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THE FOREIGN SERVICE
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AMERICAN EMBASSY

REC'D
MAY 4

No. 347

Quito, April 21, 1948.

ACTION
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SUBJECT: Conversation with Dr. José Miguel GARCIA MORENO,
Acting Foreign Minister, Concerning Disturbed
Condition in Ecuador.

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THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,

WASHINGTON.

SIR:

I have the honor to refer to my despatch no. 319 of April 13, 1948, entitled "Possible Threat of Communist-Inspired Disturbances in Ecuador", in which I reported to the Department the serious concern of the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. José Miguel Garcia Moreno, regarding the Communist situation in Ecuador, and to inform the Department that I called yesterday afternoon on Dr. Garcia Moreno, at his request, to discuss these matters further.

Dr. Garcia Moreno told me that he still felt considerable concern in regard to the threat of some subversive movement which might occur in Ecuador due to the ambitions of certain political leaders, mentioning in this connection the names of Colonel Carlos MANCHENO and General Alberto ENRIQUEZ Gallo. He said, however, that this concern was not so great as it had been the previous week and that he felt that the Government was alert to all dangers of this type and that appropriate measures were now being taken to protect it against such types of attack. He then mentioned the Communist danger. As to this, he expressed the fear that the Communist groups here, being well organized and determined, if possible, to organize acts of violence, arson or assassination, might be preparing to carry out their plans in the wake of any other type of political disturbance which might occur. He said that he felt sure that the Communists were making active preparations in this sense and that he was particularly apprehensive in regard to their plans for the assassination of one or more prominent persons in Quito or Guayaquil. He assured me, however, that effective measures were being taken both as regards frontier protection against the infiltration of Communist agents from Colombia and as regards the preparation of lists of undesirable aliens whom it was the intention of the Government of Ecuador to deport in the near future. He said that both the Army and police forces were on the alert and were prepared for any emergency. As to the Army, he

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Despatch no. 347, April 21, 1948, Quito.

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expressed some doubt as to its dependability in a crisis, and said that it was torn by political rivalries, especially as regards what he described as its Manchenista and Enriquezista groups.

Dr. Garcia Moreno then said that the Ecuadoran Government was anxious to have a supply of tear gas bombs sent to it by the United States Government at an early date, if such action should be possible. I inquired as to whether the Ecuadoran Government had taken any steps in this direction and he said that the matter had already been taken up, although he was not aware of the details of what had been done. He said that he would send me his file on this subject, and I promised him to look into the matter with sympathy and interest.

Dr. Garcia Moreno then made the surprising request that, if possible, I undertake steps to "reinstate" the intelligence service of this Embassy, which he described as having existed up to the early part of the year 1947. He said that, in these critical times, such a service had become more necessary than ever before, and said that his request was of course based on the premise that the information gathered by this service might be of great use to the Foreign Office, should we be willing to exchange with the latter information of this type. I explained to Dr. Garcia Moreno that, while the previous intelligence service, which was organized under FBI auspices, had in fact been terminated early last year, all officers of our Embassy were interested in securing information of all types in regard to Ecuador paralleling the interests and duties of Ecuadoran diplomats in connection with their daily work in all other countries of the world. I explained that we make frequent reports to Washington, and that these reports cover a wide variety of subjects, commercial, social, cultural, political and others. I said that we were endeavoring to do our best with the means at hand and that I doubted very much whether the United States Government would be in a position to take the action he suggested. I told him, of course, that such action would have to be global in character. He repeated his request towards the end of our interview, and I told him once more that I saw no prospect of favorable action although I would report to my Government the views which he had expressed.

By way of comment, it seems surprising that Dr. Garcia Moreno would act upon the assumption that we have no intelligence service now which might be considered as comparable to that which existed a year ago. I naturally did not elucidate on this subject. It is possible that he wished me to commit myself in some way in regard to our present intelligence organization. If so, he certainly

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received no enlightenment as regards our organization, although I expressed to him my appreciation of his discussing with me, in such a frank manner, various confidential matters of mutual interest.

Dr. Garcia Moreno's request was, perhaps, of some significance in view of the publicity which has been given, in the local press, to American news reports concerning discussions and congressional hearings in Washington on the subject of the alleged lack of complete intelligence reporting from our Embassy in Bogotá prior to the recent Colombian revolution. These reports, which have caused some local comment, doubtless brought to Dr. Garcia Moreno's attention the fact that some type of intelligence reporting is now in operation in our Embassies abroad, and this may have given an impetus to his inquiry. As previously reported, a full discussion of our CIA service in foreign Embassies, as it appeared in a Drew Pearson column in the United States, was reproduced in El Comercio of December 14, 1947. This article, as also reported, has awakened the particular interest of Foreign Minister Parra Velasco, who is said to keep a copy of this article, mounted on cardboard, in his desk. My conclusion is that the Foreign Office must be well aware of the existence of a well-organized intelligence service in this Embassy and that, in the present uncertain political situation, it may wish to effect an increased exchange of information with this Embassy in regard to matters affecting Ecuadoran security.

I took occasion, in our conversation, to indicate that it would be difficult for me to undertake any general exchange of information of this type, since such action might be considered as contrary to our basic concepts of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries.

Respectfully yours,

John F. Simmons
John F. Simmons

File 800B
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Copy sent American Embassy,
Bogotá.