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AN
NORTH AMERICAN DEPARTMENT

4026

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Registry Number AN4026/436/8

FROM Mr. Gallienne, GUATEMALA, to

No. Mr. Broad. 54/86/48

Dated Confidential. 26.10.48

Received in Registry 11.11 48

Report about the "Caribbean Legion" published in the Latin-American issue of "Time" magazine dated 25 Oct.

Refers to Guatemala letter of 22 October, to Mr. Steptoe (AN4023/436/8).

Encloses a copy of the extract.

Copied to Mr. Meade, Washington, H.M. Ambassador Mexico City, and to the acting Governor, British Honduras.

Last Paper.

AN4025

(Minutes.)

See AN4023.

References.

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BRITISH LEGATION,
GUATEMALA.
4028
20th October, 1948.

54/36/48

BY AIR BAG

CONFIDENTIAL

My dear Broad,

On the 22nd October I wrote a letter to Steptoe at San Salvador about the "Caribbean Legion" and a copy will go in this same bag.

The United States "Time" magazine, in its Latin-American issue dated October 25th, but received here on October 23rd, printed a report about the Caribbean Legion. I attach a copy.

The Time report seems accurate but there is one statement in it that gave me concern: it says that the "Legionaires" from Costa Rica are being brought to Poptún in the Petén.

Poptún is fairly near the frontier with British Honduras and the presence there of perhaps three hundred of this Legion, just at this moment of tension, could not be ignored.

It is very hard for us to get any information about anything outside Guatemala City, harder still anything about the remote district of the Petén, and hardest of all anything about the Caribbean Legion, but I started a ball rolling to try to find out if this Time report was true, which I doubted.

However, today I was able to question the United States Chargé d'Affaires on this subject and he told me that the members of the Legion being brought back from Costa Rica were going to Poptún but only because this was a remote airfield where observation would be difficult. The Guatemalan Government tried to keep everything about the Legion secret. Some of the Legion were, he understood, to be dispersed, but not disbanded, and others would be concentrated at Esquipulas which is about ten miles from the frontier with the Republic of Honduras, and remote from British Honduras.

This sounds quite reasonable, so I have dropped my enquiries, which would have been very difficult anyway.

I am...

Phillip Broad Esq.,
North-American Department,
Foreign Office,
LONDON.

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I am sending copies of this letter to Gerald Meade at Washington, His Majesty's Ambassador at Mexico (for Service Attachés) and to the acting Governor of British Honduras.

Yours ever,

(W.H. Gallienne)

30th October, 1948.

P.S. Since I wrote this letter, which is awaiting the bag, conditions have changed rapidly because of our refusal of mediation and the announcement of the visit of two H.M. Ships to Belize. I feared that the authorities in British Honduras might increase their precautions unnecessarily and thus aggravate a position already delicate so I sent a telegram to the acting Governor of British Honduras (my telegram No. 99 of the 29th October to Belize repeated to Foreign Office as my telegram No. 220).

I am trying very hard to guess Guatemala's actions and, if possible, to keep one jump ahead but unfortunately they are jumping very fast.

W.H.G.

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"TIME" MAGAZINE ISSUE OF 25th October, 1948.

CENTRAL AMERICA.

WINGS OVER TACHO.

The general sailed his flat-brimmed Pershing-style campaign hat on to a table, and sagged into a chintz-covered chair. Scowling across the parlor of his Managua hilltop mansion, Nicaragua's Dictator Anastasio ("Tacho") Somoza grumbled: "I did everything I could to prevent what is coming, but there's no way to keep the peace in Central America. For years Nicaragua's GUARDIA NACIONAL has stood like a Chinese wall in Central America, stopping trouble from going north and south. God knows I'm a patient man, but there is nothing I can do now. The fireworks may start any time—maybe tomorrow."

Tacho shifted his paunch and glowered at the 15-foot alligator across the room. "The man responsible for this mess is Arévalo, up in Guatemala," he growled. Tacho had heard that Arévalo was making jokes: "Let him talk about sending me flowers. I'll send them over to him first. He plans to attack Honduras and Nicaragua. He has just made a pact with Figueres of Costa Rica, Prío Socarrás of Cuba, and the Caribbean Communist tramps to destroy the peace of Central America. He is responsible for Central America's coming war."

LEND-LEASE. It was not only Guatemala's President Arévalo who was prodding Tacho Somoza last week. There was also a variegated group of political exiles, self-appointed enemies of tropical dictators, who called themselves the Caribbean Legion. Last spring they had flown at least 21 plane-loads of arms from Guatemala right around Tacho's Chinese wall and landed them in Costa Rica—where they helped General José Figueres install a government that bears no love for Somoza.

Since that victory, the Legion's Dominican colonels and generals have been drilling 150 Nicaraguan youths on Figueres' Río Conejo farm, just outside San José. For Figueres (who knows that Costa Rican counter-revolutionaries are also drilling on Tacho's side of the border), the situation has been a little embarrassing. The Caribbean Legion and its friends have been looking for a way to get on with their business without leaving Figueres on the spot.

Last month they went to Guatemala City for strategy talks with Arévalo and Nicaraguan exile leaders. Last week they made their first move. Guatemalan registered air transports began landing in Costa Rica to take aboard the Legion's khaki-clad recruits. Once again, the airlift was on; again it by-passed Tacho's wall. This time the recruits and gear were headed for an encampment at Poptun, in the remote Guatemalan province of El Petán. Even though the move was no surprise this time, Tacho could do nothing about it: Arévalo's air force was bigger than his.

BETWEEN!!.

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BETWEEN TWO FIRES? The airlift's destination suggested that the Legion might be turning its attention for the moment to Honduras, where Dictator Tiburcio Carías had just won a carefully staged election.

But last week Tacho swore he would not be flanked again. "You think I'm going to let them put me between two fires? No! The battle for Managua will be fought right over there in Tegucigalpa. When the first Legionaire pokes his nose in, the GUARDIA will be there to pot him."