

Spanish-Speaking Telles Garners Affection

U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica a Hit

By JACK RUTLEDGE

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica (AP) — The ambassador seems to be proving the point.

The point is President Kennedy's theory that U.S. relations in Latin America could be improved by naming Spanish-speaking ambassadors of Latin descent to posts south of the border.

The ambassador is Raymond L. Telles, former mayor of El Paso, Tex., America's youngest ambassador at 45, and the first one named under the Kennedy policy. He is looked on as a sort of diplomatic guinea pig.

Wins Recognition

In the few brief weeks he has been here, Telles has made himself the most popular ambassador the United States has ever sent to Costa Rica. His charm, willingness to mix, ability to speak fluent Spanish, and obvious Latin ancestry have won grudging recognition even from Communist students.

On this, the press, Costa Ricans and American residents all agree.

"He has the press of Costa Rica in his pocket," said an official of the newspaper "Prensa Libre."

And in an article, the newspaper La Republica said: "He has all the characteristics of our Latin American race and the virtues and admirable qualities of the North American people."

Not Skepticism

The affection for Telles is in contrast to the skepticism when he arrived in May. What has he done?

Telles wasted no time in identifying himself with all walks of life. During his first week he attended an important soccer game between Costa Rica and Honduras. He gave the "kick of honor" to start the game and received an ovation. Costa Rica won 2-1, which helped the atmosphere, when he awarded a trophy to the victors.

He attended Little League Baseball games, entered the social life with vim, made friends with top officials, was available to the press, mingled with the lower class.

A Catholic, he attended mass on his first Sunday in Costa Rica, holding his rosary, standing among barefoot campesinos because the pews were crowded. The news spread like wildfire.

The most active Communists in



GOOD NEIGHBOR — Raymond L. Telles, Spanish-speaking U.S. ambassador to Costa Rica, marches onto a soccer field with his arms around the captains of the Costa Rica and Honduras teams. —AP

Costa Rica, which has little trouble with Communists, are students of the law school of the national university. Telles visited the school, talked to professors and scholars. He was such a hit the students invited him to be guest of honor at their annual dance.

He even linked himself with national tragedy. A Lacsá airline plane crashed, killing two pilots. Telles attended the funeral mass.

The ambassador wasted no time touring the small republic, seeing what makes the Ticos — as they are called — tick. His picture is in

the newspapers almost daily.

And under it all is an honest sincerity which even the embassy staff reacts to. "The best boss in the world," was the way one staff member described him. "I don't know how he can find time, but he takes a real and personal interest in the staff and their problems."

"Many of your ambassadors do not mingle with the people enough," said a Costa Rican official. "It is one failure of your diplomacy. But your Ambassador Telles certainly does. He's known,

too, as the gringo who can speak excellent Spanish. It helps."

Telles was born Sept. 5, 1915, in El Paso, and was graduated from Texas schools. He was an accountant until he enlisted in the Army in 1941. Commissioned in the Air Force, he became chief of the Air Force Lend Lease program to Latin countries.

He served in Mexico on a special mission to the Mexican Air Force from 1945 to 1947, was an aide to Gen of the Army Dwight Eisenhower when he visited Mexico City as U.S. chief of staff, and later accompanied then President Truman to Mexico on his 1947 visit.

Telles served in Korea, where he received the Bronze Star medal. Then he entered politics, and was elected mayor of El Paso in a bitter election in 1957. He was the only Texas mayor invited to the inauguration of Mexican President Lopez Mateos.

Telles was re-elected mayor in 1959 without opposition.

President Kennedy said during his campaign that he would name Spanish-speaking Americans to ambassadorships in Latin America. Telles was his first choice. His second was Teodoro Moscoso of Puerto Rico, who was named ambassador to Venezuela.

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Hector,

We really have to play this up to the nth degree and then apply more pressure so Kennedy will change some of his Ambassadors in Latin America and send American Ambassadors of Mexican ancestry.

This is a golden opportunity for us to make hay while the sun shines.

Genel.

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