

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

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Intelligence
Note - 521

June 23, 1967

To : The Acting Secretary
Through: S/S
From : INR - George C. Denney, Jr. *A.C.D.L.*
Subject: Crisis Management in Bolivia: Government Flounders but Keeps its Footing

Bolivia's crisis continues, but it now seems evident that the unrest among western tin miners has not sparked a general movement of opposition to the government. President Barrientos' efforts to strengthen his political position by negotiations with the Bolivian Socialist Falange (FSB) have come to naught, and the Huanuni tin miners have declared the Huanuni area a "free territory." Nevertheless, Barrientos has taken no drastic actions (e.g. violent repression of the miners) thus far, and he has retained the support of the military. Moreover, there are no signs of a coalescence of the several elements in the population capable of seriously threatening public order; the guerrillas in southeastern Bolivia, the miners in the west, students, opposition political groupings of the left. The cumulative total of adverse factors in the present crisis creates a somewhat more somber impression than do the same factors examined individually. The crisis could clearly sharpen as a result of largely unpredictable events, but the general outlook is no worse -- and in some respects slightly more hopeful -- than it was last week.

The guerrilla movement. The Bolivian armed forces have found it difficult to retain contact with the guerrilla force and are still a long way from stamping out the movement. There have been rumors of possible new guerrilla "fronts", but such reports seem somewhat overdrawn and unrealistic in view of the small size of the guerrilla movement, estimated to number about 60 members. We have seen no evidence of successful recruiting efforts by the guerrillas. The Soviet-oriented Bolivian Communist Party

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NJ 72-38

By *mg* NARA. Date *3-26-92*

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(PCB) is reported to have set up "classroom training" for party members in guerrilla warfare, but this is unlikely to add to the government's problems in the immediate future.

The present guerrilla movement can probably evade and harass the counterinsurgent forces for an indefinite period, but it does not in itself and at its present size constitute a serious threat to the government.

The unrest in the mining areas. The best efforts of extreme leftist agitators have apparently failed to spark any massive, violent move against the government or to weld the miners to the guerrillas. The focus of miner discontent is situated in Huanuni, where miners have declared a "free territory." They made similar declarations during periods of unrest in 1964 and 1965 and are probably seeking leverage to get concessions from the government, including lifting the state of siege. Nevertheless, the rank and file miners seem little inclined to cooperate with the guerrillas, despite the urging of extremist leaders.

The miners are rumored to have received arms, possibly from sources in Chile, but the rumors are unconfirmed. Marxist parties in Chile have expressed support for the Bolivian guerrilla movement but there is no evidence that the Chilean extreme left has attempted or intends to provide material support either to the insurgents or the miners. The effective Chilean military and police forces would undoubtedly make every effort to block the movement of arms into Bolivia.

Political opposition and students. Leftist opposition groups would like to take advantage of the guerrilla movement and miner discontent to improve their own position. However, these groups are at odds among themselves, generally ineffectual, and subject to considerable harassment and some repression by the government. Bolivian university

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and high school students sympathize with the tin miners and to some extent, probably, with the guerrillas, but the students have remained quiet during the present crisis. We see no indications of impending student moves to show solidarity with either the miners or guerrillas.

The short-run outlook. President Barrientos reportedly hopes to engage in "personal dialogue" with the tin miners later this month. His chances of effecting a relaxation of the present tension seem good. Making concessions on pay and working conditions to the miners would cause difficulties for the national mining corporation, COMIBOL, but at the same time would likely undercut the efforts of extremist mine leaders to radicalize miner discontent in the direction of support for the guerrillas. The greatest danger in the short term would lie in the coalescence of groups or movements capable of violence. If the government should take harshly repressive measures against the miners, that coalescence might occur. However, Barrientos has not authorized such measures thus far and his chances of avoiding drastic action seem somewhat better than even.

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2020-10-09