members of Ovando's cabinet who were ousted under military pressure earlier this year, have already reappeared around General Torres. The more moderate elements in the military are likely to be reduced in effectiveness if they are not already destroyed.



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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

22552

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ACTION
October 7, 1970 (1030)

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: Viron P. Vaky

SUBJECT: Bolivia

The Bolivian situation has turned serious indeed. My reading is attached in the form of a memo to the President should you wish to send it to him.

I think that Torres will be far more radical than the Peruvian generals. Here is a real potential Nasserist.

RECOMMENDATION

That you sign the memo to the President at Tab I.

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS
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