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• ROUTINE

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DIST 9 SEPTEMBER 1968

COUNTRY MEXICO

DOI 6 SEPTEMBER 1968

SUBJECT SITU. MICH APPRAISAL: STATUS OF THE
MEXICO CITY STUDENT MOVEMENT

SANTITIZED

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6

NLJ 95-121

By ig, NARA Date 2-1-96

ACQ

SOURCE

[Redacted Source Information]

1. FOR THE TIME BEING, THE THREAT OF MASS STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS AND DISTURBANCES WHICH TOOK PLACE DURING THE PERIOD 26 JULY THROUGH 27 AUGUST MAY HAVE ABATED. WHILE IT IS NOT NOW POSSIBLE TO PREDICT THE EFFECTS OF THE STUDENT CRISIS, IT IS APPARENT THAT THE "STATUS QUO" WHICH EXISTED PRIOR TO 26 JULY HAS BEEN CHANGED AND THE EVENTS SINCE THAT DATE WILL HAVE LASTING EFFECTS ON THE MEXICAN SCENE. STUDENTS HAVE FOUND THAT THEY ARE ABLE TO EXERCISE SOME DEGREE OF INFLUENCE ON THE AFFAIRS OF THE NATION AND CAN MAKE THEMSELVES HEARD. THEY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO VOICE CERTAIN BASIC GRIEVANCES DIRECTLY

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CONNECTED WITH HIGHER EDUCATION AND TO ADD POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES.

2. AT TIMES, SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE DISTURBANCES, THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT SEEMED UNIFIED OR CERTAIN AS TO WHAT ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN. ASIDE FROM FORCEFUL REPRESSION OF VIOLENCE INITIATED BY STUDENTS, THERE WAS A PERIOD WHEN THE GOVERNMENT TOOK NO POSITIVE STEPS. THERE WERE HOPES FOR PERSONAL INTERVENTION OF THE PRESIDENT DURING THE HEIGHT OF THE DEMONSTRATION, BUT HE CHOSE TO WAIT UNTIL THE OCCASION OF HIS ANNUAL STATE OF THE UNION MESSAGE (INFORME) TO BECOME PERSONALLY INVOLVED IN THE STUDENT CRISIS. HE DEVOTED APPROXIMATELY ONE-THIRD OF HIS ADDRESS TO THE STUDENT PROBLEM. WHILE HE EXPRESSED A WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE ON SOME ISSUES, HE FORCEFULLY POINTED OUT THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROBLEM AND FIRMLY WARNED THAT VIOLENCE WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO CONTINUE. THE PRESIDENT'S STAND WAS WELL RECEIVED BY THE PUBLIC. HOWEVER, AFTER AN INITIAL PERIOD WHEN THERE WAS NO REACTION FROM THE STUDENTS IT APPEARS THAT THE STUDENTS HAVE BROKEN DOWN INTO TWO GROUPINGS "MODERATES" AND "MILITANTS." THE MODERATES ARE READY TO NEGOTIATE BUT THE MILITANTS HOPE TO CONTINUE THE STRUGGLE AND TO SPREAD THE PROBLEM TO OTHER HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE NATION.

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3. THE PRINCIPAL INSTRUMENTALITY OF THE STUDENTS DURING THIS TIME HAS BEEN THE NATIONAL STRIKE COUNCIL (CNH). THIS ORGANIZATION BEGAN AS A LOOSELY KNIT BODY OF STUDENTS FROM THE NATIONAL POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE (IPN), AND HAS BECOME BETTER ORGANIZED WITH EACH SUCCESSIVE DEMONSTRATION. IT NOW NUMBERS APPROXIMATELY ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY STUDENTS, REPRESENTING THE STRIKE COMMITTEES OF THE MAJORITY OF THE SCHOOLS INVOLVED IN THE PRESENT MOVEMENT. FROM ALL INDICATIONS, THE CNH IS GUIDED, OR AT LEAST ADVISED, BY A GROUP OF TEACHERS AND PROFESSORS FROM THESE SCHOOLS. THIS GROUP INCLUDES SOME OF MEXICO'S MOST PROMINENT LEFTIST INTELLECTUALS. ALTHOUGH THE CNH HAS ACHIEVED SOME DEGREE OF ORGANIZATION, REPORTS INDICATE THAT IT COMPRISES SEVERAL FACTIONS AND THAT ITS DELIBERATIONS ARE MARKED BY MUCH DISAGREEMENT.

4. ASIDE FROM THE HARD-CORE STUDENTS DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE CNH, THE STRIKE COMMITTEES AND THE "BRIGADES", THE MAJORITY OF STUDENTS AT THE NATIONAL AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY (UNAM) AND IPN HAVE NOT TAKEN ACTIVE ROLES EXCEPT DURING THE DEMONSTRATIONS. AT THE TIMES OF DEMONSTRATIONS, MANY OF THESE HAVE "JOINED THE CROWD", BUT HAVE NOT CONTINUED TO PARTICIPATE ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS.

5. THE STUDENTS, THROUGH THE CNH, HAVE TRIED TO TAKE THEIR CASE TO THE PEOPLE BUT WITHOUT APPARENT SUCCESS. A HOPED FOR:

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GENERAL WORK STOPPAGE ON 4 SEPTEMBER DID NOT MATERIALIZE, AND NO SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF WORKERS OR PEASANTS HAS BECOME INVOLVED.

6. THE ONE DISTINGUISHING FEATURE OF THE CURRENT STUDENT UNREST HAS BEEN THE UNPRECEDENTED UNLEASHING OF CRITICISM AND INVECTIVE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT AND, IN PARTICULAR, AGAINST THE PRESIDENT. THAT THIS TURN OF EVENTS HAS SHAKEN THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION IS ATTESTED TO BY REPORTS, WHICH ALTHOUGH UNCONFIRMED ARE CONSIDERED TO BE PROBABLY TRUE, THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS INSPIRED RUMORS OR REPORTS THAT THE U. S. GOVERNMENT, THROUGH THE CIA AND FBI, EITHER SPARKED OR NURTURED THE STUDENT CRISIS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT FAILED, OF COURSE, TO AVAIL ITSELF OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO BLAME THE COMMUNISTS, WHO ARE ALWAYS A PLAUSIBLE AND TEMPTING TARGET, SINCE THEY STAND TO BENEFIT FROM AND HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE DISTURBANCES. IT HAS BEEN REPORTED THAT THE PRESIDENT ATTRIBUTED THE STUDENT UPRISINGS TO THE COMMUNISTS, WHO HE CLAIMS, ARE AIDED AND SUPPORTED BY THE CUBAN AND SOVIET EMBASSIES. HOWEVER, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY WITH CERTAINTY WHETHER HE ACTUALLY BELIEVES THIS TO BE TRUE. THERE IS NO HARD EVIDENCE THAT EITHER THE CUBAN OR THE SOVIET EMBASSIES HAVE MASTERMINDED THE DISTURBANCES, ALTHOUGH IT IS REASONABLE TO ASSUME THAT THEY HAVE AT LEAST PROVIDED MORAL

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SUPPORT. LOCAL LEFTIST EXTREMISTS HAVE BEEN EXPLOITING THE SITUATION TO THE BEST OF THEIR CAPABILITIES. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT THERE HAS BEEN VERY LITTLE SPONTANEOUS CRITICISM OF THE SOVIETS, EVEN THOUGH THE SOVIET-CZECH CONFRONTATION OCCURRED IN THE MIDST OF THE DISTURBANCES. THERE HAS BEEN EULOGIZING OF CHE GUEVARA BUT, LITTLE OR NO PRAISE FOR FIDEL CASTRO.

7. ONE MAJOR CONCERN HAS APPEARED TO BE UPPERMOST IN THE MINDS OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS - THAT THE STUDENT PROBLEM NOT INTERFERE WITH UPCOMING OLYMPIC EVENTS. IT APPEARS THAT THE STUDENTS, ASIDE FROM THE MORE RADICAL ELEMENTS, REALIZE WHAT IS AT STAKE IN THE OLYMPICS, AND WHILE THE MAJORITY WOULD NOT TRY TO DISRUPT THE GAMES, THE FACT THAT THE TIME FOR THE OLYMPICS IS CLOSE AT HAND DOES NOT INHIBIT THE STUDENTS FROM AIRING THEIR GRIEVANCES. HOWEVER, FROM THE EXTREME RADICALS, ANYTHING CAN BE EXPECTED.

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8. IN SUMMARY, WHAT BEGAN AS A RELATIVELY MINOR INCIDENT INVOLVING ONLY SEVERAL HUNDRED STUDENTS GREW TO SUBSTANTIAL PROPORTIONS. THE GOVERNMENT SEEMED UNABLE TO MOBILIZE ITSELF TO DEAL WITH THE MOUNTING PROBLEM. THE GOVERNMENT USED FORCE TO STOP STUDENT VIOLENCE, BUT DID NOT TAKE A PUBLIC STANCE ON THE PROBLEM, EXCEPT FOR THE MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT'S OFFER TO THE STUDENTS ON 22 AUGUST, UNTIL THE PRESIDENT DELIVERED HIS ANNUAL STATE OF THE UNION MESSAGE. THIS EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN THAT THE GOVERNMENT AND THE NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (PRI) DO NOT POSSESS THE POWER AND NEAR TOTAL CONTROL OVER PUBLIC BEHAVIOR WHICH EXISTED PREVIOUSLY. WHILE THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT MEXICAN STUDENTS HAVE BEEN INFLUENCED BY STUDENT UPRISINGS IN THE U. S. AND EUROPE, THE RECENT STUDENT DISTURBANCES HAVE BEEN A NEW EXPERIENCE FOR MEXICO AND MAY PROVIDE AN INDICATION OF THINGS TO COME. THE OLD ORDER

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IS PASSING, AND ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TECHNICAL STUDENTS (FNET) HAVE BEEN REPLACED - AT LEAST FOR THE PRESENT - BY A MORE MILITANT DEMANDING ORGANIZATION, THE CNH. STUDENTS HAVE FOUND THEY CAN BE A SIGNIFICANT ELEMENT IN THE NATION'S DECISION MAKING PROCESS, AND THEY ARE NO LONGER CONTENTED WITH THE PATRONIZING ATTITUDE OF THE GOVERNMENT. STUDENTS HAVE LEARNED THAT THEY CAN ASSERT THEMSELVES TO THE EXTENT WHERE NOT ONLY THE GOVERNMENT BUT THE PEOPLE LISTEN, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT AGREES WITH THE STUDENTS OR NOT.

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