

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4072

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 5639

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BL

SUBJECT: THE RETURN OF CIRO HUMBOLDT

1. EXILED MNR POLITICIAN CIRO HUMBOLDT MADE A DRAMATIC RETURN TO BOLIVIAN POLITICAL LIFE ON AUGUST 28, HOLDING A SURPRISE PRESS CONFERENCE IN THE OFFICES OF THE MNR IN DOWNTOWN LA PAZ. HUMBOLDT REPORTEDLY TELEPHONED THE LOCAL NEWSPAPERS, PRETENDING TO BE MNR EXECUTIVE SECRETARY RUBEN JULIO, AND ANNOUNCED THAT "IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS" WOULD BE ANNOUNCED AT MNR HEADQUARTERS. HUMBOLDT HIMSELF THEN STEPPED OUT OF A TAXI IN FRONT OF THE MNR BUILDING AT PRECISELY 4 P.M., WEARING A BEARD AND DRESSED IN A HAT AND DARK CLOTHES, AND ENTERED TO READ A STATEMENT TO THE PRESS.

2. HUMBOLDT'S STATEMENT AND SUBSEQUENT COMMENTS TO NEWSMEN ARE LARGELY A DEFENSE OF HIS OWN ACTIONS FROM 1971 TO THE PRESENT. CLAIMING THAT HIS ENEMIES USED THE JUNE 5 COUP ATTEMPT AS A PRETEXT TO REMOVE HIM FROM THE SCENE, HUMBOLDT ASKED THAT THE PROOFS OF HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THE YOUNG OFFICERS' REVOLT BE MADE PUBLIC. AT THE SAME TIME, HUMBOLDT REITERATED HIS CLAIM TO BE THE ACTING NATIONAL CHIEF OF THE MNR; HE DESCRIBED DR. VICTOR PAZ ESTENSSORO AS THE TRUE CHIEF OF THE PARTY AND ADMITTED TO HAVING MET WITH PAZ IN LIMA PRIOR TO HIS OWN CLANDESTINE RETURN TO BOLIVIA. FOLLOWING THE PRESS CONFERENCE, HUMBOLDT LEFT
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MNR HEADQUARTERS AND DEPARTED AS HE HAD COME, IN A TAXI.

3. GOVERNMENT AND OFFICIAL MNR REACTION TO HUMBOLDT'S SUDDEN RE-APPEARANCE WERE NOT LONG IN COMING. A MINISTRY OF INTERIOR COMMUNIQUE ANNOUNCED THAT THE MINISTRY WOULD DETAIN HUMBOLDT FOR HAVING ENTERED THE COUNTRY ILLEGALLY. THE COMMUNIQUE ALSO ACCUSED HIM OF HAVING RETURNED SOLELY TO PROMOTE HIS OWN PERSONAL INTERESTS WITHIN THE MNR. ACTING MNR CHIEF GUILLERMO FORTUN AND OTHER HIGH PARTY OFFICIALS ALSO CRITICIZED HUMBOLDT'S ACTION IN RETURNING TO BOLIVIA. IN A BRIEF COMMUNIQUE, THE MNR HIGH COMMAND AGAIN ACCUSED HUMBOLDT OF INVOLVEMENT IN THE JUNE 5 COUP ATTEMPT, AND CHARGED THAT HE HAD VOLUNTARILY ABANDONED HIS POST AS ACTING PARTY CHIEF TO ATTEMPT THE OVERTHROW OF THE BANZER GOVERNMENT.

4. THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN INFORMED THAT HUMBOLDT WAS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY BY OFFICIALS OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR ON THE MORNING OF AUGUST 29.

5. COMMENT: SPECULATION IS RUNNING HIGH AS TO THE MOTIVES FOR HUMBOLDT'S BRIEF BUT SPECTACULAR RE-EMERGENCE ON THE BOLIVIAN POLITICAL SCENE. ONE POSSIBILITY, WHICH SEEMS UNLIKELY IN OUR VIEW, IS THAT HUMBOLDT RETURNED TO LEAD OR TAKE PART IN A NEW CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE BANZER GOVERNMENT. ANOTHER, MORE LIKELY, EVENTUALITY IS THAT HUMBOLDT SET OUT ON HIS RETURN TRIP TO BOLIVIA WITH THE INTENTION OF MAKING A SURPRISE APPEARANCE AT THE MNR CONVENTION, ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED TO BEGIN ON AUGUST 28. HOWEVER, WHEN HE ARRIVED IN BOLIVIA AND DISCOVERED THAT THE CONVENTION HAD BEEN POSTPONED AT THE LAST MOMENT, TO SEPTEMBER 27, HE DECIDED TO STAGE A PUBLIC RE-APPEARANCE AS THE BEST WAY OF SAVING THE SITUATION. A RELATED CONSIDERATION IS THE POSSIBILITY OF A PAZ-HUMBOLDT UNDERSTANDING IN LIMA, WHERE-BY HUMBOLDT AGREED TO MAKE HIS CLANDESTINE RETURN TO BOLIVIA AS PART OF A PLAN TO FURTHER WEAKEN THE POSITION OF GUILLERMO FORTUN. FORTUN HAS APPEARED, IN RECENT WEEKS, TO BE INCREASINGLY OUT OF FAVOR WITH BOTH THE BANZER GOVERNMENT AND A MAJORITY OF THE MNR'S MILITANTS. WHATEVER THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF HUMBOLDT'S RETURN, HE IS LIKELY NOW TO BE QUICKLY BUNDLED OFF INTO PRISON OR EXILE BY GOB SECURITY

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OFFICIALS, WHO ARE PRESUMABLY EMBARRASSED BY THE THEATRICAL MANNER IN WHICH THE FORMER MNR LEADER MADE KNOWN HIS RENEWED PRESENCE IN BOLIVIA.

PARKER

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NNN

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