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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AmEmbassy MEXICO, DEPARTMENT OF STATE 175
BUREAU OF INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON. August 11, 1960
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SUBJECT: Pressure of the Mexican Left on the Administration. FBI-9 NSA-2

The statements made recently by leading members of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) and by high government officials concerning the course and policies of the present Mexican administration have been a source of concern to many, both in Mexico and abroad. This has been especially true in the United States where various groups felt that Mexico enjoyed stability and was cordially disposed towards the United States. The reaction within Mexico was also widespread, and party and government leaders found it necessary to clarify what was meant by the "judicious left" and the "extreme left within the Constitution."

In order to appraise properly the meaning of these public utterances by leading party and administration officials, it is necessary to understand the various pressures to which the Government has been subjected for some time. Ever since the national electoral campaign of 1958 both the left and the right have been severely attacking and pressuring both the party and the administration. The pressure from the right has not been too effective. (The right in Mexico has been closely identified with the Roman Catholic Church, large landed estates, and rich aristocratic families. These groups opposed the Revolution and its radical doctrine and have advocated gradual evolution in Mexican politics.) It has limited itself mainly to attacking the party and the administration on what it terms PRI's political monopoly, corruption, suppression of the opposition, and what it considers the administration's failure to provide adequate schools for the growing school population. It also assails the administration for Article 3 of the National Constitution which stipulates that education in Mexico shall be the function of the State and that it shall be lay both in character and content. This Article was intended to restrict the Roman Catholic Church in educational matters.

Despite these sustained attacks and criticism, the rightist opposition has not been successful in making much of an impression on either the dominant party or the administration. Rightist opposition does not have dynamic leadership or a basic program of action which appeals to the growing middle class or to the masses of the population. Besides, rightist opposition has traditionally been associated with

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money interests and is constantly being labelled as a backward force in Mexican political life. The administration and the dominant party are sensitive to criticism from whatever source. In December, 1959, President Adolfo LOPEZ Mateos, while visiting Querétaro, did endeavor to mollify the rightist opposition and the Church by stating that there existed in Mexico complete freedom of worship, and that the State was not interfering in the religious activities of the Church.

The present regime and the dominant party have been subjected to a more telling pressure from leftist individuals and groups. (In Mexican terms the left is intimately associated with the doctrine of the Revolution. It means in general, land reform, labor rights, greater national participation in economic development, elimination of the Church from politics and education, and reduction of foreign influences.) This pressure originates with some intellectuals, teachers, students and certain labor groups. Leftist pressure expresses itself in various ways. Leftists criticize officials and the dominant party; they maintain that the Revolution has been subverted; that many leaders carrying the banner of the revolutionary movement are venal and have enriched themselves at the expense of the workers and peasants; that the agrarian reform has not been pushed far enough; also, they hold the United States responsible for the ills that afflict Mexico and other Latin American countries. These radical forces are militant, fairly well organized, and extremely vocal. At the slightest pretext their professional agitators organize demonstrations of protest often accompanied by irrational violence.

Leaders of the dominant party and the administration are committed, at least verbally, to the basic tenets of the Revolution. These tenets are generally leftist in character. Consequently, the authorities, caught in the trap of their own radical pronouncements and in some cases their own radical convictions, are reluctant to adopt severe measures against leftists and their agitators. Only when someone openly and defiantly challenges the authority of the Government do the authorities act with firmness and expedition. The imprisonment of Demetrio VALLEJO and his immediate followers is a case in point. This attitude of tolerance on the part of the authorities has tended to encourage and embolden the left to pursue an aggressive course. It is pertinent to suggest that these dissident groups view former President Lázaro GARDENAS as the symbol of leftist causes in Mexico. Ambassador HILL is convinced that the most powerful political personality in Mexico today is ex-President Gádenas. His position and influence become more effective because of President López Mateos' apparent vacillating attitude and at times indecision with respect to national and international matters.

In the past two years, the left has made every effort to compel the administration to pursue a more leftist course than did its predecessor. Many observers claim that former President Cardenas has had a hand in this endeavor, and point to the emphasis which the

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present administration has placed on the expansion of the agrarian reform. It should be remembered also that Cárdenas and many other prominent Mexican leftists have at various times visited Cuba and have publicly expressed their sympathy for Fidel CASTRO and the Cuban Revolution. All these factors have encouraged the left to become more active and more aggressive and to subject the authorities to tremendous pressure.

This telling pressure from the left on the administration was made evident on the occasion of the visit to Mexico of the President of Cuba, Dr. Osvaldo DORTICOS, in the middle of June. The reporting officer, as well as other officers of the Embassy, was told by various contacts that Mexican Government officials were not too eager to have President Dorticós visit Mexico. The pressure from Cárdenas and other leftists, however, was so strong that they had to yield by extending to President Dorticós an official invitation. At least one Minister, Gustavo DIAZ Ordaz, Minister of Gobernación, was reported as being deeply concerned with respect to this visit. He is alleged to have stated that the administration's lavish entertainment was prompted by its desire not to allow the left alone to capitalize on the visit and create grave problems for the authorities.

This may have been the intention of the administration. But in trying, as it allegedly claimed, to mollify the left by taking control of all matters pertaining to the visit, it gave the impression, unwittingly or not, of being the prisoner of the left. No other visiting head of State, in the memory of the reporting officer, has been so lavishly received or treated more cordially. The administration ordered that government employees be dismissed from their regular duties in order that they might go to the airport to receive President Dorticós. This action is rare in Mexico. Advertisements paid by the Government were printed in most major papers calling on all citizens to show President Dorticós the friendship and sympathy of Mexicans for Cuba. Much was made of the close ties existing between these two sister republics, and citizens were urged to treat President Dorticós with utmost respect and cordiality. Many public events were officially organized in his honor. It was generally believed that the authorities exceeded all balanced bounds in entertaining President Dorticós. The impression, therefore, was gained by many that the exuberance displayed by the present Mexican administration in receiving and entertaining President Dorticós was the result of strong pressure from the left, and very especially, from Cárdenas.

The leftist pressure on the administration and on the PRI has manifested itself in other ways. There have been persistent rumors in recent months that Cárdenas was dissatisfied with the moderate course the dominant party and the administration were following. It has been reported that Cárdenas has favored the organization of a socialist party that would endorse a more radical course for the revolutionary movement. Many other leftists have favored this idea

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since they maintain that the PRI no longer represents the basic ideology of the Revolution. According to a number of reports, the rumored organization, a socialist party with Cárdenas' endorsement, has provoked much concern in the high command of the PRI and the administration.

In order to mollify the left and neutralize the effect of its pressure, PRI and administration leaders have, at least verbally, assumed a leftist posture. Official and party spokesmen have maintained publicly that the course and ideology of the present Mexican regime are leftist in character. The first spokesman who expressed himself on this matter was General Alfonso CORONA del Rosal, President of the PRI. At a banquet organized by the National Executive Committee of the PRI on June 24 in honor of the group of Mexican legislators who recently toured Europe and Iron Curtain countries, Corona del Rosal stated that the position of Mexico in ^{the} face of its problems was really revolutionary, a judicious left (izquierda atinada). This statement caused much discussion in all political circles and many asked for clarification. Senator Manuel MORENO Sánchez, leader of the Senate, speaking at the same banquet, called for the unity of those leftist forces of which Corona del Rosal had spoken.

Although the statement made by General Corona del Rosal and its endorsement by Senator Moreno Sánchez could not perhaps be interpreted as the official position of the administration, it has generally been felt that both gentlemen spoke with prior official approval. This view was borne out by the statement, made a few days later, by President Adolfo López Mateos during his recent visit to the state of Sonora. While in Guaymas he held a press conference on July 1 and the question was asked him concerning the political character of his administration. In reply he said that the present Mexican administration was one of "extreme left within the Mexican Constitution," ("extrema izquierda dentro de la Constitución Mexicana"). This statement by the President, especially soon after the visit of President Dorticos, caused considerable stir within political circles in Mexico. (Extreme left appears to mean an aggressive advocacy of the doctrine derived from the Revolution. Neither the Mexican left nor the extreme left, according to Mexican interpretation, considers itself necessarily identified within international Communism.) Rightist opposition attacked the statement as revealing the leftist trend of the administration and the dominant party, and held that it gave encouragement and comfort to the Communists. Leftist groups were jubilant and wholeheartedly endorsed the statement as representing the basic tenets of the Revolution. Demonstrations were organized in support of the administration for its political position and much was made of the statement.

Significant among the endorsements expressed with respect to President López Mateos' extreme left statement was that of Emilio SANCHEZ Piedras, Deputy in the Federal Congress and President of the

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Permanent Committee of the Congress. Speaking before a regular session of the Permanent Committee, he tried to explain what "extreme left" meant in terms of the Mexican Revolution and Mexican domestic realities. It meant, among other things, he claimed, progress in the agrarian reform, expansion of agricultural improvement and productivity, expansion of foreign markets, better education, and social justice. Deputy Sanchez Piedras, however, was not satisfied to confine himself to domestic affairs. Touching upon the Cuban situation, he stated that at this moment when the doors of friendship and understanding with respect to Cuba are being closed by the northern neighbor (the United States), the representatives of the Mexican people offer the Cuban people complete Mexican solidarity.

The statement by Deputy Sánchez Piedras concerning Cuba was widely discussed here and in the United States. The reaction was tremendous. Various demonstrations held soon after the statement was made got out of hand and violence resulted. Involved in these demonstrations were students, teachers, some labor groups, and other dissident elements. The publicity given in the United States to these incidents resulted in cancellation of tourists' reservations at a number of hotels. United States firms with business in Mexico became distinctly concerned regarding their operations here. Such a prompt adverse reaction in the United States in the face of these statements and incidents had a sobering effect on Mexican officials. Explanations of all kinds were made in an effort to show that all was well and that "extreme left" meant simply social justice; solidarity with Cuban people meant the traditional friendship of the Mexican people for the people of that sister republic and sympathy for their legitimate aspirations.

Concerning the leftist posture of the PRI and the administration, the interpretation that such a posture was adopted in order to mollify the Mexican left and reduce its pressure on the authorities may be a valid one. In so doing, the administration tried to demonstrate that it was pursuing a leftist course and consequently the left should not complain. These official statements, however, have tended to embolden leftist groups to assume a more aggressive attitude than before. Regarding the statement by Sánchez Piedras concerning Cuba, one cannot escape the conclusion that it may have been intended as a warning to the United States to "go easy" on Cuba. The implication appears to be that the United States should realize that Cuba has friends in the hemisphere whose sympathies are with the revolution in that country and that no harsh treatment should be meted out to the Cuban people.

It should be said parenthetically that President López Mateos appears to have poor knowledge of international affairs and little understanding of economic matters. During the period he has occupied the presidency, he has done little to promote the kind of understanding between the United States and Mexico characteristic of the RUIZ Cortines administration. This has taken place despite the assurances given Ambassador Hill by ex-President Ruiz Cortines in the presence

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of López Mateos that he was convinced the cordial and correct relations between the two countries would continue and, in fact, improve.

It is plausible that these aforementioned statements were issued for domestic political reasons only in view of the strong leftist pressure on the administration. It is also true, however, that President López Mateos, as real head of the dominant party, is reported to have expressed himself as desiring to revitalize the party with stronger revolutionary doctrine. This, of course, could only mean a more dynamic leftist course than the party has pursued in recent years. It should be noted that PRI leadership has for the most part lost its revolutionary fervor. Political leaders and members of the ruling oligarchy have attained economic and social position. Their outlook is that of a bourgeois who has prospered under the present system and would not like to have that system disturbed or altered in any way. This attitude on the part of the ruling oligarchy has caused the revolutionary movement to evolve into what can be called a middle of the road regime. (Middle of the road is that moderate course into which the Mexican regime has evolved since the administration of President Avila Camacho.)

The left has assailed this attitude of the ruling oligarchy and has brought increasing pressure on the administration. There exists general discontent within certain sectors of the population. This discontent would tend to explain the rumors concerning the organization of a socialist party to take up the banner of the Revolution. The general political situation in Mexico is further aggravated by the tremendous growth in population and by the concentration of large numbers in urban centers where housing, services, sanitation, education, other facilities, and even jobs are inadequate. This population concentration has given rise to grave social problems which, in turn, affect adversely the overall political situation. Furthermore, the revolutionary movement, despite its many contributions, has not been able to extend benefits to all sectors of the population. It can be said without exaggeration that its more spectacular attainments have reached only about twenty per cent of the people. Thus, it is not strange to hear intellectuals as well as other observers point out that a new revolution is necessary in order to make the Revolution of 1910 effective.

The attempt of the administration and the dominant party to placate the left is in itself an admission that the left is a powerful force in indoctrinating the masses and in giving direction to popular aspirations. It also reveals a recognition of the latent discontent within those sectors of the population which have not derived benefits promised by the Revolution. In the past, political observers have been most fearful of the steady increase in the power of the Catholic Church. Many have stated to this reporting officer that the administration had more to fear from this quarter than from the left. It would appear, however, that the militant left is today a greater threat to Mexican stability than the right. Should the left become

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increasingly militant, the administration would have to yield to its demands, or become repressive. It should be borne in mind that the ruling oligarchy recognizes the need for stability at all costs because it has embarked on a program of economic and industrial expansion as well as on a program of national integration of the various racial elements. In order to attain these ambitious aims, stability is imperative.

The political disturbances which have developed in Mexico since 1958 and which started during the last few months of President Ruiz Cortines' administration and have continued under the present regime, are a matter of much concern to the Embassy. They serve as ample warning that the political situation in Mexico requires careful watching.

For the Ambassador:

Alberto M. Vazquez

Alberto M. Vazquez
First Secretary of Embassy

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