

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LA PAZ 04685 192214Z

72

ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3705

INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 4685

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT BL

SUBJ: A PRELIMINARY LOOK AT THE NEW GOB

1. THE NEW ALL-MILITARY CABINET HAS NOT MET TOGETHER AS YET, BUT ALREADY THERE IS SPECULATION THAT THE FOURTEEN MEMBERS ARE DIVIDING INTO THREE OR FOUR CLIQUES, ONE OF WHICH, HEADED BY COLONEL JUAN PATINO AYOROA, IS BASICALLY HOSTILE TO PRESIDENT BANZER. THESE DIVISIONS, HOWEVER, APPEAR TO RESULT FROM POLITICAL AMBITIONS AND PERSONAL LOYALTIES RATHER THAN FROM ANY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL VIEWS. THERE ARE NO SO-CALLED GENERATIONAL GROUP OFFICERS IN THE CABINET, AND THE OVERALL PHILOSOPHICAL CAST OF THE NEW GOB IS CONSERVATIVE. IT IS LIKELY TO PLAY A CARETAKER ROLE IN THE VARIOUS MINISTRIES RATHER THAN ATTEMPT TO LAUNCH BOLD NEW VENTURES.

2. PRESIDENT BANZER SHOULD HAVE LITTLE DIFFICULTY IN EXERCISING HIS LEADERSHIP IN THIS CONTEXT AS LONG AS HE

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LA PAZ 04685 192214Z

MAINTAINS A DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY IN HIS DEALINGS WITH THE

ALLEGED FACTIONS WITHIN THE CABINET AND THE HIGH COMMAND OF THE ARMED FORCES. AT THE PRESENT TIME, IT APPEARS TO US THAT BANZER WILL REMAIN IN OFFICE UNTIL SOME SUCCESSION PROCESS, SUCH AS ELECTIONS, IS ARRANGED IN 1975. HE MIGHT BE PRESSURED INTO RESIGNING IN FAVOR OF A MILITARY JUNTA NINETY DAYS OR SO BEFORE ELECTIONS IN ORDER TO ADD TO THE PROSPECTS OF GOVERNMENT IMPARTIALITY IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS. SO LONG AS BANZER AND HIS CABINET MANAGE WHAT IS NOW GENERALLY VIEWED AS A GOVERNMENT OF TRANSITION, HE IS NOT LIKELY TO CONFRONT ANY SERIOUS OR BROADLY BASED COUP ATTEMPT. HOWEVER, SHOULD IT APPEAR THAT HIS PLANS TO MODIFY THE POLITICAL STRUCTURES OF THE COUNTRY ARE A COVER TO STAY IN OFFICE, OR TO POSTPONE ELECTIONS INDEFINITELY, HE WOULD RUN A GRAVE RISK OF BEING THROWN OUT OF OFFICE.

3. THE PROCESS OF RECOMMENDING AND ADOPTING THESE POLITICAL REFORMS IS IMPORTANT, THEREFORE, TO THE STABILITY OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT. THERE IS ALREADY GRUMBLING OVER THE NON-WORKING OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR STRUCTURAL REFORM, AND ITS PREDECESSOR THE NATIONAL CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL(NEVER FORMED, THOUGH ANNOUNCED IN EARLY APRIL), AND THE LENGTHY TIME PERIOD GIVEN TO THE COUNCIL (180 DAYS) TO MAKE ITS RECOMMENDATIONS. SOME PEOPLE ARE NOW SUGGESTING THAT IT WOULD BE MORE DEMOCRATIC, MORE CONSTITUTIONAL AND MORE CONDUCIVE TO POLITICAL TRANQUILITY, TO CALL FOR A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY TO PROPOSE AND APPROVE CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS. THESE PEOPLE SUGGEST THAT THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR STRUCTURAL REFORM SHOULD BE LIMITED TO PROPOSING THE RULES FOR CONVENING A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, WHICH COULD THEN BE CALLED WITHIN A MONTH OR SO. THERE IS ALSO TALK THAT WITHOUT A BROAD POLITICAL AMNESTY AND FREEDOM TO CAMPAIGN POLITICALLY, THE GOVERNMENT'S CREDIBILITY IN FORMING THE ALL-MILITARY CABINET WILL BE SHOT FULL OF HOLES.

4. REPORTEDLY, THE SO-CALLED GENERATIONAL GROUP OF OFFICERS LED BY GARY PRADO CONTINUES TO AGITATE FOR BANZER'S REMOVAL AND FOR PROMPT GENERAL ELECTIONS, BUT THE BANZER GOVERNMENT SHOULD HAVE A BREATHING SPELL NOW OF SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE THE OPPOSITION PRESSURES GROW TO DANGEROUS PROPORTIONS. AS NOTED ABOVE, THESE PRESSURES NEED NOT GROW

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LA PAZ 04685 192214Z

UNDULY IF THE GOVERNMENT SHOWS SUFFICIENT SIGNS OF FORWARD MOVEMENT LEADING TO A PROMISED GOVERNMENTAL SUCCESSION.

5. THE EMBASSY EXPECTS THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL USE AUGUST 6, INDEPENDENCE DAY, AND AUGUST 7, ARMED FORCES DAY, TO MAKE SOME MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENTS SURROUNDING THE TIME TABLE FOR ELECTIONS AND PERSONNEL CHANGES (E.G., A SHAKE UP IN THE MILITARY AND CHANGES IN THE MINISTRIES AT THE SUB-SECRETARY

LEVEL).

6. COMMENT: THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THE FORMATION OF AN ALL-MILITARY CABINET IF IT CARRIES OUT ITS STATED PURPOSE OF GOVERNING DURING A TRANSITIONAL PERIOD LEADING TO NATIONAL ELECTIONS NEXT YEAR SHOULD BENEFIT U.S. INTERESTS IN BOLIVIA. POLITICAL TENSIONS HAVE BEEN LESSENED AND DEMOCRATICALLY ORIENTED POLITICAL GROUPS SHOULD HAVE A CHANCE TO RECOVER THEIR FOLLOWING AND GREATLY REDUCE THE PROSPECTS OF A GOVERNMENTAL TAKE-OVER BY EXTREMIST ELEMENTS. BEFORE THE FORMATION OF THE MILITARY CABINET AND THE ANNOUNCED FORTHCOMING CONSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE COUNTRY, THE ODDS WERE RISING FOR A COUP BY JUNIOR MILITARY OFFICERS WHO MIGHT HAVE BECOME RADICALIZED IN THEIR QUEST FOR SUPPORT.

7. THE ALL-MILITARY GOVERNMENT WILL ALMOST INEVITABLY LEAD TO SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED MILITARY EXPENDITURES, PRINCIPALLY ON PAY, BENEFITS AND ALLOWANCES SIDE. THE BOLIVIAN ARMED FORCES, LIKE MOST OTHER SECTORS OF BOLIVIAN SOCIETY, ARE IN VERY POOR SHAPE. TO THE EXTENT THAT BETTER PAY AND FACILITIES HELP INSURE THE COHESIVENESS AND LOYALTY OF THE MILITARY UNITS TO THE PRESENT GOB, THE PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL STABILITY ARE ENHANCED AND OUR OVERALL INTERESTS IN BOLIVIA ADVANCED.

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