

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-20 PC-04 OMB-01 AGR-20 EB-11 COME-00

TRSE-00 SNM-02 DEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 NIC-01 DRC-01 /155 W

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R 121254Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2504

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, BGEN, BL

SUBJ: BANZER AND CAMPESINOS IN COCHABAMBA

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT BANZER SOUGHT DURING APPEARANCE MARCH 8 IN COCHABAMBA TO RECONCILE HIS GOVERNMENT WITH CAMPESINOS OF AREA. BANZER SPOKE AT MILITARY AIRPORT DURING CEREMONY MARKING GOVERNMENT'S FREE GIFT OF 1,000 METAL PLOWS AND 24 TRACTORS TO COCHABAMBA'S FARMERS AND COOPERATIVES. ESTIMATED 5,000 CAMPESINOS PRESENT. END SUMMARY.

1. THEME OF GATHERING PRONOUNCED BY MINISTER OF CAMPESINO AFFAIRS AND AGRICULTURE, COL. NATUSCH BUSCH, WHO DECLARED "MILITARY-CAMPESINO PACT" IN FULL FORCE. NATUSCH IDENTIFIED HIMSELF WITH BANZER AND EXTOLLED PRESIDENT AS CAMPESINO'S FRIEND. HE SAID BANZER HAD TOLD HIM THAT HE HOPED CAMPESINO WOULD BE PRESIDENT OF BOLIVIA IN NEAR FUTURE.

2. BANZER'S LONG AND MEASURED SPEECH SOUGHT TO EXPLAIN ECONOMIC MEASURES AS MEANS OF INCREASING INCOME TO CAMPESINOS, THE PRODUCERS OF BASIC PRODUCTS. HE SAID FORMER LOW LEVEL OF LEGAL PRICES ALLOWED PROFITS TO BE MADE BY SPECULATORS. HE URGED FARMERS TO RAISE MORE NOW. BOLIVIA, HE SAID, IRONICALLY, IS FORTUNATE IN

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CONTRAST TO REST OF WORLD BECAUSE IT HAS SHOWN ITSELF CAPABLE OF

PRODUCING MANY THINGS FOR DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION, LEGAL EXPORT AND CONTRABAND. BANZER TOLD THE CAMPESINOS THAT BOLIVIA EXPORTS COCA WORTH US \$ 280 MILLION WHICH IS DESTROYING THE YOUTH OF WORLD AND URGED THEM TO SWITCH TO OTHER CROPS.

3. BANZER PICTURED HIMSELF AS DEEPLY CONCERNED FOR CAMPESINO WELFARE, A DUTY HE CLAIMED THAT CAME TO HIM, IN A SENSE, AS POSTHUMONOUS CHARGE FROM PRESIDENT BARRIENTOS. HE REGRETTED THAT HE COULD NOT SPEAK QUECHUA SO THAT HE COULD SPEAK OF HIS LOVE OF THEM MORE EXPRESSIVELY. HE RECOGNIZED POOR STATE OF COCHABAMBA ECONOMY BUT TICKED OFF LIST OF GOVERNMENT MEASURES THAT WILL IMPROVE FUTURE INCLUDING DISTRIBUTION OF FREE LAND IN NEWLY OPENED CHAPARE REGION AND INDUSTRIALIZATION OF COCHABAMBA ITSELF. HE SAID GIFT OF TRACTORS AND PLOWS IS FIRST STEP IN MAKING AGRARIAN REFORM MORE MEANINGFUL BY HELPING INCREASE PRODUCTION.

4. COMMENT: RIGHT AT BEGINNING OF SPEECH BANZER SAID THAT GIFT OF TRACTORS AND PLOWS WAS NOT RPT NOT RESPONSE TO RECENT "TRAGIC EVENTS" IN VALLEY BUT CIRCUMSTANCES ARGUE OTHERWISE. BANZER'S SINCERITY EVIDENT IN SPEECH, INCLUDING REFERENCE TO COCA WHICH HELPFUL TO US BUT NOT NECESSARILY GOOD POLITICS FOR HIM. NONETHELESS, BOTH PRESIDENT AND MINAG SPOKE IN PATERNALISTIC TONES. CROWD WAS LARGE BUT ONLY VERY SMALL CLACK RESPONDED TO SPEECHES. LARGE NUMBERS STREAMED TOWARD EXIT WHEN PRESIDENT BEGAN SPEAKING UNTIL GUARDS CLOSED GATE OF BASE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, FARM EQUIPMENT, PUBLIC RELATIONS, SPEECHES, AGRICULTURAL WORKERS, LAND REFORMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 MAR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LAPAZ01488
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: LA PAZ
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740351/aaaabvkd.tel
Line Count: 87
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 SEP 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <10-Sep-2002 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BANZER AND CAMPESINOS IN COCHABAMBA SUMMARY: PRESIDENT BANZER SOUGHT DURING APPEARANCE MARCH 8 IN
TAGS: PINT, BGEN, BL, (BANZER SUAREZ, HUGO), (BUSCH, NATUSCH)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005