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SECURITY : CONFIDENTIAL

PRIORITY: AIR POUCH

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

TO : Department of State

737.11/8-2350

AUG 20 1950

FROM : GUATEMALA 195 August 23, 1950.

XR 614.37
720.00

REF : Embassy Telegram no. 99 of August 16, 1950.

SUBJECT : SPECULATION SURROUNDING SECRET VISIT OF PRESIDENT
CARLOS PRIO SOCARRAS.

*cy. to
AmEmb,
Ciudad Lujillo,
9-1-50; C. Hauch,
M.D.*

The unheralded and secret visit of President PRIO Socarrás to Guatemala on August 12 has aroused much speculation, but the Embassy has been unable to uncover any credible explanation as to the real motives for and the significance of the trip.

The apparent facts are as follows: Prío Socarrás arrived by Cuban plane at the military side of the Guatemala airport about 10 o'clock on the morning of August 12; was met by President AREVALO, the Chief of the Armed Forces (Major Carlos PAZ Tejada), and by Colonel Jacobo ARBENZ; conferred in private with President Arévalo for about two hours; was entertained at a luncheon party which included Colonel Arbenz, the Minister of National Defense, the Chief of the Armed Forces, and the Minister of Communications (Colonel ALDANA Sandoval); and left for Cuba sometime during the afternoon. The local press said nothing about the visit, although the aforementioned facts are now more or less public knowledge.

Speculation as to the purpose of the visit follows two general lines of thought: 1) Prío Socarrás came to counsel his friend Arévalo that in view of the international situation and Guatemala's equivocal attitude in respect to the Communists he had better take measures to improve this country's international position, especially vis-a-vis the United States; or 2) that Prío Socarrás and Arévalo discussed specific suggestions of the former for a general improvement of relations with Nicaragua, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, and possibly Peru. One story heard is to the effect that Prío came to "free himself" of Caribbean Legion commitments. Another version circulating is that the talk with Arévalo concerned internal politics - that Prío urged his friend to take effective steps to curb present Communist influences which have damaged Guatemala's reputation in the eyes of the hemisphere.

Significantly, the Cuban Minister professes complete ignorance of the purpose of the visit. On the evening of

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MKWells/mch

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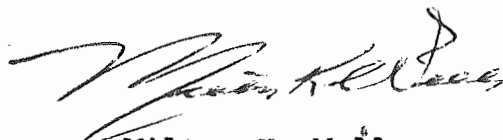
ATTEND

VJ

August 12, when I inquired as to the veracity of the rumor regarding Prío's presence in Guatemala, he merely confirmed that Prío had arrived that morning and had returned to Cuba "after lunch". Yesterday, he paid me an unexpected visit at the Embassy. He opened the subject by inquiring whether I could inform him as to the purpose of Prío's visit! I expressed appropriate surprise, remarking that he should be the one to inform me, not visa versa (I doubted he could be as innocent as he professed to be, and rather suspected the inquiry was designed to learn how the Embassy had interpreted the visit). He insisted that neither he, nor anyone else in Guatemala but President Arevalo himself, was aware of the nature of the business discussed between the two.

Commenting upon the silence of the Guatemala City press, the Cuban Minister admitted he had personally asked the newspapers to refrain from publishing anything lest the visit be "misinterpreted". The apparent reason, however, was to prevent the news from reaching the Cuban public, since Prío had absented himself from Cuba without due legislative approval. In this connection, the Cuban Minister remarked it wouldn't do much harm if news of the trip leaks out some two weeks later.

While the purpose of the secret visit remains a mystery to this Embassy, the circumstances strongly infer that the business which brought Prío Socarrás to Guatemala must have been of more than ordinary importance.



Milton K. Wells
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim

Copies to: Guatemala Desk Officer
Amembassy, Habana

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BUREAU OF
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TO : Department of State

737.11/8-2550

RECEIVED
Aug. 30

FROM : GUATEMALA 213 August 25, 1950

XR 716.00

REF : Embassy's Despatch no. 195 of August 25

cy sent to AmEmb
Cibdad Trujillo,
89-5-50

ARA

SUBJECT : FURTHER RUMORS REGARDING MOTIVES BEHIND THE SECRET
VISIT OF PRESIDENT CARLOS PRIO SOCARRAS

737.11/8-2550
ARA-041-48 - G - EUR/X

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Today a friendly Chief of Diplomatic Mission told me he had heard from a Salvadoran source that the real purpose of President Carlos PRIO Socarras' hurried visit with President AREVALO on August 12 was to persuade the latter that something must be done to prevent OSORIO from taking office as the President of El Salvador. The Embassy is inclined to place this version in the category of another wild guess, possibly given circulation by Salvadoran sources unfriendly to and suspicious of the Arevalo Government, since the same rumor has also come from several other quarters.

A reliable American citizen reported to the Embassy that the editor of a leading Guatemala City newspaper told him the belief in press quarters is that Prio had come to see Arevalo as a messenger for President TRUMAN to urge Guatemala to hue closer to the anti-communist line on international issues, et cetera. The editor reportedly said the newspapers had refrained from printing the story on the grounds it would likely raise a storm of nationalistic protests and do more harm than good.

The British Minister tells me that when he casually inquired of the Foreign Minister this morning, the latter flatly denied that President Prio had made the reported visit.

Milton K. Wells
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim

MKWells:rc
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Amembassy Habana
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SEP 6 1950

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737.11/8-2550

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SECURITY : RESTRICTED

PRIORITY: AIR POUCH

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TO : Department of State

737.11/9-1450
XR 614.37

RECD
Sept. 16

FROM : HABANA 604 September 14, 1950

Encl. 1

ACTION
ARA*

REF :

SUBJECT : VISIT OF PRESIDENT PRIO TO GUATEMALA REPORTED IN THE HABANA NEWSPAPER TIEMPO, SEPTEMBER 12, 1950

INFORMATION
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Rumors circulating in Cuba and elsewhere to the effect that President PRIO had made a secret visit to Guatemala on August 12, 1950, first appeared in published form in Cuba in the September 12, 1950, issue of Tiempo, a newspaper controlled by Representative Orlando MASFERRER (in which Minister of Defense Ruben de LEON is also alleged to have an interest), wherein appeared the following item:

md

"...And speaking of the President, in days past Carlos Prio, accompanied by General Ruperto CABRERA, made a super-secret trip in a military plane to Guatemala. He went and returned the same day. The plane left from the President's private airport at "La Altura" farm."

No mention was made as to the purpose of the trip.

For the Chargé d'Affaires ad interim:

Earl T. Crain,
First Secretary of Embassy.

ETCrain/elw
Sept. 14, 1950

Enclosure:
Clipping of Tiempo article
(2 copies to Dept.)

cc: Amembassies Guatemala
Ciudad Trujillo

737.11/9-1450
DC/R Central Files

SEP 14 1950

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SECRET

TIEMPO
September 12, 1950.

...Y hablando del Presidente. En días pasados, Carlos Prío, acompañado del general Ruperto Cabrera hizo un supersecreto viaje en un avión militar hasta Guatemala. Ida y regreso el propio día. El aparato salió del aeropuerto privado del Presidente en la finca "La Altura"...