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FROM : AMEMBASSY, HABANA

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

August 16, 1955

REF :

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SUBJECT: Joint Weeks No. 33 for State, Army, Navy and Air
Departments from SANA

(UNCLASSIFIED) EX-PRESIDENT PRIO RETURNS TO CUBA. With only a very few hours advance notice of his intention, ex-President Carlos PRIO Socarrás unexpectedly and dramatically returned to Cuba on August 11, after three years and five months of exile. He was warmly greeted at the airport by a crowd estimated at 2,000 and again by about 1,000 at the hotel where he is staying temporarily. Strong detachments of guards were stationed at the airport and the hotel and Prio was heavily escorted from one place to the other over a well-policed route. Not the slightest incident occurred.

Mrs. Prio returned with her husband. He was followed in a later plane by other exiles including Carlos HEVIA, Auténtico presidential candidate in 1952.

The ex-President gave a general press interview and issued a manifesto to the public. In these he said that his activities would be within the law and that he contemplates first of all a mobilization of public opinion to make the Batista regime modify its intransigent "take it or leave it" attitude. Perhaps the most interesting part of his manifesto was his admission of violating American neutrality laws, when he said: "...in order to cooperate with the people in their dramatic and constant struggle to again achieve their liberty, I did not hesitate to risk my own liberty in foreign lands by acquiring the necessary arms in order then, together with this noble and generous people, to throw myself into the task of reconquering liberty by force..." He added that, before civil war should break out, he decided on "a last and supreme effort" to avoid such a tragedy by the mobilization of public opinion.

Batista called the manifesto a confession of crime and said it lacked seriousness. He thought it "singularly significant" that Prio's words contained a threat and dismissed the manifesto as "indiscreet and arrogant".

FCFornes Jr/mgw

REPORTER

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(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) Comment. Prío's last minute decision not to come back to Cuba on August 6 drew just the kind of criticism from almost all quarters that had been anticipated (see Weeka No. 32). However, by promptly reversing himself again, he silenced this criticism and withdrew some of the sting from it and did much to correct what many considered a political error.

The ex-President's manifesto can be regarded as a declaration of peaceful intentions provided the Batista regime is more receptive of opposition demands. There is in it, however, the hint that obstinacy in rejecting those demands may lead to the "civil war" mentioned therein more than once. On the government side, the manifesto was criticized because it did not call on Aureliano SANCHEZ Arango and others associated with insurrectionary activities to desist from their efforts and did not give a sign of good faith by offering to surrender additional arms caches the government is convinced exist.

(LIMITED OFFICIAL USE) THIRD ARMS CACHE SEIZED. On August 10 another arms cache, the third in a week (see Weeka No. 32), was seized by the authorities. According to the police, they were guided to the downtown apartment where the arms were found by information picked up in connection with the first seizure on August 4. The cache included four M-1 rifles, three light machine guns, one 81 mm. mortar, mortar shells and machine gun ammunition. Once again it was declared by the authorities that the arms were for use in an uprising to be led by Aureliano SANCHEZ Arango and his cohorts. Four or five persons were arrested in connection with the seizure. (See despatch No. 119, August 11, 1955).

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) RETURNED EXILE WANTS VISA FOR U. S. It is interesting to record that within 24 hours of his arrival in Cuba from exile in the United States (see above), the Embassy was informed that Carlos Hevia wished to obtain a visa for the United States to replace an expired one in his ordinary passport.

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) Comment. This suggests that Carlos Hevia is not so sanguine over the outcome of Prío's return to Cuba as to neglect the basic precautions of one who thinks he may need to seek political asylum once more.

(UNCLASSIFIED) DISTURBANCES AT UNIVERSITY. Twice during the week minor disturbances broke out at the University of Havana. On the 10th one occurred in connection with a protest against the imprisonment of students on account of the recent arms seizures. There was another on the 12th when the students observed the 22nd anniversary of the fall of Machado. Both disturbances followed the usual course: the students did all in their power

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to make manifest their feelings, throwing missiles into the streets, lighting bonfires, etc., while the police diverted traffic from neighboring thoroughfares and kept the students penned up in the University precincts. No one was arrested and one report has it that two press photographers were slightly hurt.

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) Comment. While these minor student disturbances have little real significance beyond indicating continuing bitterness against the regime by a part at least of the University student body, they do serve and are used to bolster repeated charges of repression of civil liberties and freedom of expression.

(UNCLASSIFIED) PETITIONER FOR ANNEXATION OF CUBA ACQUITTED. Ramón SALAS Martínez, the man who in May asked the Embassy to transmit to Congress a petition to annex Cuba to the United States (see Weeka No. 26), was acquitted by the Urgency Court on August 10 of a charge of an attempt against Cuba's sovereignty. Salas pleaded that he only wanted such union between the United States and Cuba as would permit Cubans to move to the United States without passports and work there without difficulties. The court was evidently not disposed to be harsh with a man who gives every sign of being a sincere but misguided admirer of the United States, obsessed with the notion of some form of closer relationship advantageous to Cuba.

(UNCLASSIFIED) GENEVA CONFERENCES. While the Cuban press devoted major attention to Prio's return to Cuba, some editorial comment was devoted to the two Geneva conferences: the U.S.-Chinese negotiations, and the Atoms-for-Peace meeting. Regarding the first Excelsior predicted that the Chinese Reds, unable to gain major concessions from the United States, will end the talks without touching on basic Asian problems. Alerta believed that Washington's support of the Chinese Nationalists prevents a viable solution to the Far Eastern impasse and that the solution would be to accept the "two Chinas" policy. Información concluded that peace between the two Chinas is practically assured and that the Nationalists can no longer hope to conquer the mainland either politically or militarily. For Diario Nacional the United States acted wisely in refusing to send back Chinese students who have specialized in nuclear energy and related studies in American universities.

On the Geneva Atoms-for-Peace conference, the Cuban press was hopeful that nuclear energy may be increasingly put to peaceful uses. El Mundo envisaged a marvelous future for man as a result of non-military uses of atomic energy, while

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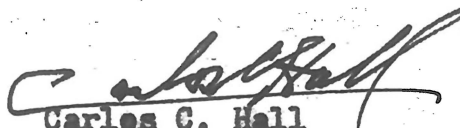
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Diario de la Marina echoed President Eisenhower's statement that "it is up to us" to convert atomic energy and even the hydrogen bomb into instruments for peaceful progress. In Informacion's opinion, the atomic conference was an index to Russia's political intentions, for Soviet action at Geneva may well reflect Communist aims for the future.

Army, Navy, Air

Negative.


Charles C. Hall

Chargé d'Affaires ad interim

Participants: CCHall, CABeenstra, CFPick, Jr., FCFernes, Jr., JdeZengotita, ACertesino, EWilliamson, FJDonahue, CAnderson, Treadway (Army), Krisel (Navy) and Slaton (Air).

cc: Amembassies Ciudad Trujillo and Port-au-Prince.
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