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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM AMEMBASSY, HABANA

1790

DESP. NO.

TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE

April 25, 1952

DATE

REF Action Taken

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SUBJECT: Weeka No. 17 for State, Army, Navy and Air Departments from SANA

Name of officer

SECTION I

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POLITICAL

The membership of the Consultative Council was announced April 18, with Dr. Carlos SALADRIGAS as President and Dr. Jorge GARCIA Montes Vice President. Both were made Ministers Without Portfolio. The three largest interest groups represented were sugar, labor, and the press, with representatives of other economic and political activities making up the balance. The reception given the appointments was in general lukewarm, if not critical, because of the relative obscurity of many of the members. This led to charges that they were selected on the basis of "proved fidelity" to the regime or as stooges for more prominent people rather than of their representative character in their fields. The appointment of Saladrigas, however, was generally praised (except by the Communists and other leftist groups), and several observers looked to him for the success or failure of the Council's mission. Council members will be paid per diem of \$30 per session up to \$600 per month, the funds to come from previous appropriations for Congress. The magazine Gente found this to have been the reason for the appointment of a Government Administrator for Congress (Cándido MORA). The first meeting of the Council is scheduled for April 28, at which time it will reportedly draw up its procedural rules. The Council is to study and draw up projected legislation "primarily in matters affecting labor and production".

Immediately after the publication of the Council list, the Ortodoxo Party "excommunicated" the three party members named to the Council. They were: Ramon VASCONCELOS, director of the newspaper Alerta; Lelio ALVAREZ Ramirez, leader of a farmers' organization; and Conrado RODRIGUEZ, a sugar labor leader and party director. These three repudiated the Ortodoxo Party, saying it had lost its original impetus and had fallen into "inept" hands (a criticism directly against Roberto URRUTIA MONTE).

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CONFIDENTIAL
SECURITY INFORMATION

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The recent visit of Eduardo OCHOA (brother of Emilio OCHOA, President of the Party) to BATISTA constitutes another sign of dissension.

Besides Saladrigas and Garcia Montes, President Batista announced several other new appointments of Ministers Without Portfolio, which will raise the Cabinet to 13 heads of Executive Departments and 13 Ministers Without Portfolio. The reason for this, according to Batista, is to spread out the responsibility for the Government's projects. Already appointed are: Gustavo GUTIERREZ, President of the National Economy Board; José PARDO Jimenez, President of the National Urban and Rural Housing Board, and Santiago REY Pernas. Miguel SUAREZ Fernandez, President of the Commission for Study of Social and Retirement Security, is to be appointed next week, Batista said. Ernesto de la FE resigned as Minister Without Portfolio to become Minister of Propaganda. The name of this Ministry reportedly is to be changed to Information, to make it more palatable.

Following a policy statement last week by Minister of State CAMPA that Cuba desires full relations with Spain, Dr. Antonio IRAIZOZ y del Villar was appointed Ambassador to Spain. Dr. Juan Pablo LOJENDIO has been named Spanish Ambassador to Cuba. Iraizoz is well known as a newspaperman and intellectual and has not been politically active in recent years. The appointment brought praise from conservative circles and the local Spanish colony, and was generally approved, except by the Communists and some leftist papers who saw in it an indication of Batista's "reactionary" tendencies.

Possibly also tied in with a statement by Campa that Cuba would seek more recognition in the form of Secretariats of the Specialized Agencies of UN was the creation of the post of Ambassador for Cultural Affairs and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO, for which Dr. Juan J. REMOS Rubio was appointed. The Council of Ministers also created the position of Ambassador for Commercial Affairs in Europe, giving Dr. Orestes FERRARA Marino an apparent sinecure abroad.

Recognizing the "importance of the Embassy of the Republic in Washington, D. C., and the necessity that the Chargé d'Affaires have the rank of Minister Plenipotentiary", the Government raised the position of Counselor to the diplomatic rank of Minister. Dr. Alberto ESPINOSA Bravo, now occupying the position, received the promotion. One position of First Secretary was raised to the functional rank of Minister Counselor, and First Secretary Nicolás RIVERO Machado was promoted to this position.

CONFIDENTIAL
SECURITY INFORMATION
(Classification)

To consolidate control over local government, Minister of the Interior Ramón HERMIDA said on April 22 that all Aldermen of the Municipalities of Cuba will be required to swear to uphold the "Constitutional Law" or automatically be removed. This power is implied in the First Final Transitory disposition of the Constitutional Law. No replacements are to be named; the Municipal Councils will be composed of the remaining members, thereby giving the Government firmer control. In Habana, 7 of the 27 Aldermen, 3 Ortodoxos (including PORTELL Vilá), the two Communists (Cesar ESCALANTE and Nila ORTEGA), and 2 PNC members announced that they would not take the oath. This would reduce the Council to 20 members. The deadline for the oath has not been announced. The fight to remove Escalante was not carried through (ref. Weeka 16 April 18, 1952), possibly because of public anti-Batista demonstrations at the Council meetings (forcing the Council to declare its sessions secret, over the protest of the Ortodoxo and Communist minority), or because of his probable removal through refusal to take the oath. Félix AYON, the only PAU member of the Council, was elected President of the Council April 18, after the resignation of José MORALES Gómez. It was later announced that all public employees would be required to swear to the "Constitutional Law".

There were some signs foreshadowing a cooling between Batista and the CTC, judging from reports that Batista adherents in Camaguey and in other locations have been creating opposition to CTC union officials. In addition, four of the eight labor representatives appointed to the Consultative Council are comparatively unknown PAU members, given equal position with Eusebio MUJAL, José Luis MARTINEZ and two other CTC officials. Marco HIRIGOYEN, a henchman of Mujal, has been openly critical of the Consultative Council as a "rubber stamp" for Batista. Finally, the adoption of a Labor Code and the creation of Labor Tribunals are not likely to be welcomed by the CTC.

A clandestine pamphlet entitled "Echoes of the Resistance" has appeared, possibly published by the FEU or the Ortodoxos. It describes itself as "non-political and anti-Communist", and may be one of a series. The issue marked No. 2 alleges dissension in the Army "because the PAU is getting all the patronage". It also said the only reason there has not been an explosion against Batista is that the people have been afraid the Government might fall into worse hands (Communist or other). Warning Batista to relinquish the Government to men who would promise guarantees of free elections, it predicted that "soon things will be changing". Another leaflet, signed "Ortodoxo Liberty Movement", lists 25 members of the Armed Forces as "traitors,

CONFIDENTIAL
SECURITY INFORMATION

assassins, conspirators and thieves", incites the Armed Forces to rebel, and calls on citizens to join in a crusade to "use force to repel force". It is reportedly being circulated by mail.

In the meantime the Government continued its mildly repressive measures against opposition groups. These included breaking up a meeting of the Communist Women's Federation (FDMC) and detentions of PSP and Ortodoxo party members in various parts of the Island. Three ex-Navy officials were also detained for "illicit assembly", interrogated and later released. Public ridicule may have been partly responsible for the cessation of the almost daily detentions of Ortodoxo leaders in Habana (as reported last week). José PARDO Llada was nevertheless brought to trial before the Urgency Court, following his previous arrest for "unauthorized" publication of his leaflet La Palabra (reference Weeka No. 15 of April 10, 1952). The Government appears to be on the alert against suspected opposition movements.

The press reported that the Guatemalan Ambassador took the ex-Secret Police Chief Eufemio FERNANDEZ Ortega to the airport on April 23, where he boarded a plane for Guatemala. Fernandez took refuge in the Guatemalan Embassy after the March 10 coup.

The Cuban National Association of Veterans of World War II urged illegalization of the Communist Party (PSP) and the creation of "democratic reeducation camps" for Communists, in a visit to Interior Minister Hermida on April 22. They also said they were undertaking the organization of a Cuban volunteer brigade to fight in Korea.

The Archbishop of Habana, Manuel Cardinal ARTEAGA, issued a pastoral letter on April 22 in which he said that although Catholics have the right to exercise their political rights freely, they should not involve the Church in political campaigns. He said he has been upholding the "apolitical" character of the Church for many years, but he did hope that the present Government will accomplish its proclaimed objectives and that the desire of the citizenry to lead Cuba to democracy will reunite those divided politically.

The Government announced the creation of a committee for the rehabilitation of the town of Baracoa, in Oriente Province. The economy of Baracoa has suffered in the last few years through destruction of surrounding banana and coconut plantations by disease. The issue of Government assistance to Baracoa has become almost an index of a particular Government's

Page 5 of _____
Desp. No. 1790
From HABANA

CONFIDENTIAL
SECURITY INFORMATION
(Classification)

Page _____ of _____
Encl. No. _____
Desp. No. _____
From _____

willingness to help the people. As a first step the Government announced an appropriation of a million dollars for public works, agricultural and industrial development in Baracoa, along with a plan for the economic rebuilding of the town. Baracoa has on several occasions been the scene of political anti-Government disturbances, one of them a revolt of the entire town incited by FEU leaders (Weeka No. 7 August 17, 1951).

The Administrative Officer of the Ministry of State, Ambassador Florencio GUERRA Suárez, was discharged by the Minister following the arrest of his American son-in-law for gold smuggling. Guerra's name was publicly linked with the gold smuggling ring, which operated by bringing gold coins from Mexico to Cuba for re-shipment to Curacao.

CONFIDENTIAL
SECURITY INFORMATION

ARMY

The post of "Special Advisor" (Asesor General) was established by Decree No. 614 dated April 3, 1952 which appeared in the Official Gazette of April 18. The duties will be of a technical-military nature and in addition those which may be assigned by the Army Chief of Staff. The officer designated for this detail will hold the rank of Brig. General. Colonel Aristides V. SOSA y de Quesada, Chief of the Juridical Service, was promoted to Brig. General on April 16 and was designated Special Advisor.

COMMENT: This new detail is probably intended to be similar to that of our Judge Advocate General; however, the Decree does not limit the duties to those of a legal advisor and the officer selected for this duty can belong to any of the Services. The assignment and promotion of Gen. SOSA (Minister of Defense in 1944) are logical because of his legal experience and seniority in the Army.

During the past week several promotions occurred in the Army. Lt. Colonel Ramon M. BARQUIN y Lopez, Cuban Military Attaché in Washington, was promoted to Colonel; three officers were promoted in the Juridical Service as a result of the vacancy created by Gen. Sosa's promotion. Major Francisco H. TABERNILLA y Palmero, Aide to President Batista and son of Major General Francisco Tabernilla y Dolz, Army Chief of Staff, was promoted to Lt. Colonel.

Law-Decree No. 18 dated April 21 established various new grades in the Corps of National Police: (1) the Chief of National Police will hold the temporary rank of Brig. General while fulfilling such duties and in the future he will be selected from among the eligible Colonels in the National Police Corps by the President of the Republic. (Comment: Heretofore, the law required that the National Police be commanded by a "superior" officer of the Army.) Upon relief of this assignment he will revert to the status of Colonel and will become Assistant to the Chief of National Police. (2) All previous regulations which established the number of Colonels and Lt. Colonels in the National Police were rescinded and positions for 4 Colonels and 7 Lt. Colonels were authorized.

NAVY

It was announced this week that two more officers were promoted to the rank of commodore in the Cuban Navy. The officers so named are Juan Pedro CASANOVA Roque and Antonio ARIAS Echevarria. Both of these officers were ring-leaders in the March 10th revolt, the former having been a lieutenant (junior

CONFIDENTIAL
SECURITY INFORMATION
(Classification)

grade) and the latter having been retired in the same rank in 1944. The present sub-chief of the Navy is Commodore Pedro CONCEPCION who was also promoted to this rank recently.

COMMENT: The necessity for two more officers of the rank of commodore appears nil. The responsibilities and authority exercised by Commodores ARIAS and Casanova are not sufficient to justify their high rank.

An Eight-Point Plan for improving the Cuban Navy has been submitted to the Naval Chief of Staff by the U.S. Naval Mission. The plan, which was favorably received, encompasses the following points which are listed in order of relative importance:

Improvement Programs for:

Organization	Afloat Training
Fiscal and Supply	General Training
Afloat	Personnel
Naval Air	Repair and Shore Stations

The plan highlights in excellent fashion the deficiencies as well as the potentialities of the Navy.

COMMENT: It is not yet clear whether or not the Navy will receive sufficient fiscal support from Batista. Rear Admiral Rodriguez CALDERON and Commodore Concepcion lunched with the President on Monday, April 21, reportedly to press the Navy's case. It is encouraging to note that the Cubans plan to place their frigates and escort craft in navigable condition prior to making any requests for military aid from the U.S.A.

The general impression received from the Cuban Navy six weeks after the Batista revolt is one of truculent vigilance. The officers and men are not yet permitted normal leave and liberty. Most posts permit 50 percent of their complement to return home at night while the other 50 percent remain at their barracks which are still heavily guarded. Indicative of the apprehension obviously felt by the new regime was the arrest and detention this week of three former senior naval officers who were retired last month. These individuals were Capt. Marcos PEREZ Medina, Lt. Comdr. Flaquer NUNEZ and Lt. Comdr. MALLO Lopez. They were charged with conspiring against the security of the State and held over-night for questioning by the secret police. Evidently the three officers convinced the police of their innocence since all were released the next day.

COMMENT: It is known that Rear Admiral Rodriguez Calderon has informed his subordinates of his intention of ruthlessly quelling any suspicion of conspiracy or discontent among the retired officers.

CONFIDENTIAL
SECURITY INFORMATION

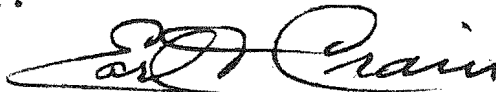
AIR

President Fulgencio Batista has signed a decree authorizing the reorganization of the Cuban Army Air Force. This reorganization is substantially as proposed by the USAF Mission to Cuba working in collaboration with the Chief and Executive Officers of the Cuban Army Air Force.

In brief, the reorganization establishes a new Table of Organization and Equipment and delineates the new units which will comprise the Air Force. It also establishes a new strength ceiling and authorizes promotions to fill vacancies created by the new table of authorization. The Chief of the Air Force will, under this table, become a Brigadier General.

Another decree, published in the same Official Gazette, authorizes the appropriation of \$1,250,000 from non-obligated funds of fiscal year 1950-51 for the purchase of twenty-five F-47 fighter aircraft to equip the fighter squadron created under the reorganization of the Air Force cited above.

For the Ambassador:



Earl T. Crain
Acting Counselor of Embassy

Participants:

ETCrain; DGClark; WPHouk;
HWDodge; Elmore (MA), Ryan (NA)
Pitts (AA)

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