

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 AID-05

PC-01 HA-05 /080 W

-----125643 101748Z /43

R 081953Z FEB 79

FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4727

INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCSO J2 QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

CONFIDENTIAL LA PAZ 1225

E.O. 12065: GDS 2/8/85 (JOHNSON, RALPH R.) OR-P

TAGS: PINT, BL

SUBJECT: (U) ELECTION YEAR 1979: THE VIEW FROM SANTA CRUZ

1. (C - ENTIRE TEXT)

2. SUMMARY. A RECENT (JANUARY 30 - FEBRUARY 2) VISIT TO SANTA CRUZ BY AN EMBASSY OFFICER REVEALED THAT SUPPORT FOR THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IS GROWING IN THIS KEY REGIONAL CAPITAL, AND THAT MOST BUSINESS AND POLITICAL OBSERVERS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE FSB, BELIEVE VICTOR PAZ ESTENSSORO WILL CARRY THE SANTA CRUZ DEPARTMENT IN THE COMING ELECTIONS. PRIVATE BUSINESSMEN IN SANTA CRUZ HAVE PLEDGED APPROXIMATELY \$500,000 OF THE \$3.5 MILLION PAZ ESTENSSORO IS NECESSARY TO RUN HIS CAMPAIGN, AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR HAS ALSO AGREED TO PAY THE EXPENSES OF SANTA CRUZ DELEGATES TO THE MNR CONVENTION IN LA PAZ.

3. THE CONSENSUS AMONG POLITICAL PARTIES AND BUSINESS

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LEADERS AT THE MOMENT IS THAT EX/PRESIDENT BANZER WILL NOT BECOME A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. MOST BELIEVE THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE SUPPORTERS OF THE EX-PRESIDENT ARE DISPOSED TO BACK VICTOR PAZ. END SUMMARY.

4. WITH THE EMERGENCE OF THE VICTOR PAZ ESTENSSORO PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY SEEMILGLY ASSURED, AND DIVIDSIONS APPEARING

IN THE UDP COALITION, THE POLITICAL ASSURED, AND DIVISIONS
APPEARING IN THE UDP COALITION, THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE IN
SANTA CRUZ HAS CALMED CONSIDERABLY DURING THE PAST THREE WEEKS.
PAZ MET PERSONALLY WITH PROMINENT SANTA CRUZ BUSINESSMEN
BEFORE TRAVELLING TO LA PAZ FOR THE MNR CONVENTION, AND ACCORDING
TO A PARTICIPANT IN THAT MEETING, APPROXIMATELY \$500,000 WAS
PLEDGED TO THE PAZ CAMPAIGN. THE MNR LEADERSHIP IS SAID TO HAVE
DISCUSSED AGRICULTURAL POLICY AT SOME LENGTH WITH THE SANTA
CRUZ CATTLEMEN AND MAJOR FARMERS AND TO HAVE MADE COMMITMENTS
REGARDING THE AGRICULTURAL POLICIES THAT WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY
A PAZ GOVERNMENT.

5. WHEN ASKED BY AN EMBASSY OFFICER ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR
BROADENING THE PARTY'S SUPPORT IN THE SANTA CRUZ AREA, LOCAL
MNR LEADERS MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY ARE OPENING THE DOORS,
ALBEIT QUIETLY, TO THE FOLLOWERS OF EX-PRESIDENT HUGO BANZER.
ALTHOUGH DENYING DIRECT CONTACT WITH EITHER BANZER OR HIS
ADVISERS, MNR OFFICIALS SAID THEY EXPECT SUPPORT FROM THIS
QUARTER BECAUSE THEY INTEND TO MAKE IT KNOWN THAT AN MNR
GOVERNMENT WOULD CONCENTRATE ON DEALING WITH PROBLEMS AT HAND
RATHER THAN DWELLING ON THE PAST. (COMMENT: THIS APPROACH IS
OBVIOUSLY DESIGNED TO REASSURE THOSE WHO WOULD NOT WELCOME AN
INVESTIGATION OF THEIR PERFORMANCE AS MEMBERS OF THE BANZER
GOVERNMENT.)

6. ACCORDING TO AN ADVISER AND RELATIVE OF EX-PRESIDENT
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BANZER, THE FORMER PRESIDENT DOES NOT NOW INTEND TO PARTICIPATE
AS A CANDIDATE IN THE COMING ELECTIONS. ASKED WHOM BANZER
FOLLOWERS MIGHT BE EXPECTED TO SUPPORT, THE SOURCE COMMENTED
THAT THEY WOULD PROBABLY BACK PAZ, ALTHOUGH HE INFERRED THIS
MIGHT BE DONE INDIRECTLY VIA GENERAL BERNAL AND THE PDC. HE
ADDED THAT AT THIS POINT WHATEVER RISKS MIGHT BE ENTAILED IN
CARRYING OUT THE ELECTORAL PROCESS SEEM PREFERABLE TO THE
CERTAIN REACTION THAT WOULD FOLLOW A CANCELLATION OR UNWARRANTED
POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTIONS.

7. AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, LEADERS OF THE FALANGE (FSB) IN
SANTA CRUZ CLAIM TO BE CONFIDENT OF VICTORY IN THE JULY
ELECTIONS. OUTLINING A STRATEGY WHICH CALLS FOR STRONG ATTACKS
ON VICTOR PAZ AND HIS POLICIES AS PRESIDENT OF BOLIVIA, FSB
REPRESENTATIVES EXPLAINED THAT THEY PLAN TO POLARIZE THE
ELECTORATE BY SHOWING THAT THERE IS NO POLITICAL DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN PAZ AND SILES ZUAZO. HAVING IDENTIFIED THESE TWO
CANDIDATES IN THE MINDS OF THE VOTERS, THE FSB EXPECTS BOTH
THE MILITARY AND THE SANTA CRUZ REGION TO FIND PAZ QUOTE AS
UNACCEPTABLE AS ELSEWHERE UNQUOTE. AT THIS POINT THE FIELD WOULD
BE CLEAR FOR THE FSB CANDIDATE, MARIO GUTIERREZ. (COMMENT:
ALTHOUGH SANTA CRUZ REMAINS A STRONGHOLD OF THE FSB ON THE

LOCAL LEVEL, I.E., FSB CANDIDATES ARE ROUTINELY ELECTED TO THE POWERFUL PRO-SANTA CRUZ COMMITTEE, AND SERVE AS RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY, ETC., NON-FSB POLITICAL OBSERVERS IN THE AREA FIND THE ABOVE SCENARIO IMPLAUSIBLE. THE FSB IS NOT THOUGHT TO BE IN A STRONG POSITION TO ATTACK PAZ, AS IT ENTERED INTO AN ALLIANCE WITH THE MRRN OF PAZ IN 1971. IN ADDITION, FSB SUPPORT OUTSIDE SANTA CRUZ -- PARTICULARLY IN RURAL AREAS -- IS CONSIDERED WEAK. THE INFLUENTIAL PRIVATE SECTOR OF THE REGION, WHOSE SUPPORT WOULD BE ESSENTIAL TO THE FSB, DOES NOT BELIEVE THE PARTY OR ITS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE HAVE SIGNIFICANT NATIONAL APPEAL, AND THE LION'S SHARE OF THE CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS FROM BUSINESSMEN IS BEING COMMITTED TO PAZ ESTENSSORO.)

8.CONCLUSIONS: SO LONG AS THE PAZ CANDIDACY APPEARS VIABLE,
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AND HE SEEMS TO HAVE A REASONABLE CHANCE OF VICTORY, SUPPORT IN SANTA CRUZ FOR THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IS LIKELY TO REMAIN RELATIVELY FIRM. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE DEEP ANIMOSITY AMONG INFLUENTIAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC GROUPS IN THE SANTA CRUZ AREA TOWARD THE UDP (AND ANTIPATHY TOWARD SILES ZUAZO DATING BACK TO THE LATE 1950(S), SHOULD SILES ZUAZO AT SOME POINT IN THE CAMPAIGN APPEAR TO BE A PROBABLE VICTOR, PRO-ELECTION SENTIMENT IN SANTA CRUZ COULD EVAPORATE RAPIDLY. IF THE UDP COALITION WINS THE ELECTIONS, IT WILL BE FACED WITH FORMIDABLE OPPOSITION IN THE SANTA CRUZ DEPARTMENT.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 feb 1979
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1979LAPAZ01225
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS 19850208 JOHNSON, RALPH R
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D790064-1096
Format: TEL
From: LA PAZ OR-P
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1979/newtext/t19790277/aaaacljn.tel
Line Count: 148
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: c5e58be6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 jan 2006
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3830090
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: (U) ELECTION YEAR 1979: THE VIEW FROM SANTA CRUZ
TAGS: PINT, BL
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c5e58be6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014