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7 October 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY GILPATRIC

From: Maj. Gen. Lansdale *SL*

Subject: Civic Action in Bolivia

Julio Sanjines, Director of Civic Action, Bolivia, made a surprise visit to Washington last week, stating that he wanted to discuss recent developments and future plans with me. I invited representatives of the Special Assistant/OSD, ISA/OSD, Joint Staff, Army, Air Force, State Department, and AID to meet with Mr. Sanjines at my office, 3 October.

In essence, Mr. Sanjines pled for U.S. understanding and help in a series of immediate, low-cost civic action projects in Bolivia -- to beat the Communists in a race for the loyalty of the most militant Bolivian mining communities, to make a healthy start towards political stability in Bolivia, to give the Bolivian Armed Forces more self-sufficiency in supporting themselves, and to add incentive for productivity and the eventual payment of taxes in Bolivia's land reform program. Mr. Sanjines felt that the present U.S. aid programs in Bolivia, while extremely helpful to his country, included a number of long-range projects too slowly paced to meet the critically urgent political realities. He implied that the U.S. -financed \$4 1/2-million highway being constructed from La Paz to the altiplano, splendid as it is, might well go into Communist hands when completed -- while, if \$500,000 of this same U.S. money were diverted to ten civic action projects, this might well make the vital difference in preventing a Communist takeover.

AID representatives at the meeting explained that Congressional actions had sharply circumscribed funds for U.S. assistance to Bolivia, that Alex Firfer (AID chief at the U.S. Embassy in La Paz) was currently

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MCA-90/48

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Authority EO 12356  
Name: [redacted] Chief, Declass  
Rec. Mgmt. [redacted]

From the NATIONAL SECURITY ARCHIVE, 1755 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036

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reworking the fiscal apportionment of U.S. assistance, and that Mr. Sanjines should return to La Paz promptly to make his plea to Mr. Firfer. I urged him to stop off in Panama, en route, to confer with CINCSO.

The Communist Threat. Mr. Sanjines explained that Communist or "extremist" leaders presently in Bolivia were militant and highly vocal -- but rather unorganized and not too good at managing their affairs. The real Communist threat lies in about 300 selected Bolivians now undergoing Communist training and discipline in Eastern Europe. When this hard-core group of trained and disciplined Communists is re-infiltrated into Bolivia, it undoubtedly will have a plan, along with the resources and ability, to start a serious attempt to win the country. A major resource to be gained and used in the Communist plan is obviously the people and the militia in the mining communities. The well-armed militia, if consolidated into a single force and supported by the people of these communities, could prove to be more than a match for Bolivia's Armed Forces. The memory of a defeat of the Bolivian Army by the people's militia a few short years ago is fresh in Bolivian minds.

Counter-Action. Mr. Sanjines has plans for immediate-impact civic action projects in the most potentially dangerous mining communities. He has selected ten key communities, each with its own militia today, and each with well-surveyed or researched community needs (in terms of water supply, public health, etc.) -- each of which can be satisfied with a project costing about \$50,000. Tactics for military civic action in each of these ten communities would be similar to the highly-successful Achacachi project in May of this year -- which resulted in bringing recalcitrant miners and Army together, and with the people forcing the militia out of town while inviting the Army in to occupy the militia's barracks.

In each of these ten communities, plans call for the formation of a community civic action committee to work with the military civic action team, and to help initiate prompt self-help in the community. Mr. Sanjines intends to enlist the support of the more dynamic human resources on our side in these community committees; he mentioned Maryknoll Fathers,

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Protestant missionaries, Rotary, and the Lions Clubs International, among others. Also, he envisions the police becoming more involved in Civic Action along with the military.

He noted that there are roughly 100 communities in Bolivia where conditions are such that they offer a potential for Communist exploitation. He believes there should be civic action projects for each, to win them over to supporting the government, and thus to bring stability to Bolivia. Starting with the ten most dangerous communities, soonest, will give the Bolivian Government a good head start over the Communist organizers when they re-infiltrate.

The Achacachi Example. Achacachi is a mining community in northern Bolivia. Its militia was widely feared, noted for having murdered a Cabinet Minister with impunity. Its Indian miners despised the Bolivian Army. Living on the side of a mountain, the people had to go down the river to haul up water (mostly by hand) for their daily needs.

With the help of a Maryknoll Father, and a handful of local citizens, arrangements were made to accept an Army Civic Action team -- to help give the town a public water supply system. The project was well planned in advance, and every minute was made to count once it got underway. (Sanjines believes this same thorough planning and implementation can be done in the ten critical projects mentioned above).

The Army Civic Action team arrived in Achacachi in a long truck convoy. In the first truck was a band, which detrucked in the plaza and promptly started a band concert to the delight of the population. In a festive air, the rest of the convoy arrived -- truckloads of lengths of pipe and soldier engineers who promptly set to work. As the work progressed (making reservoirs on the hillside, a pumping station at the river, pipelines from river to the reservoirs, and pipelines from reservoirs to individual homes), the local population was asked to pitch in and help. This they did increasingly until, by the end of the project, the soldier engineers wound up as supervisors of local volunteer workers.

More significantly, the local population became concerned about the welfare of the hard-working soldiers who were giving such sorely-needed

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help to the community. The population looked at their loafing, scoffing militia -- and forced the militia to leave their barracks, which were then turned over to the Army. The militia then dispersed, having lost the support of the people.

The Achacachi project cost about \$40,000, mostly for material. The people pay a nominal sum to the town's Civic Action committee for water service to their homes, to pay for upkeep and the salary of an engineer at the pumping station. The water system is estimated to have sufficient capacity to fulfill the community's growth needs for the next 100 years. Plans are now being made for electric power supply. As an Army infantry unit replaces the Army engineers in the town's barracks, the Army generator also will furnish electricity to light the town plaza.

Israeli Help. Mr. Sanjines explained that he had stopped off in Washington en route home from Israel. In Israel, he had helped in outlining a program of instruction for training Bolivian officers in Israel, as well as completed arrangements for Israeli officers to come to Bolivia to act as advisors-instructors in a new Bolivian Army agrarian program.

The plan is to establish Army farms in country areas requiring security (the first will be close to the Peruvian border), where local inductees will be given basic military training, literacy education, instruction in improved farming techniques, and, hopefully, some faith in a better future for Bolivia's citizenry. Israeli military-agricultural instructors will live on these farms, which will be run by Bolivian officers trained in Israel.

Sanjines said that there were two major goals to this Army farm program besides making better farmer-citizen-soldiers of the local recruits. One goal is to get the Army out of urban centers and into areas where security is needed. Another goal is to raise sufficient food to feed the Armed Forces. Currently, out of the \$7-million Defense budget, \$2 1/2-million is for food, which the Army might well be able to provide for itself under this plan.

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MCA-92/48

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Incentive. Mr. Sanjines spoke several times about the need for more faith by the citizenry in the future of Bolivia. He hopes that the younger Israeli military helping on the Bolivian Army farms, getting their hands dirty alongside the Bolivians, will impart some of their drive and spirit to not only the military, but also to farmers in surrounding areas. He expressed concern that land reform, and the new relocation projects, are putting a lot of people on their own land -- but the people don't quite understand the concept of ownership and independence -- and end up raising crops for the barest subsistence of their own families; Bolivia has yet to find an incentive substitute for the large landowner who made his farmers produce, or for the Inca rulers before that. No Bolivian politician has yet dared to impose taxes. There are few consumer incentives, such as radios, to induce greater farm productivity; these have to be introduced.

Meanwhile, a token form of taxation has been tried out in five areas by Bolivian Civic Action, with unusually successful results. There is excellent aerial-photo coverage of most of Bolivia, with the photos held by the government. Prints cost 30¢ each. They are sold to the new owners of land for \$1.50, to show him the boundaries of his plot and as visible evidence of what he owns. The aerial photos have proven to be far more convincing to Indian land-owners than a legal document or a map.

Sanjines, who has been recalled to active duty as a Lieutenant Colonel, also spoke of what Civic Action could mean to Bolivian military men of his generation (too young to have known the defeat of the Chaco War, too junior to have been in responsible commands in the defeat of the Army by the militia). Although they train for war, it is doubtful that they will fight an external enemy under today's conditions. If their major task remains to keep readying forces for such a war, and thus into building up frustrated energy, idle talents might well find outlet through political temptations -- such as a coup against the government; (news of the coup in Honduras was just being reported as our meeting with Sanjines began, apparently provoking this thought from him). However, Civic Action is providing a highly challenging outlet for the Bolivian military, stimulating through the immediate tangible results, including a new-found friendship with the people. There is a long way to go for Civic Action in Bolivia, with a long-term dynamic role in it for Bolivian military energies and abilities.

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