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POLITICAL MATTERS

COUNTRY CHILE/VENEZUELA

DOI 21-22 OCTOBER 1976

SUBJECT VISIT OF AN EMISSARY OF VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES

PEREZ TO EXPLAIN LATTER'S MOTIVES IN ATTENDING FUNERAL OF

ORLANDO LETELIER

ACQ CHILE, SANTIAGO (5 NOVEMBER 1976)

SOURCE A RETIRED MILITARY OFFICER WITH GOOD CONNECTIONS THROUGHOUT THE

MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. HE IS A FAIRLY RELIABLE REPORTER.

21 NOV 16 1976

1. ON 21 OCTOBER 1976, ENRIQUE ~~R I V A S~~ GOMEZ, SELF-
IDENTIFIED AS A PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE OF VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT
CARLOS ANDRES P E R E Z, ARRIVED IN CHILE AND REQUESTED A
MEETING WITH GENERAL GUSTAVO L E I G H, AIR FORCE MEMBER OF THE Junta

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JUNTA. THE FOLLOWING DAY, RIVAS MET LEIGH AND TOLD HIM THAT HE HAD BEEN SENT BY PRESIDENT PEREZ TO EXPLAIN THE LATTER'S INTENTIONS IN PERSONALLY ATTENDING THE FUNERAL OF ORLANDO LETELIER, FORMER CHILEAN AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES WHO WAS ASSASSINATED IN WASHINGTON, D.C. ON 21 SEPTEMBER 1976 AND BURIED IN CARACAS.

2. RIVAS TOLD LEIGH THAT PRESIDENT PEREZ DID NOT MEAN TO AFFRONT THE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT BY HIS ACTION, BUT RATHER THAT HE ATTENDED THE FUNERAL TO SHOW HIS RESPECT FOR VENEZUELA'S DEMOCRATIC TRADITIONS. RIVAS SAID THAT PRESIDENT PEREZ HOPED HIS ACTION HAD NOT BEEN MISINTERPRETED BY THE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT AND THAT THERE WOULD BE NO HARD FEELINGS BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS OVER THE MATTER.

3. GENERAL LEIGH SAID THAT PRESIDENT PEREZ' ACTION HAD BEEN BADLY RECEIVED IN CHILE AND THAT HE PERSONALLY FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND THE PRESIDENT'S MOTIVES. LEIGH SAID THAT HE UNDERSTOOD PEREZ' RESPECT FOR DEMOCRACY, BUT HE FELT THAT IN LETELIER'S CASE, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT TO SEND A

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REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE. THE DECISION TO
PERSONALLY ATTEND THE FUNERAL HAS BEEN USED BY CHILE'S ENEMIES
TO EMBARRASS THE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT.

4. WHEN QUERIED ABOUT THE VENEZUELAN INVESTIGATION INTO
THE LETELIER ASSASSINATION, RIVAS SAID THAT VENEZUELAN AUTHORITIES
HAD GONE ABOUT AS FAR AS THEY WANTED TO GO IN QUESTIONING ORLANDO
B O S C H, CUBAN EXILE LEADER, REGARDING HIS POSSIBLE INVOLVEMENT.
RIVAS POINTED OUT THAT BOSCH HAD POWERFUL FRIENDS CLOSE TO THE
VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT AND THAT PRESSURE WAS BEING APPLIED ON
BOSCH'S BEHALF. HE EXPRESSED DOUBT THAT ANY MORE INFORMATION WOULD
BE REVEALED BECAUSE OF THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT'S RELUCTANCE TO
PRESS THE MATTER TOO FAR.

5. (SOURCE COMMENT: THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF RIVAS' TRIP WAS
TO EXPLORE THE CHILEAN ATTITUDE TOWARD A PROPOSAL BY PRESIDENT
PEREZ TO HOLD A MEETING OF PRESIDENTS OF THE ANDEAN PACT COUNTRIES
TO TRY TO RESOLVE THE IMPASSE BETWEEN CHILE AND THE OTHER PACT
MEMBERS OVER IMPORT DUTIES AND FOREIGN INVESTMENT. VENEZUELA DID
NOT PLAN TO APPROACH ANY OTHER COUNTRIES UNTIL THE CHILEANS AGREED
TO THE IDEA; HOWEVER, THIS MATTER WAS OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS WITH

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CHILE'S FORMAL WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PACT ON 30 OCTOBER.)

6. IN REQUESTING HIS MEETING WITH LEIGH, RIVAS ASKED THAT HIS PRESENCE IN CHILE NOT BE MADE A MATTER OF PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE. FOR THIS REASON, THE MEETING WAS ARRANGED TO TAKE PLACE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE RATHER THAN AT DIEGO PORTALES GOVERNMENT HOUSE, WHERE THERE IS A GREATER RISK OF DISCOVERY BY REPORTERS.

7. (HEADQUARTERS COMMENT: A REPRESENTATIVE OF THIS AGENCY [IN CARACAS] COMMENTED THAT ALTHOUGH RIVAS HAS, ON OCCASION, HANDLED (S) SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE PEREZ ADMINISTRATION, SUCH AN ASSIGNMENT AS DESCRIBED IN THIS REPORT IS UNUSUAL. IT IS OUT OF CHARACTER FOR PEREZ TO EXPLAIN OR APOLOGIZE FOR HIS ACTIONS AND IT APPEARS STRANGE THAT A PEREZ REPRESENTATIVE WOULD ADMIT THAT BOSCH HAS POWERFUL FRIENDS IN THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT WHEN THE GOVERNMENT HAS GONE TO GREAT LENGTHS TO ATTEMPT TO HIDE THIS FACT.)

8. FIELD DISSEM: EMBASSY AT SANTIAGO; SENT TO CARACAS.
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