

M. Bowler

110

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 29, 1967

~~SECRET~~

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Participants: Ambassador of Bolivia
Julio SANJINES-Goytia

Mr. William G. Bowdler

Place: Embassy of Bolivia

At the invitation of the Bolivian Ambassador, I went to his residence this afternoon to discuss the Bolivian situation.

Most of the one-hour conversation was a monologue by the loquacious Ambassador describing the background to the Barrientos administration and the present political situation. Toward the end of the conversation, he got around to the two points he had on his mind.

The first was increased external assistance. I asked him what specifically he had in mind. He replied that he was not thinking of budgetary support since Bolivia had passed that stage and was proud of its accomplishment. I then asked him what type of project assistance he had in mind. On this he was very vague, saying that we should send a special mission from Washington to study what additional projects might be started to further Bolivia's development.

The question in which he was most interested -- and obviously the main purpose for the invitation -- was to ask for our help in establishing what he called a "hunter-killer" team to ferret out guerrillas. He said this idea was not original with him, but came from friends of his in CIA. I asked him whether the Ranger Battalion now in training were not sufficient. He said that what he has in mind is 50 or 60 young army officers, with sufficient intelligence, motivation and drive, who could be trained quickly and could be counted on to search out the guerrillas with tenacity and courage. I asked him whether such an elite group would not cause problems within the army and perhaps even political problems between Barrientos and his supporters. The Ambassador said that these problems could be minimized by rotating a fixed number of the team back into the army at regular intervals. The rotation system would have the added benefit of bringing a higher degree of professionalism into the officer ranks of the army.

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I told him that his idea may have merit, but needs further careful examination.

Before leaving, I told him that I had seen reports that Bolivia might be considering declaring a state of war against Cuba. I asked him whether he had any information to substantiate these reports. He expressed complete surprise and strong opposition, pointing out that such action would expose Bolivia to international ridicule. He speculated that these reports might have been planted by Cuban exiles. He said that some Cubans had approached him along this line and there may well be Cuban exiles in Bolivia who are doing likewise with other Bolivian officials. I told him that I also thought that this action would be a serious mistake not only because of the light in which it would cast Bolivia, but also because of the serious legal and practical problems which would arise from being in a state of war with Cuba.

Upon departing, he said he appreciated having the opportunity to talk frankly with me and expressed the desire to exchange views on his country from time to time. I told him I would be happy to do this whenever he thought it useful.


William G. Bowdler

Copy to: Mr. Walt Rostow
Mr. Robert M. Sayre - State.



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