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DEC 31 1953

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December 31, 1953

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to

Vincellette

Action Taken

1-3-54

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SUBJECT: Joint Weeka No. 53 for State, Army, Navy and Air
Departments from SANA.

Office Symbol 1AD

Name of Officer *Vincellette*

Direction to DC/R *AL*

PART I

Political

(UNCLASSIFIED) "Resignation" of Minister of Information.
 On December 28 Ernesto DE LA FE, the Minister of Information, announced that he had presented his "irrevocable" resignation from that post. However, after lunching with the President on the 29th, de la Fe informed reporters that he would continue as Minister of Information. He explained that his resignation had been intended only "to facilitate possible new plans" that Batista might have for the new year and that "in deference to his (Batista's) leadership" he would remain in his present position "until new instructions from his superior." It was said that de la Fe had presented his resignation to the Minister of State instead of to the Secretary of the Presidency and the Council of Ministers.

(CONFIDENTIAL) Comment. The Embassy has received two explanations of de la Fe's attempted resignation, both unconfirmed. One explained it as the result of a spat between the Ministers of State and Information regarding a recent speech by the latter on the desirability of closer Spanish-American relations to which the Minister of State took exception as interference in foreign policy matters. This situation was reportedly eased when Batista told Minister of State Campa that he had approved the speech before its delivery. The second explanation of the "resignation" said that it was the result of a heated argument between de la Fe and the Secretary of the Presidency over jobs in the Ministry of Information insisted upon by the latter for his friends. This story may not

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be true but it has the virtue of explaining why the resignation might have been presented to Campa as dean of Ministers rather than to the Secretary of the Presidency. In any case de la Fe's explanation of his action is so weak as to suggest friction within the Cabinet, possibly on the basis of personalities involving de la Fe, one of its least-regarded members. De la Fe's report of the outcome gives no indication whether Batista refused to accept the proffered resignation or whether he deferred a decision regarding his Minister of Information pending further developments.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Pre-Christmas Press Interview with Batista. In an informal interview with presidential palace reporters just before Christmas, President Batista reaffirmed that elections would be held in November 1954, as scheduled. He also repeated that he has not yet decided whether he will be a candidate for the presidency.

(CONFIDENTIAL) Comment. Despite the repeated statements of Batista and government spokesmen that elections will be held as now planned, there remains much skepticism among Cubans on this score and many believe that eventually some excuse will be found to postpone elections again.

(UNCLASSIFIED) PAP Absorbs PAU. On December 24, the leaders of the Partido Acción Unitaria (PAU) met with the leaders of Batista's Partido Acción Progresista (PAP) in order formally to enter the ranks of the latter party. The president of the PAU was reported to have said that the step was taken because a party with the name of PAU "could not receive official support" (i.e. the support of Batista) and that the name the party had intended to adopt had been "taken away" from it, i.e., by the registration of the Partido Unión Radical (PUR) by Cabinet ministers and others (see Weeka No. 50).

(CONFIDENTIAL) Comment. In view of persistent reports the Embassy has received in the past to the effect that the PAU was a front organized to serve Communist purposes, its fusion with the PAP may be a source of considerable concern.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Revised Electoral Code Published.
In an extraordinary edition of the Official Gazette dated

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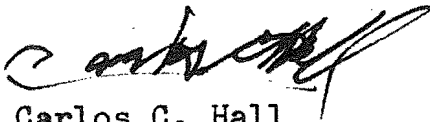
December 10, 1953 (which did not appear until December 28, 1953), there was published Law Decree No. 1215 of November 26, 1953, which promulgated the complete text of the Electoral Code as revised to provide for general elections on November 1, 1954 (see Weeka No. 45). The Code had been amended by a previous law decree in early November when elections were postponed from June 1, 1954, but errors had crept in and it had been decided to republish the complete text, as corrected and amended. The requirement that a political party could be organized only if it showed affiliations equal to four percent of the electorate was unchanged, remaining as established by Law-Decree No. 723 of February 27, 1953, which dropped the requirement from six to four percent (see despatch No. 1424, March 13, 1953).

(UNCLASSIFIED) Ex-President of Costa Rica Leaves Cuba. Otilio ULATE, Ex-President of Costa Rica, terminated his visit to Cuba (see Weeka No. 52) and left Habana for San José on December 24.

Army, Navy, Air

Negative.

For the Ambassador:


Carlos C. Hall
Counselor of Embassy

Participants:

CCHall, ETCrain, FCFornes, Jr., EJWilliamson, JCanter, Elmore (MA), Hackett (AA)

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MA(4) for USAR CARIB and USARFANT

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