



Intelligence Information Report

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Communist Party

DATE DISTR. 20 February 1973

COUNTRY: El Salvador/Costa Rica

DOI: [redacted]

SUBJECT: Concern of Exiled Salvadoran Communist Leaders with Party Reorganization in El Salvador

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SOURCE

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1. Exiled leaders of the Communist Party of El Salvador (PCES) have held meetings in San Jose, Costa Rica, to discuss the reorganization of the PCES. Jorge Arias Gomez, Director of the PCES newspaper "Tribuna Popular," Miguel Angel Saenz Varela, Rafael Menjivar Choto, exiled member of the PCES Central Committee and former rector of the University of El Salvador, and other exiled PCES leaders in Costa Rica have had various meetings since December 1972, but are hampered because they have received little information from PCES leaders still in El Salvador. Nevertheless, they have made some decisions which will be communicated to the Party leadership in El Salvador. They believe two objectives are important: First, to incorporate young PCES members, especially peasants, into lower and middle leadership positions. Secondly, they suggest efforts be made to detect and counteract police infiltration of Party ranks, a problem which has alarmed the leaders, both within El Salvador and in exile. Arias and Saenz commented on the precision of police questioning of Communist leaders who were detained during the raid on the University of El Salvador and are convinced that the PCES is heavily penetrated up to middle levels of the Party.

2. In addition to the declared reasons for involving themselves in the PCES reorganization, the exiled PCES leaders are concerned with efforts by Jorge Shafick Handal, the PCES Secretary General, to consolidate his internal position. The exiles in Costa Rica believe that Handal is taking advantage of their absence to strengthen his hold on the Party at their

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expense, and feel that his maneuvering may be the cause of the recent extension of PCES permission for Saenz and Arias to remain longer in Costa Rica. Arias has permission to remain until May 1973, and Saenz can remain indefinitely until he finishes his thesis for his doctorate in law.

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The exiled PCES leaders believe that Handal is using the Party reorganization to place individuals he trusts in leadership positions and to remove those in whom he has no confidence. Saenz, for example, was criticized by Handal for taking a position contrary to Party instructions during the University crisis. Arias, as Director of "Tribuna Popular," is also building an increasing personal prestige which the exiled leaders believe has caused certain jealousy on Handal's part.

4. The exiled leaders believe there is another reason for Handal's reorganization of the PCES. The majority of PCES members believe the Party's performance during the University crisis was cowardly, and accuse the leaders of abandoning the fight rather than face the ultra-leftists. This has caused some pressure to review the PCES policy toward the University. However, since such a review would lead to the discovery of certain errors by Handal, the exiled leaders believe that Handal may be planning to amend the Party University line without open discussion. They believe this is typical of Handal, and may lead the PCES to go toward the other extreme, that is, trying to concentrate all its resources in the University. (Headquarters Comment: [redacted])

[redacted] Handal is undergoing treatment in the Soviet Union for general exhaustion and is not expected to return to El Salvador soon. Although Handal has been away, there is no indication he will be replaced.)

5. [redacted] Dissem: Embassy at San Jose: [redacted]

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