

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LA PAZ 09950 190215Z
ACTION ARA-15

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 CIAE-00 PM-06 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00
INRE-00 HA-05 AID-05 EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /073 W
-----084194 190221Z /64

O R 190150Z NOV 79

FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9346
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEM ASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
USCINCSO J2 QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ IMMEDIATE
DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

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ROME FOR VATICAN

EO 12065: NA
TAGS: PINS, PINT, BL
SUBJECT: JUBILATION MARKS BOLIVIA'S RETURN TO DEMOCRACY

1. THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION OF DEPUTY LIDIA GUEILER TEJADA
ON NOVEMBER 16, 1979 AS PRESIDENT OF BOLIVIA SET TWO
PRECEDENTS: THE FIRST LADY PRESIDENT IN THE NATION'S HISTORY,
AND APPARENTLY THE FIRST TIME A MILITARY OVERTHROW HAS EVER
BEEN REVERSED THROUGH DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES. THESE RATHER
EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS WERE ACCLAIMED BY A RATHER EXTRAORDINARY
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REACTION IN LA PAZ ON FRIDAY EVENING AS A CHEERING CROWD
JAMMED THE PLAZA MURILLO IN FRONT OF THE CONGRESSIONAL AND
GOVERNMENT PALACES WHILE ELSEWHERE CITIZENS' SHOUTING AND
HONKING OF AUTOMOBILE HORNS--AS
IF BOLIVIA HAD WON THE AMERICAN CUP SOCCER COMPETITION--
SIGNALLED THEIR JUBILATION OVER THIS REMARKABLE RETURN TO
CONSTITUTIONALISM AFTER TWO WEEKS OF GRIM, SUPPRESSIVE

MILITARY GOVERNMENT. INDEED, THE CHANGE WAS A KICK TO THE SUDDEN ABRUPT TERMINATION OF A PROTRACTED NIGHTMARE.

2. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, THE CABINET--EXPECTED TO BE ANNOUNCED MONDAY NOV 19--WILL BE ONE OF "NATIONAL UNITY," WHICH CAN BE INTERPRETED TO SIGNIFY PARTICIPATION BY SOME OF THE MAJOR POLITICAL GROUPS, PARTICULARLY VICTOR PAZ' MNR ALLIANCE. WE ARE ALREADY RELIABLY INFORMED THAT AUGUSTO CUADROS SANCHEZ, MINISTER OF ECONOMY IN ONE OF THE PAZ ADMINISTRATIONS, WILL BE THE NEW FINANCE MINISTER. CUADROS SANCHEZ IS DESCRIBED AS A CONSERVATIVE ECONOMIST AND ONE WHO CAN BE EXPECTED TO TAKE A FIRM HAND IN CONFRONTING BOLIVIA'S CRITICAL ECONOMIC SITUATION.

3. ON THE INTERNATIONAL FRONT, PRESIDENT GUEILER REITERATED BOLIVIA'S CLOSE ADHERENCE TO THE ANDEAN PACT AND CALLED FOR ALL DEMOCRACIES TO SUPPORT THE NEW BOLIVIAN RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONALISM, PARTICULARLY IN CONFRONTING BOLIVIA'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. FRONT PAGE PRESS TREATMENT WAS GIVEN THE DEPARTMENT'S DESCRIPTION OF EVENTS HERE AS A "DRAMATIC VICTORY FOR THE BOLIVIAN PEOPLE," WITH THE EXPECTATION OF A NORMALIZATION OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. WE MIGHT ADD THAT WE HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED SEVERAL CALLS FROM VARIOUS SECTORS, INCLUDING BOLIVIAN DEPUTIES AND PUBLIC SERVANTS, EXPRESSING APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE FOR U S POLICY NOT TO DO BUSINESS WITH NATUSCH.

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4. IN THE MEANTIME, THE PARLIAMENT'S UNANIMOUS CHOICE OF LIDIA GUEILER IS REFLECTED IN A SIMILAR CLOSING OF RANKS AMONG OTHER SECTORS. FORMER PRESIDENT WALTER GUEVARA ARZE ANNOUNCED THE END OF HIS "CLANDESTINE GOVERNMENT," NOTING THAT IT HAD EFFECTIVELY ACCOMPLISHED ITS PURPOSE IN CONTRIBUTING IN NO SMALL MEASURE TO BOLIVIA'S RETURN TO DEMOCRACY. LABOR LEADERS DESCRIBED THE EVENTS AS A TRIUMPH FOR THE WORKERS, AND BOLIVIA'S NATIONAL LABOR FEDERATION (COB) IN A MESSAGE TO WORKERS HAILED THEIR CONTRIBUTION AND CALLED FOR CONTINUED UNITY AND VIGILANCE. THESE REACTIONS ARE TYPICAL ELSEWHERE IN BOLIVIA AS PRESS REPORTS INDICATE JUBILATION AND A RELAXATION OF THE TENSE ATMOSPHERE IN BOLIVIA'S MAJOR URBAN CENTERS.

5. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF AN ANNOUNCEMENT THAT BOLIVIA'S BANKS ARE CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE--A CONTINUATION OF THE BANKING HOLIDAY DECLARED LAST WEEK AFTER THE CENTRAL BANK CLOSED ITS FOREIGN EXCHANGE WINDOW--LA PAZ IS EXPECTED TO RETURN TO NORMAL VERY QUICKLY. THE NEW GOVERNMENT HAS OFFICIALLY LIFTED THE STATE OF SIEGE, WHICH IN A SENSE HAD ALREADY BECOME AN UNOBSERVED ANACHRONISM BY THE WEEKEND.

BOEKER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DEMOCRACY, POPULAR SUPPORT, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE, ELECTIONS, FORM OF GOVERNMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 nov 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: 1979LAPAZ09950
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D790531-0936
Format: TEL
From: LA PAZ
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1979/newtext/t19791150/aaaabpx.tel
Line Count: 117
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 610c2e22-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
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: 710316
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: JUBILATION MARKS BOLIVIA'S RETURN TO DEMOCRACY
TAGS: PINS, PINT, BL, (GUEILER TEJADA, LIDIA)
To: STATE ASUNCION
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/610c2e22-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