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AMERICAN EMBASSY

MEXICO, D. F.

White House approved, 7/10/62

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Memorandum of Conversation

CONFIDENTIAL

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DATE: Friday, June 29 4:45 p.m. [1962] Part I

SUBJECT: Salinity Problem

PARTICIPANTS: President Kennedy
President Lopez Mateos
Foreign Minister Tello
Ambassador Mann
Mr. Martin

COPIES TO: Ambassador Carrillo Flores

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President Kennedy opened the discussion by indicating that the present situation with respect to salinity of the water being delivered to the Mexicali Valley is unsatisfactory. He hoped that agreement could be reached on means for correcting this, as he was not happy with what we had been doing. While there were no provisions in the treaty with respect to salt content, the United States should seek in a friendly spirit to help maintain the quality of the water. We thought we would be able to keep the salt at reasonable levels until the end of 1963, and by then hoped to have worked out a solution to the problem. Any solution would require funds, and therefore a major part of our problem is satisfying the Congress as to its fairness.

President Lopez Mateos expressed concern that by 1963 there might be irreparable damage and felt that a canal to waste saline waters to the Gulf was required.

President Kennedy felt we must keep the scientific panel studying the question in order to come up with a solution. He emphasized that we could not contemplate any change in the Treaty itself, as the Senate would not approve any change. He pointed out that work needed to be done in Mexicali to improve the drainage. He stressed that we are concerned about the problem and that we will do all we can but it will take a cooperative effort.

President Lopez Mateos confirmed that Mexico had a long time plan to improve Mexicali's drainage. He thought that this was a problem which must be solved in a practical manner as quickly as possible, and nothing done in the Mexicali Valley would provide a solution.

President Kennedy

ARA: Martin

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President Kennedy said that we are anxious to meet our responsibilities but water is a very short commodity and there are strong feelings about it. We would work ahead vigorously in the Executive Branch and with the Congress.

Ambassador Mann urged that Mexico submit an application to the IBRD for funds to undertake the works in the Valley. He felt this would be very helpful to us in securing action on our side.

President Lopez Mateos said this would be of no value if the United States did not reduce the salt content.

Ambassador Mann agreed, but said we must each have faith that the other would act.

President Kennedy affirmed again that we are going to do the best we can in face of difficult problems to correct the situation which had been created from our side of the border. We would keep in touch with the President of Mexico on our progress, and hoped that he would see what he could do on his side.

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