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TO: DEPARTMENT OF STATE
INFO: ARA/CIA, MEXICO, MEXICALI

FROM: Ambassador TRUJILLO

SUBJECT: Has the Movimiento de Liberacion Nacional Chosen Baja California As the Beachhead for Its Campaign Against the Partido Revolucionario Institucional?

DATE: July 19, 1962

SUMMARY

Less than twelve months ago, the State of Baja California was the youngest and perhaps the most tranquil state in the Mexican Republic, but during the interval a power play with national ramifications, directed by the Movimiento de Liberacion Nacional (MIN), has created a highly volatile and potentially most explosive political situation in Baja California which it now appears could well climax within the next fifteen to twenty days. Depending on events during the interval, any one of several results may be anticipated.

Although moves leading to the creation of this situation have been made over a period of some twelve months, the strategy is only now becoming apparent. The game, if it can be called that given the dangerous gambles involved, has been extremely difficult to follow even for experienced native players, because the pawns utilised are humanly motivated and capable of independent and erratic moves, beyond the exact control of those who seek to manipulate them. Nonetheless, some firm conclusions can not be drawn, and other, admittedly tentative, but still probable, results can be predicted. It seems certain that regardless of what turns events may take, a serious setback for the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) will be an inevitable consequence, with the MIN enjoying a commensurate advantage and boost in power and prestige.

BACKGROUND

It is difficult to establish a point of departure from which to portray the situation that exists in Baja California today, partially because of the unexpected (even to those who have precipitated them) developments and conditions which contributed to the creation of the current situation, and...
partially because at this juncture, it appears that any one of several goals may ultimately be sought by those who press the game, the intellectual leaders of the MN. The recital of at least some historical background therefore seems inevitably necessary.

During his governorship of Baja California, Braulio MALDONADO, presently identified by Mexican observers as the "visible" head of the MN, was closely allied and economically associated with the "Residents" of the Distrito de Riego del Valle Mexicali, Eligio ESQUIVEL, who eventually became his successor and currently continues to hold the post of Governor of Baja California. While it must be conceded that the post of Governor of Baja California is the most important political position in the State, it must also be conceded that the appointive position of "Residents" of the Distrito de Riego del Valle Mexicali can, when properly manipulated, rival the political importance of the governorship itself in a state where agriculture is supreme and water vital to the livelihood of every farmer, large or small. Both Maldonado and Esquivel understood this political fact of life, and both accommodated their individual interests to it during their respective tenures in the posts in question. Consequently, it was natural and inevitable that they should become associates in business enterprises in the State of the type that could be promoted through participation in the development of the agricultural potential of the Mexicali Valley, i.e., construction companies specializing in the fields of communications and expansion of facilities for the utilization of water resources.

During the period in question Alfonso GARZON, current "visible" leader of the exodus movement of campesino elements of the Mexicali Valley from the PRI, was the dominant agrarian leader in the Mexicali Valley, as much dependent on Maldonado and Esquivel for success in his undertakings as they were dependent on him for success in the effective implementation of many of their own projects. A mutually advantageous association and working accommodation between Maldonado and Esquivel on the one hand, and Garzón and his campesinos on the other, was firmly cemented during the period in question, a circumstance that has facilitated recent manipulations leading to the situation which is the principal subject of this report.

Coming to more recent times, during the initial period of Esquivel's administration, there was no specific evidence that Maldonado was actively engaged in any political undertaking within the State of Baja California. Maldonado remained in the central area of Mexico, dedicated himself to writing a communist leadership book and, it has subsequently become apparent, worked with other extreme leftists and communists to form and launch the MN.

Esquivel, meanwhile, gave no evidence during the early years of his administration of being particularly inclined toward the extreme leftist element in Mexico nor any particular evidence that he entertained a strong feeling of antipathy toward the United States. Recent developments seem to indicate, however, that Esquivel may have been hiding his time, awaiting a propitious opportunity to emerge in a different character. There are aspects of Esquivel's background which are worth noting in this respect.

While it has never been established that Esquivel has had direct ties with the communist movement in Mexico, he has been suspect because of a number of...
fragmentary and inconclusive reports. He was at least a close professional associ-
ate of Adolfo GRIEB de Alba, when the latter was Minister of Hydraulic Resources,
and it has been reported that the two shared an admiration for the communist move-
ment. The FBI has information from a reliable source establishing that Echeverrías
made regular contributions to the Communist Party of Mexico for a period. Although
information concerning Echeverría’s association with the communist movement is inco-
nclusive, in its aggregate it has been considered sufficient to warrant the with-
holding of his privilege of entering the United States, and this privilege was pro-
visionally restored only after Echeverría submitted himself to extended, inexpert and
aggressive cross-examination in order to plead for the privilege of entering the
United States to purchase equipment necessary for the conduct of his private busi-
ness enterprises. More recently, and since Echeverría has been Governor of Baja
California, he withdrew applications for nonimmigrant visas for his family sub-
mitted to our Embassy in Paris after being informed that prompt action could not be
taken in his case.

It seems safe to speculate that at best, Echeverría has not been an anti-commu-
nist and that he could well harbor a feeling of deep resentment for the United
States as a result of the difficulties he has had with our officials in connection
with the obtaining of entry permits. I do know that since Echeverría returned from
Europe (circuiting the United States) he has studiously avoided participating
in any event in his area where there has been any substantial participation of
United States elements. I cannot be sure whether this results from old resentments
or the Colorado River salinity issue, or if it is a combination of both, but there
is no doubt about the fact itself.

I have not searched the records to determine whether Maldonado came out in the
open to espouse the formation of the MNL throughout the Mexican Republic before
Echeverría undertook the project of defending Mexico’s position in the Colorado River
salinity problem, because it is not really important in this instance whether the
chicken or the egg came first. What is important is the fact that Echeverría found
use for the MNL in connection with his Colorado River salinity campaign, and the
MNL found the salinity issue to be tailor made for the promotion of the interests
in Baja California particularly, but also to some extent in Mexico at large.

Perhaps more important still, from the standpoint of the currently developing
situation, is the fact that both Echeverría and the MNL were able to serve their re-
spective (if that is what they were) interests simultaneously through use, or mis-
use, of Garson and the salinity issue.

Since the initial sequences of recent events precipitated by Maldonado’s MNL
and/or Echeverría have no obvious or apparent relationship, it is unfortunately ne-
necessary to take the discontinuity and trace developments from the two quarters be-
fore it is possible to demonstrate how they have subsequently coincided and are
currently melded. Let us take Maldonado as a starter.

Francisco Maldonado and the MNL in Baja California

Largely discredited within the FBI as a result of his communist tendencies
and bungling administration as Governor of Baja California, Maldonado, in order to
perpetuate himself in Mexican political life, was faced with the necessity of finding another banner at the end of his term of office. Aside from these considerations, it can be speculated with some degree of confidence that Maldonado, as a part of the Cardenista wing of the PRI, intentionally laid at least some of the groundwork for his more recent activities during his tenure as Governor of Baja California. Many observers in this area believe that neither Cárdenas nor Maldonado had reached a firm decision to launch the HN until convinced by developments during the initial years of the López Mateos administration that the time was ripe for such a maneuver. It is also widely speculated by knowledgeable Mexican politicians in this area that developments in Cuba encouraged an affirmative decision. In any event, organization of the HN in Baja California was accomplished quickly and with a marked degree of effectiveness, in large measure because Maldonado could call on former associates and his appointees who still held office in the area for support to this end. Also, in Tijuana at least, and I understand in Ensenada and Mexicali as well, the leadership of the local communist party organizations provided ready available leadership; the roster of directing officials of the HN in this area includes a high percentage of local directors of the Communist Party of Mexico (PCM).

The HN had been organized and needed a regional issue to rally around to draw mass adherents at about the same time that the Colorado River salinity problem became acute. Let us now return to Esquivel.

**Governor Esquivel and the Salinity Issue**

Given a cultivated distaste for the United States and conceding a normal degree of honest Mexican nationalism, combined with a feeling of regional protectionism accentuated by the fact of his gubernatorial responsibilities, it must be acknowledged that Esquivel had ample motivation for taking an active and belligerent position on the Colorado River salinity issue. When the Melton-Mohawk drainage program had been identified as the source of the marked increase in salinity of waters delivered to the Mexicali Valley, Esquivel seized upon every device at his command to establish that the United States was guilty of irresponsibly creating a situation prejudicial to the interests of the Mexicali Valley farmers and damaging to Mexico as a whole. In passing, it would be well to note that regardless of other purposes which the resultant furor might have been intended to serve, it also served to divert attention from inadequacies of Esquivel's administration, of which there has been an accumulation since his inauguration sufficient to convince a much less perceptive and much more scrupulous politician than Esquivel that a diversionary maneuver would be advisable. The Colorado River salinity issue provided a ready-made opportunity for such a maneuver.

From the beginning, Esquivel showed no disposition to deal with the Colorado River salinity issue through normal channels. Instead, he encouraged public protest manifestations, using the campeñitos and the students as raw material, and attempting to use organized labor as well.

Esquivel had little initial success in creating a situation of agitation within the student element. For one reason, Baja California has only a minimal university, and secondary students were not well enough organized. In addition,
the Comandant of the II Mexican Military Zone, acting on orders which he told me came directly from President López Mateos, advised against the granting of authorization for secondary students to participate in public manifestations as a group. A third deterrent, at least in the Tijuana and Ensenada areas, stemmed from the fact that local interests wished to avoid student disorders at all costs because of the anticipated adverse effect these could be expected to have on the vital tourist industry.

It was through the MLN and its adherents among the public school teachers that the students were eventually organized and utilized to some extent in pressing the salinity issue. Encouraged by communist leading MLN teachers, the Baja California State Federation of Secondary Students (FEBE) was revitalized and a State convention held. Esquivel received representatives of the FEBE and encouraged them to go ahead with plans to hold manifestations throughout the State protesting the salinity issue. Objections from the Comandant of the II Mexican Military Zone notwithstanding, Esquivel ordered local Mayors to authorize such manifestations. Repercussions were not particularly serious, however, with the possible exception of Tijuana, where authorities barely averted a student attempt to deface the Consulate General and finally had to resort to billy clubs, tear gas and warning shots to disperse a hard-core nucleus of student agitators, incited to violence by their MLN professors. MLN attempts to exploit these developments were not easily thwarted, but the warnings and advice to student leaders by calmer heads, in combination with the fact of summer vacation, have served to keep things under control, at least for the present. Once school reconvenes in the fall, however, MLN teacher-agitators will be in position to resume their subversive efforts among the students. There is a considerable degree of local preoccupation over this, and I frequently hear the fervent wish expressed that a solution to the salinity issue will have been announced, defined and publicized before classes are resumed in September.

It was also through the MLN that attempts were made to bring organized labor into active participation in the salinity issue, public manifestations and demonstrations being the initial objective. However, moderate elements within organized labor identified MLN agitators as extremists and communists, and were able to dissuade organized labor as a group from being drawn into the issue. This was true in the case of the Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM) as well as in the case of the larger Confederación Revolucionaria de Obreros y Campesinos (CROC).

It thus developed that the campesino element of the Mexicali Valley was the only sizable group that offered the potential of being manipulated by Esquivel in the salinity issue.

Alfonso García and the Liga Agraria Estatal

As the representative and spokesman of those most affected, Alfonso García, leader of the Liga Agraria Estatal, was an indispensable element to Esquivel in his Colorado River salinity campaign. García, with Esquivel's urging and support, brought his campesinos into the streets of Mexicali by the thousands, maintained a large group camped before the Consulate there for a protracted period and organized pilgrimages to Mexico City to carry the salinity issue to the highest levels of the Mexican Government. Knowledgeable elements among the campesinos of the Mexicali
Vallejo informs me that Garzón was under the impression, most probably as the result of Esquivel’s orientation, that the action he was taking was desired and supported by the López administration, to strengthen its hand in negotiating the salinity issue with the United States.

It seems highly likely that this was the case, and after having done what he must have felt was an outstanding job in this respect, Garzón undoubtedly expected to receive a commensurate reward for services rendered. I am told by one informant that Esquivel had assured Garzón he would be rewarded with any post he might desire, within reasonable limits. Garzón’s first choice was reportedly the mayorality of the Mexicali municipality; his alternate, nomination on the PRI ticket for State Congressman in the forthcoming August 5 elections, representing the campeños sector.

It seems likely that Garzón did not expect to receive the PRI nomination for Mayor of the Mexicali municipality, but there is every reason to believe he did not consider it at all unlikely that he should be granted his “second choice.” Esquivel reportedly assured Garzón of his backing to this end. However, when the official PRI nominations were announced from Mexico City, not only was Garzón left out in the cold, but the campeños sector received no recognition at all on the official slate of state officials to be elected on August 5.

While the inner workings of the PRI were as obscure in this instance as is normal, two astute local PRI politicians have told me they know, on good authority, that Esquivel himself was significantly instrumental in Garzón’s exclusion from the official PRI ticket. If this was the case, there could be several explanations. One of the most plausible, however, is the thesis that Esquivel wished to force Garzón into the hands of Maldonado and the NIN.

Whether by design or not, the fact remains that on finding he had been excluded as a candidate, Garzón first hurried frantically to force upon the PRI a last minute change of heart. Failing in this, he announced that he would withdraw from the PRI and take his claimed 12,000 odd campeños of the Liga Agraria Estatal with him.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

It was at this juncture that the NIN case visibly entered the picture. All that Garzón had accomplished before had been undertaken, at least overtly, as a disciplined member of the PRI and a supporter of the state and federal administrations. While it is true that his intent may have been otherwise, the fact that Garzón had, until now, avoided involvement with the Communist Party of Mexico, would seem to substantiate the thesis that even though Garzón collaborated with Maldonado during the latter’s term as Governor, he was always careful to steer clear of all extremist groups because he recognized the dangers involved, and he would have been judicious enough to continue doing so, except for the fact of his twist by the official party.

Immediately following the announcement of his withdrawal from the PRI, Garzón declared his intention to seek the mayorality of Mexicali as an independent, after
some coming and going of MN leaders, it was reported that Garzón had announced he would be the candidate of the MN in the Mexicali mayoralty campaign. He later denied having made the statement, and the MN similarly denied that it would support any candidate, alleging that its members were free to exercise their rights of franchise in whatever manner they might see fit. However, the Alianza de Electores Libres de Baja California, basically organized to support Garzón, is dominated by PRI/MN leaders, and the word is out that the MN supports Garzón.

There could be several explanations for the MN’s desire to avoid open and direct support of Garzón. Since Garzón has not been nominated as a candidate of a legally registered political party, his name cannot be placed on the ballot, and there is no provision for “write in” candidates in Mexican electoral procedures. Garzón cannot, therefore, be legally elected even though a majority of the voters might favor him. Any attempt to vote for him would simply nullify the ballot cast. Since such ballots would not be counted, or at least would not be reported, the MN would have backed a losing candidate without having gained any advantage that cannot be gained equally effectively by working through the Alianza de Electores Libres de Baja California, which is only an ad hoc organization set up for this one-time operation. Thus, Garzón is out of the PRI and working against its interests, but the MN is not, at least as an organized entity. The PRI reserves its position and maneuverability vis-à-vis the PRI, even to the extent of being in a position to be gracefully integrated or reintegrated into the PRI, should future developments make this move desirable.

Having apparently burned his bridges, Garzón has campaigned against the PRI with vigor. He has centered his efforts on the PRI’s outstanding weaknesses and is doing a workmanlike job of exploiting them. His campaign declarations have included the following features:

1. The revolution of 1910 was fought to end dictatorships which denied the people the right to choose and elect candidates freely. The imposition of candidates by the PRI is no different from the imposition of candidates by the dictadura porfirista.

2. This condition has been brought about by the burguesía who have infiltrated and gained control of the PRI, and who deny the laborer and the campesino any voice in the selection of elective officials who are to represent them.

3. The representatives so chosen use their positions to betray the country and the president himself.

4. Controlling the economic and political power of the country, these elements enrich themselves at the expense of the population at large.

5. When crossed, they resort to false imprisonment of those who dare to stand up to them, or worse, such as in the case of Rubén JARAMILLO, cold-blooded murder.

6. They grant enormous concessions to foreign monopolies and fail to defend the national sovereignty vigorously, in instances such as the Colorado River salinity problem. And so on, and on, and on....
Since Garzón cannot be elected, the question arises of why the MN is aiding and abetting him, and why Esquivel created this Frankenstein who is causing the PRI so much trouble and embarrassment. Only one sensible answer occurs to me: the MN has a program which is being advanced by Garzón’s activities, and Esquivel has been an instrument of the MN, either willingly or unwillingly, in maneuvering Garzón into the position in which he now finds himself of being irrevocably divorced from the PRI and inextricably involved with the MN, if he hopes to have any political future. And my contacts who personally know Garzón assure me that his primary motivation for the past several years has been a driving desire to enter the field of first State and then National politics.

The MN’s immediate objectives have not been apparent to me. Until only recently, I have found my local contacts inclined to brush Garzón’s current activities aside as inauspicious despite the fact that he is acknowledged to control a very reliable group of campesinos, and it is readily recognized by most that his current efforts have created a very serious situation for the PRI in this area. Most apparently expect Garzón to be bought off. It is my opinion, however, that it would be disastrous for the PRI to back down at this juncture, and in addition, if Garzón’s price is political advancement, as it apparently is, the PRI is in no position to pay this price in the circumstances that exist.

A few days past a well-informed local observer reported to me that he had obtained reliable information explaining the MN’s tactics. I have not been able to confirm this otherwise, but on the face of it, the correctness of the information seems to be supported by the fact that it offers a very plausible explanation of the tactic being executed. According to this source, the MN has two immediate objectives. First, its leaders wish to obtain funds for themselves and to support future MN activities. Second, they wish to launch former President Lázaro Cárdenas’ son Cuauhtémoc, a founding member of the MN, into national politics. Their price for calling off Garzón is reportedly:

(1) The granting of a contract to the firm Velázquez-Chávez, Hernández, which is reportedly controlled by Malasaña and Esquivel jointly, to construct a four-lane toll highway from Tijuana to Ensenada, for which financing has recently been obtained from the IBD, and

(2) The appointment of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas as “President” of the Distrito de Riego del Valle Mexicali, the position from which Esquivel managed to move into the governorship of Baja California.

THE OUTLOOK

The currently developing situation can be expected to take a number of twists and turns during the next few weeks, and I am not close enough to any of the principal individuals directly involved to be able to speculate on the most likely eventuality with any certainty. One thing does seem certain, however. Unless the PRI takes strong, repressive measures, it will inevitably be seriously weakened. And even should there be a disposition to take strong, repressive measures, the consequences would inevitably be most serious, given the fact that a large block of restive campesinos are already very much involved and are undoubtedly becoming...
daily more emotionally agitated over developments. Leaders can be placated, but
the masses are not so readily subject to manipulation.

If the MIN's aims are correctly reported to me, and if it is the decision of
Mexican officialdom to capitulate, then the MIN will have been placed in an
extremely strong position within Baja California and its national position will have
been greatly enhanced immediately, while its future prospects will be much im-
proved. In such a situation, it is to be speculated that Garzón would be taken
care of within the broad organizational structure of the Distrito de Región del
Valle Mexicali and that he would wield his influence with the campesino element on
behalf of the MIN with renewed vigor and ambition. It might be impossible for the
PRI to avoid giving Quamhén Cárdenas the Baja California governorship at the
end of Esquivel's term, if events follow this general pattern.

If Mexican officialdom stands firm and refuses to bend in the knowledge that
its control of the electoral process is adequate to the situation, regardless of
other considerations, then Garzón, the MIN and the Iglesia Agraria Estatal, plus
other labor and campesino elements, will have to be dealt with after the August 5
elections. If the MIN and Garzón are as determined as it appears at this time,
such a situation would be dangerous in the extreme and would call for massive se-
curity measures by the Mexican Army in the entire area. The results of this sort
of development, if it should eventuate, could well be more advantageous to the MIN
nationally than a capitulation to their reported demands.

Another possibility could be a decision on the part of Mexican officialdom to
trade off with the MIN, granting concessions in some geographic and substantive
area not immediately affected by present developments. However, this possible
course would not answer the question of what to do with Garzón and his campesinos.
Garzón is a power in Baja California but not elsewhere. He is smart enough to
realize that he cannot allow himself to be separated from his source of power
without risking oblivion in very short order. Yet it would seem virtually impos-
sible, given the heat of his present campaign against the PRI, for Mexican official-
dom to arrange any even reasonably satisfactory accommodation with him in this
area. For a settlement to be reached with the MIN and not with Garzón would be a
most dangerous course and would almost inevitably have to involve liquidation of
Garzón, or at least his imprisonment. Garzón's campesinos would then have to be
dealt with, and this would be a difficult task indeed, in such a circumstance.

Apart from these aspects of the problems that the future can be expected to
bring, there is the matter of Governor Esquivel himself. In the present circu-
stances, Mexican officialdom could not possibly be happy with him. He is either
deliberately helping the MIN, which seems to me to be most probable, or else he
is guilty of having very carelessly bungled his job of taking care of Mexican offi-
cialdom's interests in Baja California. If Esquivel is committed to the MIN, then
any settlement will have to include provision to accommodate him. If the MIN and
Quamhén become officially entrenched in Baja California with Esquivel remaining
on as Governor, a very effective beachhead for future MIN expansion into national
political activity will have been established.

One reliable informant has reported to me that Esquivel is attempting to take
out insurance against possible future developments. A move in this direction is

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reliably reported to have consisted of an offer from Esquivel of $100,000.00 Mexican pesos to Tijuana mayoral candidate, Ildefonso VELEZUEZ, if Velásquez would sign a commitment to use the money to campaign against Garzón and the HLN. My informant, who is a leading member of Velásquez' campaign committee, informs me that the offer was refused, as Velásquez recognized it for what it was and being satisfied that Esquivel has been delivered into the hands of the HLN, did not wish to give Esquivel anything that he might use in the future in an attempt to convince the PRI that he had been a loyal servant all along. Velásquez is reported to have shared what must have been, to judge from the member who occupied it, an enormous bench which López Mateos occupied during his undergraduate years.

In summary, the situation that has been described herein seems to me inevitably to portend very serious consequences, regardless of the outcome of the complex maneuvers now being executed.