

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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INFO: ARA/CMA, MEXICO, MEXICALI

STATE AFFAIRS
 C. Beatty
 July 31 1962
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 c. 9/1/62
 CMA/M 8/7/62
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FROM : Amconsul TIJUANA

DATE: July 19, 1962

SUBJECT: Has the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional Chosen Baja California
 As the Beachhead for Its Campaign Against the Partido Revolu-
 REF : cionario Institucional?

SUMMARY

Less than twelve months ago the State of Baja California was the youngest and perhaps the most tranquil state in the Mexican Republic, but during the interval a power play with national ramifications, directed by the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (MLN), has created a highly volatile and potentially most explosive political situation in Baja California which it now appears could well climax within the next fifteen to twenty days. Depending on events during the interval, any one of several results may be anticipated.

Although moves leading to the creation of this situation have been made over a period of some twelve months, the strategy is only now becoming apparent. The game, if it can be called that given the dangerous gambles involved, has been extremely difficult to follow even for experienced native players, because the pawns utilized are humanly motivated and capable of independent and erratic moves, beyond the exact control of those who seek to manipulate them. Nonetheless, some firm conclusions can now be drawn, and other, admittedly tentative, but still probable, results can be predicted. It seems certain that regardless of what turn events may take, a serious setback for the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) will be an inevitable consequence, with the MLN enjoying a commensurate advantage and boost in power and prestige.

BACKGROUND

It is difficult to establish a point of departure from which to portray the situation that exists in Baja California today, partially because of unanticipated (even to those who have precipitated them) developments and conditions which contributed to the creation of the current situation, and

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partially because at this juncture, it appears that any one of several goals may ultimately be sought by those who press the game, the intellectual leaders of the MLN. The recitation of at least some historical background therefore seems inevitably necessary.

During his governorship of Baja California, Braulio MALDONADO, presently identified by Mexican observers as the "visible" head of the MLN, was closely allied and economically associated with the "Residente" of the Distrito de Riego del Valle Mexicali, Eligio ESQUIVEL, who eventually became his successor and currently continues to hold the post of Governor of Baja California. While it must be conceded that the post of Governor of Baja California is the most important political position in the State, it must also be conceded that the appointive position of "Residente" of the Distrito de Riego del Valle Mexicali can, when properly manipulated, rival the political importance of the Governorship itself in a state where agriculture is supreme and water vital to the livelihood of every farmer, large or small. Both Maldonado and Esquivel understood this political fact of life, and both accommodated their individual interests to it during their respective tenures in the posts in question. Consequently, it was natural and inevitable that they should become associates in business enterprises in the State of the type that could be promoted through participation in the development of the agricultural potential of the Mexicali Valley, i.e., construction companies specializing in the fields of communications and expansion of facilities for the utilization of water resources.

During the period in question Alfonso GARZON, current "visible" leader of the exodus movement of campesino elements of the Mexicali Valley from the PRI, was the dominant agrarian leader in the Mexicali Valley, as much dependent on Maldonado and Esquivel for success in his undertakings as they were dependent on him for success in the effective implementation of many of their own projects. A mutually advantageous association and working accommodation between Maldonado and Esquivel on the one hand, and Garzón and his campesinos on the other, was firmly cemented during the period in question, a circumstance that has facilitated recent manipulations leading to the situation which is the principal subject of this report.

Coming to more recent times, during the initial period of Esquivel's administration, there was no specific evidence that Maldonado was actively engaged in any political undertaking within the State of Baja California. Maldonado remained in the central area of Mexico, dedicated himself to writing a communist leaning book and, it has subsequently become apparent, worked with other extreme leftists and communists to form and launch the MLN.

Esquivel, meanwhile, gave no evidence during the early years of his administration of being particularly inclined toward the extreme leftist element in Mexico nor any particular evidence that he entertained a strong feeling of antipathy toward the United States. Recent developments seem to indicate, however, that Esquivel may have been biding his time, awaiting a propitious opportunity to emerge in a different character. There are aspects of Esquivel's background which are worth noting in this respect.

While it has never been established that Esquivel has had direct ties with the communist movement in Mexico, he has been suspect because of a number of

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fragmentary and inconclusive reports. He was at least a close professional associate of Adolfo ORIBE de Alba, when the latter was Minister of Hydraulic Resources, and it has been reported that the two shared an admiration for the communist movement. The FBI has information from a reliable source establishing that Esquivel made regular contributions to the Communist Party of Mexico for a period. Although information concerning Esquivel's association with the communist movement is inconclusive, in its aggregate it has been considered sufficient to warrant the withholding of his privilege of entering the United States, and this privilege was provisionally restored only after Esquivel submitted himself to extended, inept and aggressive cross examination in order to plead for the privilege of entering the United States to purchase equipment necessary for the conduct of his private business enterprises. More recently, and since Esquivel has been Governor of Baja California, he withdrew applications for nonimmigrant visas for his family submitted to our Embassy at Paris after being informed that prompt action could not be taken in his case.

It seems safe to speculate that at best, Esquivel has not been an anti-communist and that he could well harbor a feeling of deep resentment for the United States as a result of the difficulties he has had with our officials in connection with the obtention of entry permits. I do know that since Esquivel returned from Europe (circumventing the United States) he has studiously avoided participating in any event in this area where there has been any substantial participation of United States elements. I cannot be sure whether this results from old resentments or the Colorado River salinity issue, or if it is a combination of both, but there is no doubt about the fact itself.

I have not searched the records to determine whether Maldonado came out in the open to espouse the formation of the MLN throughout the Mexican Republic before Esquivel undertook the project of defending Mexico's position in the Colorado River salinity problem, because it is not really important in this instance whether the chicken or the egg came first. What is important is the fact that Esquivel found use for the MLN in connection with his Colorado River salinity campaign, and the MLN found the salinity issue to be tailor made for the promotion of its interests in Baja California particularly, but also to some extent in Mexico at large.

Perhaps more important still, from the standpoint of the currently developing situation, is the fact that both Esquivel and the MLN were able to serve their respective (if that is what they were) interests simultaneously through use, or misuse, of Garzón and the salinity issue.

Since the initial sequences of recent events precipitated by Maldonado's MLN and/or Esquivel have no obvious or apparent relationship, it is unfortunately necessary to take the end user's time to trace developments from the two quarters before it is possible to demonstrate how they have subsequently coincided and are currently melded. Let us take Maldonado as a starter.

Braulio Maldonado and the MLN in Baja California

Largely discredited within the PRI as a result of his communist tendencies and bungling administration as Governor of Baja California, Maldonado, in order to

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perpetuate himself in Mexican political life, was faced with the necessity of finding another banner at the end of his term of office. Aside from these considerations, it can be speculated with some degree of confidence that Maldonado, as a part of the Cardenista wing of the PRI, intentionally laid at least some of the groundwork for his more recent activities during his tenure as Governor of Baja California. Many observers in this area believe that neither Cárdenas nor Maldonado had reached a firm decision to launch the MLN until convinced by developments during the initial years of the López Mateos administration that the time was ripe for such a maneuver. It is also widely speculated by knowledgeable Mexican politicians in this area that developments in Cuba encouraged an affirmative decision. In any event, organization of the MLN in Baja California was accomplished quickly and with a marked degree of effectiveness, in large measure because Maldonado could call on former associates and his appointees who still hold office in the area for support to this end. Also, in Tijuana at least, and I understand in Ensenada and Mexicali as well, the leadership of the local communist party organizations provided readily available leadership; the roster of directing officials of the MLN in this area includes a high percentage of local directors of the Communist Party of Mexico (PCM).

The MLN had been organized and needed a regional issue to rally around to draw mass adherents at about the same time that the Colorado River salinity problem became acute. Let us now return to Esquivel.

Governor Esquivel and the Salinity Issue

Given a cultivated distaste for the United States and conceding a normal degree of honest Mexican nationalism, combined with a feeling of regional protectionism accentuated by the fact of his gubernatorial responsibilities, it must be acknowledged that Esquivel had ample motivation for taking an active and belligerent position on the Colorado River salinity issue. When the Welton-Mohawk drainage program had been identified as the source of the marked increase in salinity of waters delivered to the Mexicali Valley, Esquivel seized upon every device at his command to establish that the United States was guilty of irresponsibly creating a situation prejudicial to the interests of the Mexicali Valley farmers and damaging to Mexico as a whole. In passing, it would be well to note that regardless of other purposes which the resultant furor might have been intended to serve, it also served to divert attention from inadequacies of Esquivel's administration, of which there has been an accumulation since his inauguration sufficient to convince a much less perceptive and much more scrupulous politician than Esquivel that a diversionary maneuver would be advisable. The Colorado River salinity issue provided a ready-made opportunity for such a maneuver.

From the beginning, Esquivel showed no disposition to deal with the Colorado River salinity issue through normal channels. Instead, he encouraged public protest manifestations, using the campesinos and the students as raw material, and attempting to use organized labor as well.

Esquivel had little initial success in creating a situation of agitation within the student element. For one reason, Baja California has only a nominal university, and secondary students were not well enough organized. In addition,

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the Commandant of the II Mexican Military Zone, acting on orders which he told me came directly from President López Mateos, advised against the granting of authorization for secondary students to participate in public manifestations as a group. A third deterrent, at least in the Tijuana and Ensenada areas, stemmed from the fact that local interests wished to avoid student disorders at all costs because of the anticipated adverse effect these could be expected to have on the vital tourist industry.

It was through the MLN and its adherents among the public school teachers that the students were eventually organized and utilized to some extent in pressing the salinity issue. Encouraged by communist leaning MLN teachers, the Baja California State Federation of Secondary Students (FEEB) was revitalized and a State convention held. Esquivel received representatives of the FEEB and encouraged them to go ahead with plans to hold manifestations throughout the State protesting the salinity issue. Objections from the Commandant of the II Mexican Military Zone notwithstanding, Esquivel ordered local Mayors to authorize such manifestations. Repercussions were not particularly serious, however, with the possible exception of Tijuana, where authorities barely averted a student attempt to deface the Consulate General and finally had to resort to billy clubs, tear gas and warning shots to disperse a hard-core nucleus of student agitators, incited to violence by their MLN professors. MLN attempts to exploit these developments were not easily thwarted, but the warnings and advice to student leaders by calmer heads, in combination with the fact of summer vacations, have served to keep things under control, at least for the present. Once school reconvenes in the fall, however, MLN teacher-agitators will be in position to resume their subversive efforts among the students. There is a considerable degree of local preoccupation over this, and I frequently hear the fervent wish expressed that a solution to the salinity issue will have been announced, defined and publicized before classes are resumed in September.

It was also through the MLN that attempts were made to bring organized labor in the area into active participation in the salinity issue, public manifestations and demonstrations being the initial objective. However, moderate elements within organized labor identified MLN agitators as extremists and communists, and were able to dissuade organized labor as a group from being drawn into the issue. This was true in the case of the Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM) as well as in the case of the larger Confederación Revolucionaria de Obreros y Campesinos (CROC).

It thus developed that the campesino element of the Mexicali Valley was the only sizable group that offered the potential of being manipulated by Esquivel in the salinity issue.

Alfonso Garzón and the Liga Agraria Estatal

As the representative and spokesman of those most affected, Alfonso Garzón, leader of the Liga Agraria Estatal, was an indispensable element to Esquivel in his Colorado River salinity campaign. Garzón, with Esquivel's urging and support, brought his campesinos into the streets of Mexicali by the thousands, maintained a large group camped before the Consulate there for a protracted period and organized pilgrimages to Mexico City to carry the salinity issue to the highest levels of the Mexican Government. Knowledgeable elements among the campesinos of the Mexicali

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Valley inform me that Garzón was under the impression, most probably as the result of Esquivel's orientation, that the action he was taking was desired and supported by the López administration, to strengthen its hand in negotiating the salinity issue with the United States.

It seems highly likely that this was the case, and after having done what he must have felt was an outstanding job in this respect, Garzón undoubtedly expected to receive commensurate reward for services rendered. I am told by one informant that Esquivel had assured Garzón he would be rewarded with any post he might desire, within reasonable limits. Garzón's first choice was reportedly the mayoralty of the Mexicali municipality; his alternate, nomination on the PRI ticket for State Congressman in the forthcoming August 5 elections, representing the campesino sector.

It seems likely that Garzón did not expect to receive the PRI nomination for Mayor of the Mexicali municipality, but there is every reason to believe he did not consider it at all unlikely that he should be granted his "second choice". Esquivel reportedly assured Garzón of his backing to this end. However, when the official PRI nominations were announced from Mexico City, not only was Garzón left out in the cold, but the campesino sector received no recognition at all on the official slate of state officials to be elected on August 5.

While the inner workings of the PRI were as obscure in this instance as is normal, two astute local PRI politicians have told me they know, on good authority, that Esquivel himself was significantly instrumental in Garzón's exclusion from the official PRI ticket. If this was the case, there could be several explanations. One of the most plausible, however, is the thesis that Esquivel wished to force Garzón into the hands of Maldonado and the MIN.

Whether by design or not, the fact remains that on finding he had been excluded as a candidate, Garzón first scurried frantically to force upon the PRI a last minute change of heart. Failing in this, he announced that he would withdraw from the PRI and take his claimed 12,000 odd campesinos of the Liga Agraria Estatal with him.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

It was at this juncture that the MIN came visibly into the picture. All that Garzón had accomplished before had been undertaken, at least overtly, as a disciplined member of the PRI and a supporter of the State and Federal administrations. While it is true that his intent may have been otherwise, the fact that Garzón has, until now, avoided involvement with the Communist Party of Mexico, would seem to substantiate the thesis that even though Garzón collaborated with Maldonado during the latter's term as Governor, he was always careful to steer clear of all extremist groups because he recognized the dangers involved, and he would have been judicious enough to continue doing so, except for the fact of his rebuff by the official party.

Immediately following the announcement of his withdrawal from the PRI, Garzón declared his intention to seek the mayoralty of Mexicali as an independent. After

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some coming and going of MLN leaders, it was reported that Garzón had announced he would be the candidate of the MLN in the Mexicali mayoralty campaign. He later denied having made the statement, and the MLN similarly denied that it would support any candidate, alleging that its members were free to exercise their rights of franchise in whatever manner they might see fit. However, the Alianza de Electores Libres de Baja California, hastily organized to support Garzón, is dominated by PCM/MLN leaders, and the word is out that the MLN supports Garzón.

There could be several explanations for the MLN's desire to avoid open and direct support of Garzón. Since Garzón has not been nominated as a candidate of a legally registered political party, his name cannot be placed on the ballot, and there is no provision for "write in" candidates in Mexican electoral procedures. Garzón cannot, therefore, be legally elected even though a majority of the voters might favor him. Any attempt to vote for him would simply nullify the ballot cast. Since such ballots would not be counted, or at least would not be reported, the MLN would have backed a losing candidate without having gained any advantage that cannot be gained equally effectively by working through the Alianza de Electores Libres de Baja California, which is only an ad hoc organization set up for this one time operation. Thus, Garzón is out of the PRI and working against its interests, but the MLN is not, at least as an organized entity. The MLN reserves its position and maneuverability vis-a-vis the PRI, even to the extent of being in a position to be gracefully integrated or reintegrated into the PRI, should future developments make this move desirable.

Having apparently burned his bridges, Garzón has campaigned against the PRI with vigor. He has centered his efforts on the PRI's outstanding weaknesses and is doing a workmanlike job of exploiting them. His campaign declarations have included the following features:

- (1) The revolution of 1910 was fought to end dictatorships which denied the people the right to choose and elect candidates freely. The imposition of candidates by the PRI is no different from the imposition of candidates by the dictadura porfirista.
- (2) This condition has been brought about by the burguesia who have infiltrated and gained control of the PRI, and who deny the laborer and the campesino any voice in the selection of elective officials who are to represent them.
- (3) The representatives so chosen use their positions to betray the country and the President himself.
- (4) Controlling the economic and political power of the country, these elements enrich themselves at the expense of the population at large.
- (5) When crossed, they resort to false imprisonment of those who dare to stand up to them, or worse, such as in the case of Rubén JARAMILLO, cold blooded murder.
- (6) They grant onerous concessions to foreign monopolies and fail to defend the national sovereignty vigorously, in instances such as the Colorado River salinity problem. And so on, and on, and on.....

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Since Garzón cannot be elected, the question arises of why the MLN is aiding and abetting him, and why Esquivel created this Frankenstein who is causing the PRI so much trouble and embarrassment. Only one sensible answer occurs to me; the MLN has a program which is being advanced by Garzón's activities, and Esquivel has been an instrument of the MLN, either willingly or unwittingly, in maneuvering Garzón into the position in which he now finds himself of being irretrievably divorced from the PRI and inextricably involved with the MLN, if he hopes to have any political future. And my contacts who personally know Garzón assure me that his primary motivation for the past several years has been a driving desire to enter the field of first State and then National politics.

The MLN's immediate objectives have not been apparent to me. Until only recently, I have found my local contacts inclined to brush Garzón's current activities aside as inconsequential despite the fact that he is acknowledged to control a very sizable group of campesinos, and it is readily recognized by most that his current efforts have created a very serious situation for the PRI in this area. Most apparently expect Garzón to be bought off. It is my opinion, however, that it would be disastrous for the PRI to back down at this juncture, and in addition, if Garzón's price is political advancement, as it apparently is, the PRI is in no position to pay this price in the circumstances that exist.

A few days past a well-informed local observer reported to me that he had obtained reliable information explaining the MLN's tactics. I have not been able to confirm this otherwise, but on the face of it, the correctness of the information seems to be supported by the fact that it offers a very plausible explanation of the tactic being executed. According to this source, the MLN has two immediate objectives. First, its leaders wish to obtain funds for themselves and to support future MLN activities. Second, they wish to launch former President Lázaro Cárdenas' son Cuauhtémoc, a founding member of the MLN, into national politics. Their price for calling off Garzón is reportedly:

(1) The granting of a contract to the firm Velásquez-Chávez, Hermanos, which is reportedly controlled by Maldonado and Esquivel jointly, to construct a four-lane toll highway from Tijuana to Ensenada, for which financing has recently been obtained from the IBRD, and

(2) The appointment of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas as "Residente" of the Distrito de Riego del Valle Mexicali, the position from which Esquivel managed to move into the governorship of Baja California.

THE OUTLOOK

The currently developing situation can be expected to take a number of twists and turns during the next few weeks, and I am not close enough to any of the principal individuals directly involved to be able to speculate on the most likely eventuality with any certainty. One thing does seem certain, however. Unless the PRI takes strong, repressive measures, it will inevitably be seriously weakened. And even should there be a disposition to take strong, repressive measures, the consequences would inevitably be most serious, given the fact that a large block of restive campesinos are already very much involved and are undoubtedly becoming

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daily more emotionally agitated over developments. Leaders can be placated, but the masses are not so readily subject to manipulation.

If the MLN's aims are correctly reported to me, and if it is the decision of Mexican officialdom to capitulate, then the MLN will have been placed in an extremely strong position within Baja California and its national position will have been greatly enhanced immediately, while its future prospects will be much improved. In such a situation, it is to be speculated that Garzón would be taken care of within the broad organizational structure of the Distrito de Riego del Valle Mexicali and that he would wield his influence with the campesino element on behalf of the MLN with renewed vigor and ambition. It might be impossible for the PRI to avoid giving Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas the Baja California governorship at the end of Esquivel's term, if events follow this general pattern.

If Mexican officialdom stands firm and refuses to bend in the knowledge that its control of the electoral process is adequate to the situation, regardless of other considerations, then Garzón, the MLN and the Liga Agraria Estatal, plus other labor and campesino elements, will have to be dealt with after the August 5 elections. If the MLN and Garzón are as determined as it appears at this time, such a situation would be dangerous in the extreme and would call for massive security measures by the Mexican Army in the entire area. The results of this sort of development, if it should eventuate, could well be more advantageous to the MLN nationally than a capitulation to their reported demands.

Another possibility could be a decision on the part of Mexican officialdom to trade off with the MLN, granting concessions in some geographic and substantive area not immediately affected by present developments. However, this possible course would not answer the question of what to do with Garzón and his campesinos. Garzón is a power in Baja California but not elsewhere. He is smart enough to realize that he cannot allow himself to be separated from his source of power without risking oblivion in very short order. Yet it would seem virtually impossible, given the heat of his present campaign against the PRI, for Mexican officialdom to arrange any even reasonably satisfactory accommodation with him in this area. For a settlement to be reached with the MLN and not with Garzón would be a most dangerous course and would almost inevitably have to involve liquidation of Garzón, or at least his imprisonment. Garzón's campesinos would then have to be dealt with, and this would be a difficult task indeed, in such a circumstance.

Apart from these aspects of the problems that the future can be expected to bring, there is the matter of Governor Esquivel himself. In the present circumstances, Mexican officialdom could not possibly be happy with him. He is either deliberately helping the MLN, which seems to me to be most probable, or else he is guilty of having very seriously bungled his job of taking care of Mexican officialdom's interests in Baja California. If Esquivel is committed to the MLN, then any settlement will have to include provision to accommodate him. If the MLN and Cuauhtémoc become officially entrenched in Baja California with Esquivel remaining on as Governor, a very effective beachhead for future MLN expansion into national political activity will have been established.

One reliable informant has reported to me that Esquivel is attempting to take out insurance against possible future developments. A move in this direction is

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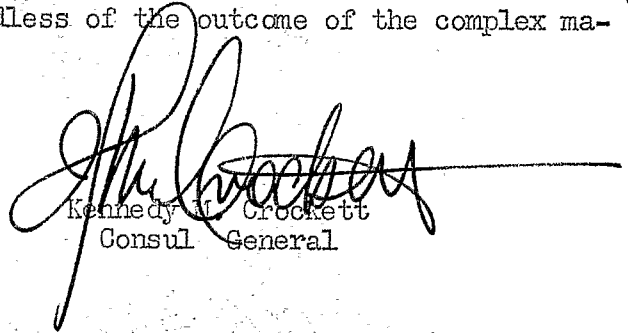
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reliably reported to have consisted of an offer from Esquivel of \$100,000.00 Mexican pesos to Tijuana mayoral candidate, Ildefonso VELASQUEZ, if Velásquez would sign a commitment to use the money to campaign against Garzón and the MIN. My informant, who is a leading member of Velásquez' campaign committee, informs me that the offer was refused, as Velásquez recognized it for what it was and being satisfied that Esquivel has been delivered into the hands of the MIN, did not wish to give Esquivel anything that he might use in the future in an attempt to convince the PRI that he had been a loyal servant all along. Velásquez is reported to have shared what must have been, to judge from the number who occupied it, an enormous bench which López Mateos occupied during his undergraduate years.

In summary, the situation that has been described herein seems to me inevitably to portend very serious consequences, regardless of the outcome of the complex maneuvers now being executed.


Kennedy M. Crockett
Consul General

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