

AN
NORTH AMERICAN DEPARTMENT

AN 4023

1948

CENTRAL AMERICA

Legis-
Caribe

Registry Number AN4023/436/8

FROM Guatemala, to Mr. Broad.

No. Confidential.

Dated -----

Received in Registry 11.11.48

Details of the make up of the Caribbean Legion.

Transmits a copy of a letter from Mr. Gallienne to Mr. Steptoe, San Salvador, No. 54/80/48, of 22nd October.

Last Paper.

AN4017 ✓

References.

(Print.)

(How disposed of.)

8) Col. Ken, M.O. 3, L.O.
Mr. Crosthwaite, S.B. Adm.
Mr. Gillingham Adm.
Mr. Terry, N.I.D. Adm.
Mr. Mackintosh, C.O.
Mr. Hunt, C.R.O.

Nov 17

(Action completed.)

R 6/1

(Index.)

12/13

Next Paper.

AN4025 ✓

(Minutes.)

See AN 4026.

This gives a clear idea of the Caribbean Legion & its activities

CB 15/11

J. Falle
12/11

SA Dept
L.A. 12/11
FOR 30/11
a la w/o AN
4017 & 4026

A useful report. The legion is bound to be a force to be reckoned with in any disturbances in Central America in the near future.

Copy W.O. C M.O. 3 - Col/Kenn
A.M. C S-B. Mr. Crosthwaite
Adm. (Mr. Gillingham & Mr. Terry - N.I.D.)
C.O. C.R. Mackintosh
C.R.O. C.R. Hunt
13/11

It is rather significant that the President of Cuba's
Privately

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Pivotal Secretary is a
Dominican exile, that
he may shortly become
the leader of the Caribbean
League. No wonder Pres
Smyth continues to
regard Cuba with such
great suspicion. The
main objection of the
League is I am sure
still Santo Domingo.

See also
AN 4026
AN 4017

J. Stephens
18/xi.

M. 18/xi

The "democratic bloc" is a thorn
in our flesh so far as anti-colonial
agitation is concerned.

Incidentally a fairly prominent
renegade mentioned to me recently
the ambitions of Betancourt in fostering
this bloc (though he did not actually
name the League). The supposition in § 10
may well be accurate.

R. Cecil
18/xi

J. G.
6/1

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4023

With the compliments

of

His Majesty's Legation, Guatemala.

P. Broad Esq.,
North American Department,
Foreign Office,
LONDON.



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54/80/48

BY KING'S MESSENGER

CONFIDENTIAL

BRITISH LEGATION,
GUATEMALA.
22nd October, 1948.

My dear Steptoe,

Your letter 8/4/1 of the 1st October in which you ask that I should tell you something about the Caribbean Legion.

2. I have been mentioning the Caribbean Legion in despatches for about six months but have never written much about it partly because I know very little and partly because I have little time. The name itself "Caribbean Legion" was probably only invented a few months ago.

3. The line-up of countries in Central America is Guatemala, Venezuela and Cuba, who call themselves the "democratic" countries, against Nicaragua, Honduras and the Dominican Republic, which the Guatemalans call the "dictator" states. In the Guatemalan "democratic" bloc is now Costa Rica, and Guatemala also claims that Mexico, Panama and Ecuador are with them, though I have my doubts about this. Salvador is more or less in the dictator bloc, but not quite as firmly, and not quite regarded as an enemy by the democratic bloc.

4. The Caribbean Legion is made up of adventurers, soldiers of fortune and political exiles. There are some United States citizens and one or two British subjects in it. Since the Caribbean Legion is a weapon of the democratic bloc the political exiles are therefore all from the dictator bloc, i.e., Honduras, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic; men who want to overthrow their present dictator governments so that they can get into power themselves. President Arévalo of Guatemala is, of course, intent on installing his puppet governments so that he can control all Central America. The Nicaraguan exiles in Guatemala have a good deal of money and use a lot of it to support the Legion, which they hope will send them to power in Nicaragua.

5. A conservative estimate of the strength of the Legion is 1,000 men. Three hundred and fifty of them are still in Costa Rica where they went to put Fiqueres into power but I believe that they are being returned to Guatemala by air this week. There are a lot of unconfirmed rumours that agitators have just crossed the frontier from Guatemala into Honduras to try to stir up a

revolution...

H.N. Steptoe Esq.,
H.M. Minister,
British Legation,
San Salvador,
EL SALVADOR.

X But there are also a number of Venezuelans, Cubans and others (presumably also Guatemalans) who naturally are not in a category of "political exiles" but in that of "adventurers."

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revolution to prevent Manuel Galvez from succeeding Carias as President, but my information is that these are all Honduran political exiles—of course abetted by Arévalo—and that the Caribbean Legion as such is not being used at present.

6. The Legion is a tool of Arévalo's and he can use it to intervene in any small neighbouring country which displeases him. If the Legion fails he can pretend he had nothing to do with it, while if it succeeds he can reap the rewards. A thousand men might not be very important except that they have a good deal of money, Arévalo and others supply them with modern arms, help them with training, and transport them to any zone of operations in Guatemalan military and civilian aircraft.

7. This makes them an effective and mobile weapon, especially as most of them must be tough fighters. The purchase and transportation of munitions is very involved because all three countries, Guatemala, Cuba and Venezuela, and I think also Costa Rica, purchase anything anywhere they can. For instance, I heard that when the Venezuelan training ship "Capana" visited Guatemala in July, it landed arms. Also I reported some time ago that we believed that arms of Czechoslovak origin had been brought over the frontier from Mexico to a Government-owned coffee finca called "La Blanca" on the Pacific coast. We know of many attempts to buy arms in Canada and have had reports of shiploads arriving from Cuba. Generally these arms seem to be kept in Guatemala and to be used in whichever direction they may be required. How much of the arms sent with the Legion to Costa Rica has been returned to Guatemala is not known but the United States Embassy think that Figueres was forced to return most but was allowed to pay \$120,000 for those which he said had been lost or damaged.

8. I have occasionally sent reports of specific supplies of munitions and cash made by Arévalo but many other rumours I have to discard, especially as I can never be quite certain whether the munitions are being sought for the Legion or by anti-Arévalists who want to start a revolution. All matters regarding the Legion are very hush-hush, and no colleague here, except the United States, has ever mentioned it to me.

9. The Caribbean Legionnaires seem to make their headquarters here: some may be living as private persons and others are kept on the various coffee fincas, confiscated from the Germans and now owned by the Guatemalan Government. If there is any real headquarters it may be in the Palace Hotel, almost next door to the chancery of this legation.

10. The head of the Legion is General Rodriguez who is an exile from Trujillo's government in the Dominican

Republic....

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Republic. He also supplied a good deal of cash. But the United States Embassy are convinced that he will be supplanted by Juan Bosch. Bosch is also an exile from Trujillo, with whom he was once friendly. Bosch is a friend of Betancourt and it is said that he lived in the Presidential mansion when Betancourt was President of Venezuela. Betancourt is supposed to have been the man who really started the Legion by supplying arms and cash. Bosch is a writer and a political agitator and it is important to note that he is now private secretary to Prfo Socarrás, the new President of Cuba.

11. I have for months heard rumours that the Legion was to be used for an attack on British Honduras and "Belice" is, of course, the country which gives me most concern. There is little doubt that a coup was planned against British Honduras and that we scotched it by sending ships and troops there in February, thus making the Guatemalans extremely angry. I do not believe they have given up their plans but they are scared to do anything now. They could easily send parts of the Legion to occupy isolated districts of British Honduras, and there were reports that they were proposing to infiltrate them as "Fifth Columnists," but a successful attack would have to be done mainly by air and, since they know we are prepared for this, it makes it improbable that they will try it on. The Guatemalans started manoeuvres of airborne landings early this year and have just started practicing parachute landings. I saw twelve parachutists drop yesterday with full equipment. Two of them were hurt and one, in fact, fell on my car! But on the whole it was a fairly good attempt in difficult circumstances.

12. That is about all I know.

13. But perhaps there is enough to make it worth circulating this letter, so I shall send copies to Broad, Gerald Meade, and to San José, C.F., Managua, Tegucigalpa, Mexico (for the Service Attachés), Panama, Havana, Ciudad Trujillo, Caracas and the Acting Governor of British Honduras.

14. I should be grateful if recipients of this letter would treat it with discretion. Not only can I not be sure that it is accurate but also I find that everything said abroad which appears to have a British origin is attributed by the Guatemalans to me. If an acting vice-consul in Timbuctoo were to say anything about Guatemala he had read in the Daily Express it might get back here and the Guatemalans would say I said it. The Guatemalan Government has a very strict censorship although they vehemently deny it. Letters are opened; all telegrams are examined, and press telegrams sometimes refused. It is said that they have a comparatively large organization for trying to break codes. When I use air mail for any destination I do it on the

assumption...

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assumption that the letter will be opened. We register such letters because we think that if the Guatemalans make a mess of opening the letter, or cannot understand the contents, they may not send it on. I am often embarrassed because friends and business acquaintances send letters through the mail which contain what must appear to them to be harmless comment on affairs here but which the Guatemalans, reading the letters surreptitiously, doubtless consider as evidence that I am a danger. I am watched like a hawk and everything that comes out from any British sources, including the press, is attributed to me, often correctly. For instance, a mild joke about a Guatemalan parachute falling on my car could well be variously interpreted as my espionage, my fanciful reporting, my ridiculing the Guatemalan army or my trying to find added grounds for complaint. Or they could invent something else.

Yours ever,

W. H. Gallienne

(W.H. Gallienne)