

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

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AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCSO J2 QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L 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 ESTIMATES 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 PLOITICAL 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 DIVISIONS 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 BANZZER 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 EILSES 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 MRNR 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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