

Westford Newsman Writes:

"Communist Guerrillas Emerge From Hiding But Guatemala Calms Down"

(Editor's Note — This dispatch was sent to The Sun by a resident of Forge Pond, who is the past president of the National Newspaper Association and publisher of a Belmont weekly newspaper. He is currently leading a group of 25 members of the association on a month's tour of Central and Near South American countries bordering on the Caribbean Sea.)

The workshop tour began in Mexico City January 12 and ends in Curacao February 10. Accompanying Mr. Seavey are his wife, Barbara, and Mrs. Charlotte P. Leahy of Littleton.

The group of American newspapermen and women were preparing to leave Mexico for Guatemala when word was received January 18 that military restrictions had been placed for a 30-day period in the country and that the borders had been closed.

The state of alert was put into effect when three "Castro Communists" gunned down four U. S. Military Mission men on the streets of Guatemala City three days previous; two were killed, Colonel John D. Webber, head of the mission and Lieut. Commander Ernest A. Munro,

chief of the mission's naval section.

All political activities were suspended, public gatherings forbidden and the carrying of firearms prohibited. Most important, though, was search without warrants was permitted. Nevertheless, the American newsmen were able to continue on their scheduled tour.

By Gordon B. Seavey

GUATEMALA CITY—The tiny Central American country of Guatemala, about the size of North Carolina has 33 volcanoes. Of this number, only three are active at the present. On occasion, puffs of smoke spiral up from the conical tops, now and then some ash and small rocks. The government does nothing about this phenomena. The Indians have watched such natural action for centuries and it is their way of life. Not even their gods could stop this spouting.

But the government of Guatemala is doing something about the Communist trained guerrillas who continually harass the people. Officials estimate some one hundred are still active, down from 350-400 who roamed the country almost free-handed 1½ years ago.

There is no doubt that Castro

trained many of these in Cuba and still furnishes them with arms, money and equipment, much of which is smuggled into the country via Mexico.

THEIR TYPE of activity is hard to control: kidnappings here and there, hit and run attacks and then a fast disappearance.

A fairly elected new Government which took power in July, 1966, offered amnesty to the guerrillas if they would lay down their arms and join the government in improving the way of life in Guatemala. The offer was refused as was a similar one two months later.

There was nothing left for the government to do than to send its 5,000-man army after them. With the aid of armed local bands of "civilian collaborators", the guerrillas have been pushed out of the countryside and the mountains and have joined their comrades in the city.

Urban terrorists had been relatively quiet, but in December the movement spewed smoke, fire and death. Outbursts of fighting brought recriminations from the right-wingers. And there was a great deal of cross-fire.

UNFORTUNATELY, it culmi-

nated with the death of two high-ranking American officers January 15 caught in this cross-fire of Guatemalan politics. Government officials and the populace alike were dumfounded and sorrowful. At this writing no one seems to know why Colonel John D. Webber, USA, and Lieut. Commander Ernest A. Munro, USN, were the victims. President Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro promptly sent condolences to President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Some say the Communists were bent on their usual foray: "Down with the Yanqui Imperialism." But others may be more correct when they say it was the brainstorm of a Communist terrorist, Leonard Castillo Johnson, 22, who was "emotionally upset" because his mistress, a 26-year-old former beauty queen with strong left-wing sympathies, had been murdered by clandestine rightist terrorists.

And he took out his wrath on ones whose deaths would appear most sensational, Americans. Possibly, no one will ever know why because Johnson, whose father was of English ancestry and also an avowed Communist, was killed by police in a fierce gun battle.

NOW WE are in Guatemala City ten days later and life goes on normally. Downtown streets are crowded and there seems no unusual display of armed force. The beautiful presidential palace of Colonial Spanish architecture and completed in 1943 has its usual number of visitors and is wide open to tourists.

Travelling from the Mexican border we were stopped three times by road patrols, but the questioning was brief and expeditious. On every level of life, we have been greeted warmly and with friendly, contagious smiles.

U. S. Ambassador John Gordon Mein reports that his contacts with the Guatemalan government officials have been cordial and sincere.

Another sign of close friendship between Guatemala and the United States is the fact this story is being mailed with a 9 cent Guatemalan stamp commemorating the 100th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's death.

THE ECONOMY of Guatemala is based on agriculture. Largest income producer is coffee but the world - wide market price is deflated. Next comes cotton, but last year's crop was small. She also produces in limited quantities such unusual things as chicle, cintracalla and

cacao. Bananas, too, are important.

The government encourages foreign investment and new industries. Goodyear manufactures tires for the Central American countries' common market and two large pharmaceutical companies are building plants on the outskirts of Guatemala City.

In the city, many new high-rise office buildings and apartments, including two new hotels have been constructed. Our headquarters are at the Biltmore, which already is adding a new section to double its capacity. It is a part of the Western - International hotel chain and has already announced plans for five more hotels in the country.

AN OLD penitentiary covering a huge block in the center of the city has just been abandoned and a major U. S. hotel chain proposes a deluxe 600-room, \$6 millions facility to be constructed on this site. A Houston businessman is negotiating with the government to develop a natural wild-life preserve which will include exotic animals from Africa and Asia

as a tourist attraction. Estimated cost is a million dollars.

Tourism is a big factor in Guatemala's economy . . . and it has much to offer. Michael De Marco of the Guatemala Tourists Commission emphasized that Guatemalans wish to share the "beauty of their country, the warmth of their charm, and the glory of their culture with all who are fortunate enough to pass our way."

PRINCIPAL tourist attractions include Guatemala City (500,000 pop.) and its old capital, Antigua, which was a great and grand Colonial city when Boston was vying with Philadelphia to become the western world's largest city.

Then there is Lake Atitlan where lofty volcanoes overhang a sparkling blue - green lake, 22 miles long, 18 miles wide and nearly a mile above sea level.

These and other attractions bring many tourists throughout the year to Guatemala as the high altitudes make it a country of eternal springtime. Plan in advance because hotel space at present is a bit limited.



Westford Man In Guatemala

A Flag of Frindship is being extended to Gordon B. Seavey, center, of Forge Village, Westford, publisher of Belmont weekly newspaper by Victor Hugo de Leon, president of the Guatemalan Press Association when the study mis-

sion to Central America sponsored by the National Newspaper Association stopped recently in Guatemala City. Colonel Ricardo Porras, director of the Guatemala Tourist Commission, is at the left.