



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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*File - Guatemala*  
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SECRET

MEMORANDUM

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TO: ARA/PPC - Mr. Einaudi  
FROM: HA/HR - Robert L. Jacobs *py*  
SUBJECT: Guatemala: What Next?  
REFERENCE: Guatemala 6366

I read with keen interest Ambassador Chapin's assessment of General Walters recent visit to Guatemala (reftel). In essence Ambassador Chapin concludes that President Lucas is not going to address our human rights concerns, that we must recognize this fact, and that we must now decide whether "national security considerations" require that we nevertheless go ahead with security assistance.

The following observations and conclusions are predicated upon the implicit assumption that those around General Lucas -- if not General Lucas himself -- are at least "amorally rational" -- that is, their fundamental objective is their survival and they will do nothing which they know will result in their self-destruction.

In conversation with General Walters, President Lucas made clear that his government will continue as before -- that the repression will continue. He reiterated his belief that the repression is working and that the guerilla threat will be successfully routed. He prefers U.S. assistance in this effort but believes that he can succeed with or without U.S. help.

General Walters efforts to persuade President Lucas that the repression will only spread the guerilla contagion were evidently unsuccessful.

Historically, of course, we cannot argue that repression always "fails" nor can Lucas argue that it always "succeeds". Recent history is replete with examples where repression has been "successful" in exorcising guerilla threats to a regime's

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survival. Argentina and Uruguay are both recent examples which come to mind. Indeed in Guatemala during the late 1960's and early 1970's a policy of repression succeeded in routing the guerilla threat to the then existing regime. However, there are also contemporary examples where repression "failed" -- Greece under Col. Papadopolous, Iran under the Shah, Nicaragua under Somoza, and Venezuela under Perez-Jimenez.

The point is the rather obvious one that only in time will we and the Guatemalans know whether President Lucas is correct in his conviction that repression will work once again in Guatemala. If he is right and the policy of repression is succeeding and will result in the extermination of the guerillas, their supporters, and their sympathizers there is no need for the U.S. to implicate itself in the repression by supplying the GOG with security assistance. We did not provide such assistance to Argentina in waging its "dirty war" against the guerillas in that country. Now that that "war" has been concluded, we are endeavoring to re-establish more normal relations with Argentina. It would seem that the Argentina experience is relevant to Guatemala. Having failed in our efforts to dissuade the GOG from its policy of repression we ought to distance ourselves from the GOG and not involve ourselves in Guatemala's "dirty war". If the repression does work and the guerillas, their supporters and sympathizers are neutralized, we can in the aftermath of the repression work to restore normal relations with the successors to President Lucas.

Our conviction that repression will not contain the guerilla threat but only exacerbate and compound it, will likewise only become evident over time. At such time as the failure of repression to contain and eradicate the guerilla threat becomes evident, demands for a change in policy within the GOG -- and the Army in particular -- should emerge. At such a juncture the crisis in relations between Guatemala and ourselves will have politically "matured" in the sense that it will then be ripe for a successful U.S. diplomatic initiative. The GOG under internal pressure will have no choice but to seek political and military assistance from the U.S. more or less on our terms.

CONCLUSIONS:

Whether President Lucas is right or wrong in his conviction that repression will succeed in neutralizing the guerillas, their supporters and sympathizers, the U.S. posture ought remain one of distancing itself from the GOG. If Lucas is right and the GOG can successfully "go it alone" in its policy of

repression, there is no need for the U.S. to provide the GOG with redundant political and military support. The provisioning of such assistance would needlessly render us a complicit party in the repression. If we are correct in our conviction that the repression will not succeed and will only exacerbate and compound the guerilla threat, then we ought to distance ourselves from the GOG until such time as it arrives at this realization and is prepared to address our human rights concerns in return for renewed U.S. political and military support.

The remaining question is whether we indeed have the time to await either the success or failure of the GOG's present repressive policies. The answer to that question depends upon an assessment of whether the guerillas represent a proximate, intermediate, or long-range threat to the GOG. If there is no proximate threat -- that is the guerillas do not represent a military threat to the survival of the present Guatemalan regime over the next 12 months -- then it would seem that we can await either the success or failure of the GOG's repressive policies. The nature of military threat posed by the guerillas can best be assessed by the intelligence community. Before deciding upon any next step in Guatemala we ought, therefore, undertake such an intelligence assessment.