

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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October 14, 1968

MEMO FOR WALT ROSTOW

SUBJECT: Mexico Riots

The attached cable from Mexico City contains a good analysis of the recent riots and assesses what there is to know about foreign influence.

The best evidence suggests violence was sparked by small well-organized Mexican extremist groups and that foreign influence was probably a minor factor.



SWLewis

Attachment

Mexico Embtel 7514, 10/12/68.

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 13526, Sec. 3.4
NIJ 95-188
By sig, NARA, Date 10-2-95



Department of State

TELEGRAM

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44

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ACTION ARA 16

INFU CU 04, HEW 07, CIAE 00, DODE 00, GPM 04, H 02, INR 07, L 03, NSA

NSC 10, P 04, RSC 01, SP 02, SS 25, USIA 12, RSR 01, EUR 15, NIC

SIL 01, LAB 06, OPR 02, FBI 01, SSO 00, /124 W

101805

P 120036Z OCT 68
FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7900

[Handwritten initials]
BUDGET
DAVIS
FRIED
GINSBURG
HARRISON
JESSUP
KATZ
LORBER
MCCARTHY
MURPHY
ROSEN
SULLIVAN
TAMM

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1. QUESTION OF FOREIGN INFLUENCE ON STUDENT DISORDERS LIKE QUESTION OF STUDENT LEADERSHIP ITSELF DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE BECAUSE OF PROFUSION OF CURRENTS WITHIN STUDENT MOVEMENT, FLUIDITY OF LEADERSHIP AT DIFFERENT MOMENTS, HIGH DEGREE OF SPONTANEITY WHICH HAS CHARACTERIZED STUDENT ACTIONS ESPECIALLY FOLLOWING ARMY SEIZURE OF UNAM WHEN LEADERS SCATTERED AND POSSIBILITY ENHANCED FOR UNCOORDINATED ACTIONS ESPECIALLY BY EXTREMIST GROUPS:

1.3
(a)(5)

2. DIRECT INVOLVEMENT BY FOREIGNERS HAS BEEN ESSENTIALLY NEGLIGIBLE AND BY FOREIGN EMBASSIES HARD TO PROVE. [REDACTED] TOP OFFICIAL SECRETARIAT OF GOVERNMENT HAS STATED GOM HAS SOLID PROOF SOV AND CUBAN EMBASSIES HAVE HELPED STRIKERS. EMBASSY HAS NO SUCH PROOF AND DOES NOT KNOW NATURE OF GOM PROOF. THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE INVOLVEMENT BY GROUPS LINKED TO COMMUNIST COUNTRIES AND INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE TRAVELED TO USSR OR CUBA AND WHO MAY THEREFORE BE VIEWED AS FOREIGN-SUPPORTED. THESE INDIVIDUALS CLEARLY HAD STRONG INFLUENCE ON FORMULATION OF STUDENT DEMANDS WHICH CHANGED FROM INITIAL FOCUS ON AFTERMATH OF JULY 29 INCIDENT TO INCLUDE ISSUES SUCH AS RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND DEROGATION OF ARTICLE 145 ON WHICH COMMUNISTS HAD TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY FOR YEARS TO DRUM UP SUPPORT:

3. EXTENT OF INFLUENCE OF FOREIGN-SUPPORTED GROUPS IN ANY GIVEN TACTICAL SITUATION MUCH LESS CLEAR CUT. HYPOTHESIS WHICH BEST FITS PRESENT

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SANITIZED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NJ 95-120

By *[Signature]* N/IRA, Date 10-4-95



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INFORMATION IS THAT AT LEAST ONE AND PERHAPS SEVERAL SMALL, TIGHTLY ORGANIZED AND DISCIPLINED EXTREMIST GROUPS HAVE OPERATED AT TIMES WITHIN AND AT TIMES IN THE SHADOW OF THE BROAD, MASSIVE STUDENT MOVEMENT, WHICH HAS, FOR MOST PART, BEEN MODERATE.

4. IN LINE WITH FOREGOING, DIAZ ORDAZ TOLD CONGRESSMAN SELDEN THAT ORIGINAL STUDENT AGITATION NOT COMMUNIST INSPIRED; HOWEVER, SOON AFTERWARDS MOSCOW-ORIENTED COMMUNISTS OBTAINED POSITION OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE IN LEADERSHIP OF MOVEMENT. SUBSEQUENTLY THIS GROUP DISPLACED BY EXTREMISTS OF MAO-CASTRO-TROTSKYITE ORIENTATION. INFLUENCE OF LATTER NOW BROKEN AND MOSCOW-ORIENTED GROUP HAS ONLY VERY SMALL INFLUENCE.

5. THERE THUS APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN THE OLD-LINE LEFT AND THE NEWER, EXTREME LEFT COMPETING WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH THE MODERATES FOR LEADERSHIP OF THE STRIKE MOVEMENT. (THERE MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN OTHER, AD HOC GROUPS REPRESENTING ALLEGED INTERESTS OF DISGRUNTLED MEXICAN POLITICOS.)

6. EMS BELIEVES THAT OLD-LINE COMMIE GROUP, WHOSE LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION WELL KNOWN TO SECURITY FORCES, CAUSED GOVT LITTLE PROBLEM AND TO SOME EXTENT SUCCESS OF MORE EXTREME GROUPS IN DISPLACING THEM MAY HAVE BEEN FACILITATED BY GOVT PRESSURES ON OLD LINERS WHICH CAUSED THEM TO PULL BACK.

7. NEWER, MORE EXTREME GROUPS HAVE SHOWN ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH, DISCIPLINE AND RESOURCES WHICH SUGGEST THIS WAS NOT AD HOC DEVELOPMENT EMERGING FROM STUDENT AGITATION BUT RATHER ORGANIZATION ALREADY IN EXISTENCE AND WELL DEVELOPED. REPORTS THAT EXTREMIST STUDENT GROUP WOULD ATTEMPT DISRUPT OLYMPIC GAMES HAD CAUSED GOM SECURITY AGENTS CONCERN EVEN BEFORE STUDENT AGITATION BEGAN. EVIDENCE TENDS TO SHOW THAT WHEN GROUP BECAME ACTIVE IN STUDENT MOVEMENT GOVT HAD ONLY SUPERFICIALLY PENETRATED ORGANIZATION AND IDENTIFIED ITS LEADERS. REAL APPREHENSION OF GOVT WAS THAT THIS GROUP, EITHER THROUGH DIRECT TERRORIST ACTIVITIES OR THROUGH CAPABILITY TO INFLAME STUDENT MASSES, WOULD DISRUPT GAMES. PROBLEM OF GOVT WAS TO IDENTIFY AND DETAIN LEADERSHIP AND BREAK UP ORGANIZATION BEFORE GAMES AND TO DO THIS IF POSSIBLE IN WAY WHICH WOULD NOT INFURIATE MASS OF STUDENTS AND WOULD NOT CREATE ADVERSE PUBLIC ATMOSPHERE FOR GAMES.

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8. AS DATE FOR GAMES APPROACHED, TWO LAST AIMS BECAME LESS IMPORTANT WHEN WEIGHED AGAINST IMPERATIVE NECESSITY BREAK TERRORIST ORGANIZATION AND SEIZE ITS LEADERSHIP. THUS A MAJOR REASON FOR SUDDEN OCCUPATION UNAM CAMPUS BY TROOPS WAS HOPE THT TERRORIST LEADERSHIP, WHICH HAD USED CAMPUS AS MEETING PLACE, WOULD BE ROUNDED UP. (IN FACT MOST HAD DEPARTED FROM CAMPUS SHORTLY BEFORE.) OCCUPATION ZACATENCO AND CASCO DE SANTO TOMAS CAMPUSES OF POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE PROBABLY HAD SAME REASON: TO SEIZE EXTREMIST LEADERSHIP AND WEAPONS. IN EACH CASE TACTIC WAS COMPLETE ROUNDUP OF ALL PERSONS PRESENT, SUBSEQUENT SIFTING OF DETAINEES AND RELEASE THOSE NOT BELIEVED DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN VIOLENCE. SUBSEQUENT TACTIC OF GOVT OF PERMITTING STUDENT GATHERINGS FOR SEVERAL DAYS, THEN SUDDENLY MAKING NUMEROUS DETENTIONS SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN DESIGNED FOR LIKE PURPOSE. AS GOVT ROUNDED UP INCREASING NUMBERS OF EXTREMIST LEADERS, ITS INFO RE ORGANIZATION AND REMAINING LEADERSHIP IMPROVED.

9. IT IS PROBABLY THAT GOVT PERMITTED STUDENTS TO ASSEMBLY ON OCT. 2 AT TLATELOLCO (IT IS ALWAYS EASIER TO PREVENT STUDENT GROUP FROM FORMING THAN TO BREAK IT UP AFTERWARDS) BECAUSE IT HAD REASON TO EXPECT THAT MANY OF EXTREMIST ELEMENTS AND LEADERSHIP WOULD BE PRESENT, AND IT SEEMS ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT PREPARATIONS HAD BEEN MADE TO SEIZE AT LEAST THE LEADERSHIP. IT SEEMS LIKELY IN THE LIGHT OF PREVIOUS DISCUSSION THAT GOVT WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO ACCOMPLISH THIS WITH MINIMUM VIOLENCE, ALTHOUGH THIS IS NOT CERTAIN, IN ANY CASE
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ACTION ARA 16

INFO CU 04, HEW 07, CIAE 00, DODE 00, GPM 04, H 02, INR 07, L 03, NSAE 00,
NSC 10, P 04, RSC 01, SP 02, SS 25, USIA 12, RSR 01, EUR 15, NIC 01,
FBI 01, SIL 01, LAB 06, OPR 02, SSD 00, /124 W

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P 120036Z OCT 68
FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7902

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IT WAS PREPARED TO USE FORCE IN WHATEVER DEGREE NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE THIS OBJECTIVE.

10. IT IS EQUALLY CLEAR THAT NUMEROUS WELL-ARMED EXTREMIST STUDENT ELEMENTS WERE CAREFULLY PLACED IN AT LEAST 3 OF THE BUILDINGS SURROUNDING THE PLAZA OF THE THREE CULTURES. AS TO SPECIFIC GROUPS, ONE CAN CONCLUDE A PRIORI THAT THEY WOULD INCLUDE TROTSKYITE TYPES IN ONE FORM OR ANOTHER. EMBASSY HAS NOW HEARD FOR SECOND TIME OF A BRIGADA OLIMPIA THOUGH NOT IN CONNECTION WITH OCT. 2. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT DEPLOYMENT ARMED EXTREMISTS WAS AGREED POLICY OF ENTIRE STRIKE COUNCIL WHICH INDEED MAY NOT HAVE BEEN AWARE OF IT IN ADVANCE. EVIDENCE IS INCOMPLETE OR CONTRADICTORY AS TO WHETHER THIS DEPLOYMENT OF ARMED EXTREMISTS WAS FOR PURPOSE AMBUSHING ARMY AND THUS PROVOKING FIRE FIGHT IN PRESENCE FOREIGN PRESS (WHO THEY KNEW WOULD BE PRESENT) OR WHETHER IT WAS "DEFENSIVE". EMB INCLINED TO FORMER VIEW. WITH EVACUATION OF UNAM CAMPUS AND OTHER STEPS STEAM SEEMD AGAIN GOING OUT OF STUDENT; EXTREMISTS MAY HAVE THOUGHT TIME HAD ARRIVED FOR ALL OUT EFFORT. AS EMB HAS POINTED OUT PREVIOUSLY, EXTREMISTS HAVE HAD OPTION OF THWARTING PEACEFUL SOLUTION BY PROVOKING VIOLENCE.

11. REPORTS OF USUALLY RELIABLE SOURCES AND ON SPOT OBSERVERS VARY GREATLY AND ARE OFTEN FLATLY CONTRADICTORY AS TO WHO FIRED FIRST SHOTS. PREPONDERANCE EVIDENCE SEEMS TO BE FIRST SHOTS EITHER OCCURRED IN OR CAME FROM CHIHUAHUA APARTMENT HOUSE. WHETHER THEY WERE FIRED BY STUDENT EXTREMISTS OR PLAINCLOTHES SECURITY AGENTS IN BUILDING CONTINUES MUCH DISPUTED POINT. FACT THAT PARATROOP GENERAL

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JOSE HERNANDEZ TOLEDO WAS SHOT WHILE USING BULLHORN TO URGE CROWD TO DISPERSE PEACEFULLY SUGGESTS STRONGLY FIRST SHOTS DID NOT COME FROM ARMY. PERHAPS QUESTION WHO FIRED FIRST SHOT WILL NEVER BE KNOWN AND IS, IN ANY CASE, ACADEMIC.

12. QUESTIONING OF LARGE NUMBER OF PERSONS (REPORTEDLY OVER 2000) DETAINED AT TLATELOLCO HAS TAKEN CONSIDERABLE TIME. GREAT MAJORITY HAVE BEEN RELEASED, BUT OPERATION NETTED A NUMBER OF EXTREMISTS AND THEIR LEADERS. GOVT APPEARS TO BELIEVE THAT RESULT HAS BEEN SUBSTANTIAL BREAKING UP OF TERRORIST ORGANIZATION. TECHNIQUE OF PUBLIC STATEMENTS BEFORE PRESS BY TERRORIST LEADERS HAS PROBABLY BEEN VERY EFFECTIVE IN CREATING FEAR, MUTUAL DISTRUST AND UNCERTAINTY AMONG STUDENTS IN GENERAL AS WELL AS REMAINING ELEMENTS OF TERRORIST GROUP.

13. WITH RESPECT TO PUBLIC STATEMENTS ABOUT FOREIGN CONSPIRACY, IMPORTANT TO NOTE USE OF FOREIGN SCAPEGOAT FREQUENT IN MEXICO AND IN THIS INSTANCE DESIGNED TO DISCREDIT STUDENT MOVEMENT AND PERHAPS TO SOME DEGREE TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM DEEPER LOCAL ROOTS OF PROBLEM. GOVERNMENT HAS SEVERAL TIMES HINTED AT SOVIET AND/OR CUBAN INVOLVEMENT, WHILE SOME ELEMENTS ON LEFT HAVE BLAMED CIA OR FBI. CARDENAS STATEMENT IS NOT SPECIFIC, THOUGH GIVEN HIS BIASES, HE MAY HAVE US IN MIND. SOCRATES AMADOR CAMPOS LEMUS SHIFTED FOCUS FROM FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT TO POSSIBLE CAPABILITY OF DISAFFECTED LOCAL POLITICIANS, CONCEIVABLY WITH SO MANY FOREIGNERS IN TOWN FOR OLYMPICS, GOM DOES NOT WANT TO FOCUS ON FOREIGN ANGLE BUT AFTER OLYMPICS, ESPECIALLY IF STUDENT DISORDERS RECUR, LATTER THEME MAY REEMERGE.

14. DOCTOR'S STRIKE, WHICH IN FACT INVOLVED INTERNS IN ONLY ONE OR TWO HOSPITALS AND ACCORDING TO DIRECTORS THOSE INSTITUTIONS DID NOT INTERFERE WITH NORMAL OPERATIONS, WAS NEVER MATTER OF SERIOUS CONCERN AND, INsofar AS EMB AWARE, IS NOW OVER.

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