AUGUST 29, 1968

SUBJECT: STUDENT SITUATION IN MEXICO

LATE IN JULY WHEN MEXICO CITY STUDENTS WENT ON A RAMPAGE, THE GOVERNMENT SECURITY FORCES REACTED STRONGLY TO BRING THEM UNDER CONTROL. FOUR STUDENTS WERE REPORTEDLY KILLED AND MANY INJURED. THIS BROUGHT CRIES OF POLICE BRUTALITY AND INCREASED DEMANDS ON THE PART OF THE STUDENTS.

MEXICAN AUTHORITIES THEN SWITCHED STRATEGY, ALLOWING THE STUDENTS PRETTY MUCH OF A FREE REIN ON DEMONSTRATIONS AND INDICATING A WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE GRIEVANCES. THE AUTHORITIES THOUGHT THIS WOULD QUICKLY DEFUSE STUDENT AGITATION.

THE STRATEGY HAS NOT WORKED. DURING THE PAST TWO DAYS, STUDENT DISTURBANCES HAVE INCREASED. THEY HAVE BEEN DESECRATING PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND DENOUNCING MEXICAN OFFICIALS, INCLUDING PRESIDENT DIAZ ORDAZ.

THE ACCOMPANYING CABLE FROM MEXICO CITY TELLS OF PRESIDENT DIAZ ORDAZ’S DECISION TO SHIFT BACK TO A GET-TOUGH, NO-NONSENSE POSTURE WITH THE STUDENTS. YESTERDAY THERE WERE CLASHES BETWEEN STUDENTS AND SECURITY FORCES WITH SEVERAL CASUALTIES. THE SLUM DWELLERS HAVE NOW JOINED THE STUDENTS, ADDING AN UGLY NEW DIMENSION TO THE SITUATION. IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS WE MAY SEE AN INCREASED LEVEL OF VIOLENCE IN MEXICO CITY.

AT THIS STAGE THE VIOLENCE IS NOT LIKELY TO AFFECT THE STABILITY OF THE DIAZ ORDAZ GOVERNMENT. BUT IT COULD SERIOUSLY AFFECT THE PRE-OLYMPIC ATMOSPHERE, WHICH IS PROBABLY WHAT THE STUDENTS ARE AFTER TO FORCE PRESIDENT DIAZ ORDAZ TO MEET THEIR DEMANDS.
STUDENT SITUATION

1. Pres. Diaz Ordaz has decided time has come to put end to student disorders. He was reportedly deeply offended by student seizure of National Cathedral and flying red and white strike banner on national flagpole in Zocalo.

2. Source stated that President has ordered army, riot police and police to use force if necessary to break up illegal activities and gatherings. Some clashes have already taken place between public security forces and students and between campesinos supporting Govt. and students. Several injured, some seriously.

3. Source expects instances of isolated violence throughout city in next couple of days by roving bands of students.

4. Source also states that student movement was masterminded by three well known communists: Héberto Castillo, Fausto Trejo and Eli de Gortari. These men now hiding on campus National University but will be arrested as soon as they appear off campus.

5. Student group said to number about 1000 was blocked from
ZOCALO THIS AFTERNOON WITH SOME VIOLENCE REPORTED. LABOR-CAMPESINO GROUP REPORTEDLY 50,000 (PROBABLY EXAGGERATED) DEMONSTRATED IN SUPPORT GOVT.

6. AFTERNOON PRESS DENOUNCED STUDENT EXCESSES IN BANNER HEADLINES, QUOTING DEMANDS ALL SECTORS SOCIETY AND PROMINENT INDIVIDUALS THAT DISORDERS BE BROUGHT TO END.

7. ARMY DETACHMENT (WITHOUT ARMORED CARS) CONTINUES TO GUARD EMBASSY.

FREEMAN