

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

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Saturday, July 6, 1968

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Saturday, July 6th, began at 5:15 and I learned what sunup looks like on the midst of the morning. The sky was still dark with just the first light coming up in the East. It was a beautiful phenomenon, but one I don't have the heartyhood to repeat often.

By 6:00 I was ready for Mrs. Burg who obligingly came over at that farmer's wife hour and gave me a comb-out.

And with Lyndon and the staff -- Jim and Larry and ~~Mary~~ Marie, Yolanda, and Mary Rather, we left by chopper for Randolph Air Force Base.

Luci was already on Air Force I -- a near miracle because she likes to sleep until 11:00.

But from this moment on throughout the trip she was the most delightful traveling companion -- always on time, in a good humor, making her hosts beam, and telling her Daddy over and over how thrilled, how grateful she was to be along.

For years she has recited the trips that Lynda Bird has been on and ended up by saying, "Want to hear how many trips I've been on?"

I tottered once to the bedroom and tried unavailingly to sleep.

And right on time Air Force I sat down at San Salvadore, El Salvadore -- a beautiful airport with a warm and enthusiastic crowd. Banners, bands, red carpet, welcoming flowers, musicians in native costumes -- the whole familiar pomp and pageantry of an airport welcoming ceremony. President Sanchez of ElSalvadore was short, thinly, enthusiastic -- stayed right by Lyndon's side the whole time -- and indeed they were a pair -- one so short

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and one so tall. Mrs. Sanchez spoke only Spanish and that ecstato tempo. Our only Ambassador, Raul Castro, looked more Latin than anybody there, spoke excellent Spanish. And he and his wife were both "take charge" people. Very competent I thought.

We were escorted inside. There was a receiving line. The ~~Empire Desk~~ Diplomatic Corps filed by. It seems to me that I have never been to a country where there wasn't a representative of China -- Taiwan that is. It's a fairly large Corps for such a small country. And of course a contingent of Government officials and then Lyndon went with President Sanchez and I went with Mrs. Sanchez and Mrs. Castro and we drove in a long motorcade with the other Presidential couples -- the Trejos of Costa Rico, whom we knew from their recent visit to Washington, the ~~Sanchez~~^{Sanchez} of Nicaragua, with Sevilla Sacasa proudly introducing his brother-in-law, the ~~Lopez Arellanos~~^{Lopez Arellanos} of Guatemala. I gathered in advance that he was the least cooperative of the group. And he of Honduras.

Along the route, the crowds were thick, smiling, cheering, shouting. And there were banners ~~near~~ stretched across the street welcoming each of the five presidents.

Mrs. Castro kept eyeing the size of the crowd with that feeling I know so well and expressing her satisfaction on it. Yes, it was bigger than they had had when Diaz Ordaz had come. It was the biggest crowd in fact that she had ever seen there. There was even a sign or two welcoming Luci.

I waved industriously out the window the whole time, although I don't

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think anybody ever knew who I was because the car was not marked.

Most of
~~xxxx~~ the signs said "Ven vonitas" referring to the name of the visiting President of the group that was welcoming him. There was only one shadow along the way. As we passed a building that appeared to be a hospital there were people standing on the steps with a banner with words I could not read except one -- "Viet Cong". I knew that was bad. Nobody did or said anything that I saw.

Consequently it was hard to recognize the hours ride that I had participated in when I read the Washington paper the next day which headlined: "P~~A~~int Tossed on Johnson's Car" and a four-column picture of the Viet-Cong sign and in small letters below, "but most cheer his arrival in El Salvadore".

This is the age of the dissenter. So often I am reminded of what Lyndon told the press one day. "Your business is to start a fight - my business is to stop one."

We arrived at Intercontinental Hotel a little past 10:00 and here we were supposed to just rest briefly and then get into a bus with all of the First Ladies and leave on a trip into the country with Mrs. Sanchez as our hostess. It didn't prove that easy. Five Latin American First Ladies are hard to coordinate. Indeed, Mrs. Sanchez was right by my side and understandably nervous as any hostess would be at the delay which went on and on. Well, I kept right on trying to reassure her that it didn't matter -- we'd get started sooner or later.

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There was much talk about whether to get on the bus and go on without them and they could join us for lunch later or not. Mrs. Lopez Arellano of Guatemala came in and made her apologies. She would not be going with us. She did not feel very well.

And finally after an elevator had stalled and a few more misadventures, we did make our way to the bus.

Mrs. Sanchez and Mrs. Castro and I, with a fuming Liz already harrassed, and another lengthy delay, while there were supposedly efforts to get in touch with Mrs. Somoza, Mrs. Trejos and the wife of the President of Honduras. And I passed my time responding to the warmth of the people outside who kept on smiling and waving flags and pressing their hands up toward the window which I opened and shook hands with as many as I could and did enumerable autographs -- only to find myself far outdone by Luci at every turn whose warmth enchanted the crowd.

And about 11:30, still minus some of the First Ladies, we started out. The trip had been arranged by Liz who had herself advanced this one, and she had earnestly searched for the things that I enjoy most. And we did them. We were driving some 40 or so miles out into the country to the weekend home of President ~~and~~ and Mrs. Sanchez. I think it was actually a sort of summer WhiteHouse.

The country was beautiful -- the most verdant green -- steep mountains, lush little valleys. I saw my first real coffee plantation -- dark, lustrous, green, bushes or small trees about 10 or 15 feet high and at regular intervals another tree -- slim trunk, its limbs spread out in an umbrella shape precisely

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for the purpose of shading it. Coffee must grow in shade, I am told. And these balsamx trees have been found to be the best shade. They are not native. They have been imported. It was a beautiful sight -- very dense and very green -- apparently carefully attended -- each coffee tree loaded with berries.

It was appalling to think that each one of those berries when it was ripe was picked by hand.

Mrs. Castro told me that the harvest season began in early October and went on for two or three months and that school let out at that time and everybody worked. And that is one of the plagues of the country. It is very much a one-crop economy. And when the harvest season is over there is the specter of unemployment. It is a lush country and everything grows. Pineapples, bananas, all sorts of palms, wild rubber trees, and hillsides on which corn is planted that is so steep that you wonder why the man working it doesn't fall down and break his neck.

That is another problem of the country. Erosion washes all the topsoil away. The Government tries to discourage planting these hillsides -- the people must eat. Their diet is principally beans and rice.

Our way -- we were traveling the Pan American Highway -- led through little villages, pitiful, dirty ~~water adobe houses~~ water adobe houses plastered on the cane, Mrs. Castro told me, with tile roofs. Some of them were just thatched. The streets were full of hungry looking dogs and nearly naked little children. Liz said the best State gift we could bring them would be the loop.

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Along the village streets, sellers of fruits, vegetables, chickens, had their little stalls arranged. And in one part I saw a woman emerging from a shop with a live chicken tied, carrying it by its feet, with a sack of groceries.

But mostly our way led through the countryside. There were fruits galore: papaya, coconuts, bananas, fields of sugar cane, and mango trees. I long ago decided that the mango was the most widely distributed fruit over the Lord's earth.

There were old familiar flowers such as hibiscus and boganvia and queens' wreath.

Mrs. Castro told me that the country was alive with blooming poinsettias, red and white, at Christmas time and it was a joy to see. They grow wild.

We were winding up all the time from close to sea level at the capital city to some several thousand feet at the lake which was our destination. It was beautiful scenery -- so lush and green and I found the plant life very interesting. There were mahogany trees and ebony. And anything would grow, even the fence posts. You could see a fence line that had sprouted so that it looked as much like a hedge as a fence.

And so, though it interested me, it appalled me by the enormity of its problems. So little land that could be cultivated -- the rich green valleys -- the land held usually in large plantations called finckors by what are called the fourteen families -- now somewhat more than that and much intermarried.

Next to coffee the crops are sugar cane, pineapple and some cattle ranches. We passed by one -- a field full of brown Swiss cattle totally unfamiliar to me.

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There were ox carts along the road loaded with wood or vegetables. And every person you saw was carrying something. All the women carried it on their heads in a basket. And there was the ubiquitous bus that I had come to know so well in Mexico -- the lifeline of the country it seems. It makes a regular schedule, stopping at brief intervals. And it has a big rack on top and all the farmers that can afford to, pile onto it, put their goods in the rack on top and head for the marketplace.

I asked Mrs. Castro what the wage was, and she said 50¢ per day and that you paid \$24 a month for a ~~xxxxx~~ maid. And at \$40 a month her butler was probably the best paid servant in the city.

And so there was little to cheer you about the people though the country itself was beautiful. Perhaps one cheering sight was numerous schools. She told me that the Alianza para el progreso had built 2500 schoolrooms in this little country.

One of the most discouraging signs I saw in the small villages ^{through} ~~which~~ we passed -- which all had plazas of course with trees and benches and old folks resting and young folks courting -- that some of the plazas had been turned into parking lots. The interior gutted of their trees and benches, an entrance street put in, the interior filled with rather sad ~~looking~~ looking vintage cars. What a blow for the charm, what little there was, of these little villages.

So when we left the valley we made a stop that Liz had planned for my especial benefit. Off the highway a bit ~~island~~ we had seen what appeared to be hummocks covered with grass. We bounced across the field, we stopped

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and got out and walked and as we got close to them, we saw that ^{there} ~~they~~ had been excavation work on at least two of them. There we met the archiologist who spoke excellent English and was I think an American attached to a University in El Salvadore and who had about 25 years ago done the archiologial exploration here. They had gone only so far, they had no money to continue with what they had found. The people that had lived here long before Columbus had had some kinship to the Aztecs and to the Mayans and probably he said had been about 50,000 people inhabiting this valley -- close to the same number that are living in it now. There were carvings of parrots and serpents linking them to the pyramids in Mexico.

What had wiped them out we could not say -- whether an invading tribe or an epidemic.

But there was a basket of artifacts that had been picked up on the spot and the collector had brought them for us to look at. Little things that might have been household guards or toys for children or some vessils for eating or storage -- neither very sophisticated or beautiful. But all with aura of age and mystery that knit your imagination.

We went on from the ~~past~~ past to the future. An agricultural experimental school which we toured with the Director. They have all sorts of citrus fruits -- apples, lemons, grapefruits -- all sorts of vegetables.

And we stopped in a shady spot for a little welcoming ceremony with all the little boys who are studying there and to have refreshments of coconut milk which I drank hopefully and bravely.

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These boys I am told were studying to become what we in this country call "agricultural agents" who went out into the counties to teach the farmers how to raise better stock and crops and vegetables. I can't think of a ~~fix~~ thing that could mean more to this country.

They were silently watching us, so I walked right up to them and tried to talk, daring to speak a little Spanish, getting the interpreter to tell them how important I thought their work was and hoping that they were learning it well and learning to teach it well.

And I felt good about this part of the trip.

And then we rode on, ascending more steeply, coming in view finally of a beautiful crater lake -- clear, lovely water, rimmed all around by the steep, drain-clad mountains.

Mrs. Castro told me that the bottom has never been found, that there is a curious legend of some evil force of strength -- perhaps there is an under tow ~~x~~ or a swirl out in the middle. But many people have drowned, that occasionally when a plane has been lost in the lake it could never be found. It is the crater of a volcano. And how deep into the bowels of the earth it goes, no one knows. And though it was beautiful it was also rather sad to me because I did not see people swimming or boating or fishing on it.

We drove up at the gate of the Sanchez home and I asked if I might walk, thereby percipitating a minor ~~shx~~ crisis because it appeared if I walked everybody obliged to walk -- the last thing I wanted. But I had been riding for so long and I wanted to see the country at closer range. And I understood

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that it was not even a quarter of a mile to the house.

So out we got, some of the ladies in high spike heels, but it was my favorite quarter hour of the day. For one thing I had passed one of the women (I had seen so many along the road) who was carrying a big straw basket on her head full of slices of pineapples, little cakes, things to sell to the people who ride the buses -- there are no Hot Shoppes along the way -- the numerous ~~flies~~ flies didn't seem to bother anybody. I stopped and talked to her and asked her if she would show me how she balanced it so nicely. She took it off. There was folded up on her head a sort of a pad -- perhaps it was a jacket or an apron -- and on it the large and rather heavy basket was balanced. And she walked gracefully, probably for miles and miles. But nobody seems to walk if they can help it.

And I am sure my hostesses considered me bizarre and eccentric. The way led nearly straight up after awhile between towering jungle like trees -- ~~xxx~~ mango and rubber I think some of them were. But here in this higher land familiar pine trees have appeared. And then there was the house of the family of our hostess, Mrs. Sanchez, her mother, seven of her children. They gathered out on the terrace. We were offered Scotch or a soft drink. We looked at the view.

And then the First Ladies took their seats together and all of the other guests settled on the shaded terrace above lake Cotapecki and we were served a lunch of turkey and ham and a sort of curried rice dish.

And then when the desert course came it was dish after dish of sweets that

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came by and each one I thought was the only one. A tray of tarts and some bright colored miniatures strawberries and pears -- all sorts of little things made of almond paste and glazed in sugared fruits and nuts.

And finally, and of course a product of the country, El Salvadore coffee, quite delicious.

I ^{had} ~~have~~ been given a necklace -- each of the guests had -- made of coffee beans. I had promptly put mine on. And one of the ladies had brought up a branch from a coffee tree loaded with the little berries, green now, turning into brown and purple later I was told. And the work looked infinitely harder of picking them one by one, especially when they ripened at different times and you had to go back and pick and choose again and again.

I sat close to Mrs. Somoza whose English was as good as mine -- very sophisticated, very pretty, wearing a large diamond ring. She had traveled a great deal she said -- to Europe, in the States. Apparently had lived only a part of the time in Nicaragua but now that her husband was President she would be there the whole time she said.

I asked Mrs. Sanchez[?] to describe her life on the finca and it turned out to my respect and admiration that she really participated in the running of the plantation. She knew how to and had vaccinated many cattle and had given artificial inseminations.

We had pictures with all of the Sanchez family down by the swimming pool. And then with Mrs. Sanchez and Mrs. Somoza and Mrs. Trejos and Mrs. Castro we left the lake house -- Luci coming along in another car -- and

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returned to the Capital, driving by the volcanic lava beds. It was a very interesting sight. The whole Island is covered with volcanos. The last one had erupted in 1919 I believe.

Off in the distance you could see a mountain peak and then a great ~~black~~ black river that wound its way down the mountainside, came right up to the highway which cut through it and continued on the other side.

Mrs. Castro said if you got out and tried to walk across it in tennis shoes, they would be in ribbons within a block or two -- so sharp was the lava.

Only in a few places had an occasional tree found a pocket of soil and grown. Mostly it was a great black silent river turned to stone like the weird surface of the moon.

I was glad for once that we decided to leave the bus and return by car. And by 5:00 we were at the residence of the U. S. Ambassador. The Castros had moved out to make it available for us and it was a lovely, open, elegant house. She told me it had cost about \$350,000, that everything there was terribly high.

And so after our very long and busy day I fell into bed for a rest and reading some of the package of books that Mrs. Castro had given me.

At the gate of the Embassy there had been a crowd of people all smiling, cheering, and each time we entered or left, there they were. Once they sang the "Eyes of Texas." Always, they waved American flags and held up babies to have their hand shaken or kissed and particularly they called out to

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Luci who was in turn at every moment in love with the crowd -- in love with the whole trip. This was no around the world in 17 days. We actually got a three-hour rest.

And then into cocktail clothes and back to the Intercontinental Hotel for a reception hosted by President and Mrs. Sanchez for all the Presidents. Angie had ~~and she~~ told us we need stay only 30 minutes. I had thought that was rather short shrift to express our appreciation. But after the rather off-hand manner in which the other Presidents wives had either been very late or did not come at all to Mrs. Sanchez' tour and lunch, and after this reception which was first scheduled for 7:00 and then it was postponed til 8:00 and then we were advised not to come until we heard that our hosts and the other guests were there, and then got the word to come at 9:00.

I decided this was another set of rules and I might as well relax.

We stood in line quite a long time meeting once more the Diplomatic Corps and the officials -- quite a few hundred people, mostly I am sure El Salvadorians and were back at the Ambassador's residence about 10:00.

Lyndon and I and Luci and Larry Temple, Marie and Mary and M Yolanda, who had not gone to the reception joined us. We settled in the beautiful living room while a storm blew up -- thunder and lightening and rain. This is the rainy season they tell me. We had a dinner prepared by the stewards whom we had brought with us.

And then for the next two hours comfortably grouped in the living room we shared one of those times to remember when Lyndon reminisced and

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philosophized and thought out loud and I sat enchanted listening as I believe the others did. He talked about the whole political and social spectrum of the day, about Communism -- what was its vitality today and in our country. What was the virus or the asthma that was infecting the universities and the communications media and the entertainment world. He said there are two conflicting emotions in me about communism. It went something like this: there is a great tide running -- a great pendulum swinging -- in the country. And in response to the permissiveness, the liberalism, the lawlessness of the day, and maybe a great swing into authoritarianism back toward conservatism and there would be a part of me that would welcome it. They would think it was necessary. But then there is the other side of me that says if that happens ~~well~~ it would set back all the things I stand for, that I fought for, that I want. The attacks on ignorance, on poverty and disease. It will set them back decades.

He talked as though he were a long way off looking at this small planet, and I found it very interesting. I asked him if he didn't feel his enthusiasm blunted, his ~~quest~~ quest for more education for everybody in this country and for other countries when our students are behaving -- and the professors too -- in the way they were today. Draft burning, flag burning. For myself I find it so easy to be passionate rather than thoughtful about it.

No, he was just as firm in his faith in education ultimately.

I did not understand his feeling quite. It was something like this was just an episode, a phenomenon that would pass. And as for the professors partly

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he thought because for so long in this country at least their salaries, their economic status, had been low. They were feeling power for the first time, enjoying a kind of revolt.

I was respectful of his attitude. Even in a way proud of it. But by my own annoyance is not ~~assured~~ ^{ASSURED.}

And then we talked of days of long ago of Mr. Kleberg. He hoped that his papers or copies could go into the Library. And there were friends that he and Mary and I have shared for many decades.

Finally about midnight, we went to bed.