

AIR POUCH

PRIORITY

CONFIDENTIAL

(Security Classification)

DO NOT TYPE IN THIS SPACE

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

737 00(W)/7-1057

FROM: Embassy, Habana

DESP. NO.

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

July 10, 1957

REF:

Action Assigned to

Action Taken

For Dept. Use Only	ACTION	DEPT.
	REC'D	IN F OTHER
	061-10 7/11	REP-2, RM/R-2, ICA-10, ARA-4, 240-1 USIA-10, OSD-2, ARMY 125, NAVY 130, AIR-24102A-15, OCB-2,

SUBJECT:-

JOINT WEEKA No. 28

Action Office Symbol

Name of Officer

Direction to DC/R

POLITICAL1. Politics and Elections

The Congress is scheduled to meet in special session on July 15, primarily to consider the proposed new electoral code. In the meantime the Government, apparently pleased with the mass rally held at Santiago de Cuba on June 30, has announced it will hold other meetings in various parts of the island. The Prime Minister has publicly declared that the opposition groups are free to hold such meetings if and when they choose.

A UP story datedlined Washington July 2, states that officials of our Government received "with surprise" but without comment a letter which Congressman Charles Porter of Oregon is said to have sent President BATISTA on June 22, urging him to have free elections soon and suggesting that a Committee from the United Nations or from the Organization of American States be authorized to come to Cuba to supervise the elections. Prime Minister RIVERO Aguerre has now said that anyone is welcome to come to Cuba to observe the electoral process but that Cuba needs no intervention and is not requesting intervention. RIVERO added that freedom of political activity is guaranteed in Cuba and that the country's elections are more democratic than in many other Latin American countries.

A further attempt has been made to unite the various oppositionist groups. Manuel Antonio (Tony) VARONA, leader of the unregistered faction of the Cuban Revolutionary Party (Autentico) and Jose R. ANDREU, leader of the unregistered Democratic Party, have appealed to all groups to unite in seeking a solution to the national problems. On the other side of the picture, however, a power struggle within the National Revolutionary Party (PNR) broke into the open during the past week when Jose PARDO Llada, President of the PNR, expelled former Gen. Min. and leading PNR-man Oscar GANS from the Party. Each accused the other in public statements of highhandedness in attempting to dictate the policies of the PNR.

POL:HALagasse:hs

REPORTER

CONFIDENTIAL

ACTION COPY — (DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The action office must return this permanent record copy to RM/R files with an endorsement of action taken.

TO THE RM/R CENTRAL FILES

737.00(W)/7-1057

HBS CONFIDENTIAL FILE

CONFIDENTIAL
(Classification)

Page 2 of
Encl. No. _____
Desp. No. 26
From Habana

Much of the opposition was aroused to indignation by the case of Dr. Roberto AGRAMONTE, member of the Executive Council of the Cuban People's Party (Ortodoxo), and Ortodoxo candidate for the Presidency in 1952. AGRAMONTE sought asylum in the Mexican Embassy on July 5, and left for exile in Mexico on July 9. He issued a statement to the press saying that a group of men armed with submachine guns broke into his home and searched it shortly after midnight on July 5, and that he feared he might meet the same fate as former President of the Ortodoxo Executive Council Pelayo CUERVO who was murdered on the day of the attack against the Presidential Palace, March 13, 1957. Police have denied searching AGRAMONTE's home. (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: The VARONA-ANDREU appeal has received favorable comment from some oppositionists but it is too soon to tell whether it will succeed in effectively uniting the various oppositionist groups, which have so far proved extremely individualistic.

Although it is generally accepted that members of the Cuban security forces did not enter and search AGRAMONTE's home, the reason is not quite clear. It has been reported that his son has joined Fidel CASTRO and his "26th of July" Movement group in the Sierra Maestra mountains and this report may well have been the cause of the search. It is said that AGRAMONTE himself was not at home when the police called. (CONFIDENTIAL)

2. Terroristic and Rebel Activities.

There have been fewer reports of terroristic activity during the past week than during the previous week but there has been an increase in rumors and reports concerning the Army-rebel activities in Oriente Province. Beginning on July 4, there have been many reports of a major encounter between the Army and the rebels in Palma Soriano, involving tank movements, but the Army has consistently denied all such reports. It is now being reported that the Army is preparing a move intended to completely wipe out the CASTRO forces but no details are available. A report that Colonel Pedro BARRERA Perez, Commander of the Army troops engaged against CASTRO, had been taken prisoner by the CASTRO forces has received wide publicity during the past few days and has been strongly denied by the Army. The Army transported a group of newspapermen to the Sierra Maestra and they apparently found BARRERA safe and well.

Anti-BATISTA rebel elements received a boost during the past week by unconfirmed but apparently well-founded reports that Raul CHIBAS, former head of the Executive Committee of the Cuban People's Party (Ortodoxo), and Felipe PAZOS, leading oppositionist and former President of the National Bank of Cuba, had joined Fidel CASTRO in the Sierra Maestra. (UNCLASSIFIED)

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

(Classification)

Page 3 of
Encl. No. 26
Desp. No. 26
From Habana

Comment. There are many rumors that the rebels plan some sort of move sometime this month. July 26 will be the anniversary of Fidel CASTRO's ill-fated attack against Moncade Barracks in Santiago in 1953 and it is quite likely that it will be the occasion of anti-Government demonstrations.

There are conflicting opinions as to why CHIBAS and PAZOS went to the Sierra Maestra area, if indeed they are there. Some say they went to formulate and coordinate a plan of action in the event CASTRO is successful in his military operations. Others say that the backers of the 26th of July Movement are concerned about the reports that have appeared in the press alleging that CASTRO will nationalize industries in Cuba and that they have sent the two men, particularly PAZOS, to steer CASTRO's political policies and to safeguard the considerable investment they have in CASTRO and his operations.
(CONFIDENTIAL)

3. University of Habana Summer School Cancelled.

With the explanation that the political situation "has become worse", the University of Habana announced cancellation of its summer session "in order to avoid serious difficulties". This is the first cancellation of the Summer School in its 16-year history. The Summer School normally has 1,500 to 2,000 students, some 100 of them American. (UNCLASSIFIED)

4. Popular TV Panel Program Suspended. The CMQ network television program "Ante la Prensa" (Meet the Press) was suspended for two weeks by the Minister of Communications after the appearance on June 28, of Dr. Emilio OCHOA, a political oppositionist - whose remarks were considered strongly anti-Batista. Ironically Dr. Rafael GUAS Inolán, the Vice President, was scheduled to appear on one of the cancelled shows. (UNCLASSIFIED)

5. U.S. Independence Day. Cuban newspapers and magazines gave extensive coverage to USIS materials on the significance of the Fourth of July, and reaction as seen in editorials and commentaries was uniformly warm toward the United States. Commemorative celebrations were held by service clubs and civic organizations in several parts of the island. In Habana, Vinton Chapin, Chargé d'Affaires, delivered a well-received talk to the American Club. (UNCLASSIFIED)

PSYCHOLOGICAL

The purge from the Soviet Presidium of four important communist leaders and what this might mean for the rest of the world was by far the predominant subject (17 editorials and commentaries) in the Cuban press. There was a wide divergence of opinion as to the significance of this purge, ranging from what of El Mundo and Pueblo

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

(Classification)

Page 4 of
Encl. No.
Desp. No. 26
From Habana

that there would be little fundamental difference in Soviet foreign policy, to that of Alerta and Informacion which predicted profound changes in the Soviet's international relations as Khrushchev will no longer be held back by the pre-Stalinists in the Soviet hierarchy. All were in general agreement that Khrushchev and his policy of de-Stalinization (including a softer policy towards the satellites) had won out in a power struggle in the Kremlin with the "old Bolsheviks" Molotov, Malenkov, and Kaganovich who had been at least skeptical of this policy. But, most agreed this victory could not have been won without the full support of Zhukov and the Soviet armed forces. Many papers, including Diario de la Marina, Excelsior, Pueblo, and Informacion commented on how the Soviet armed forces have been gradually assuming power since the death of Stalin -- even at the expense of the Communist Party. This was contrasted with the control Stalin had on the Soviet military by use of the secret police. The greatest significance to many Cuban papers, however, of this latest Soviet government crisis was best put by Diario de la Marina which stated that a system of government that could purge four such conspicuous figures, so bound to the history and formation of the USSR, is evidence of its own instability, of the congenital weakness of a regime maintained by terror, and confirms other various signs of internal decomposition, disagreement among communist leaders, and general popular discontent. The purge shows the real Achilles heel of the Soviet regime, said El Mundo's lead editorial, for as time passes the harsh dictatorship of the proletariat is gradually weakening at the base. (UNCLASSIFIED)

MILITARY

Negative.

LABOR

1. Bank Employees Hold Elections.

On July 6, elections were held in four of the provincial unions affiliated with the Labor Federation of Bank Employees. Two provincial unions - those of Las Villas and Oriente -- refused to participate in the elections which were held pursuant to resolutions adopted at the CTC's 25th National Council meeting of June 11. In the Habana province union, CTC supported Osvaldo Martinez Antufia was elected secretary-general, receiving 789 out of 801 votes cast. Elections for an executive committee of the Federation are scheduled for July 13. (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: The abstention of two provincial unions together with the abstention of a considerable number of members in the provincial

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

(Classification)

Page 5 of

Encl. No. _____

Desp. No. 26

From Habana

unions which did participate has cast real doubt on how truly representative the elections were. Leaders in the Bank Federation opposed to the CTC - Jose M. Aguilera, Calixto Fernandez, Orlando Fundora - have publicly stated that the CTC-sponsored elections contravene the legal provisions of their Federation and that appeal will be made to court action to annul them. (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

Vinton Chapin
Vinton Chapin
Charge d'Affaires a.i.

Contributors:

Political: H.A. Lagasse

U. of Habana

TV Program

Independence Day

R.G. Cushing

Psychological: R.S. Bryan

Laber: J.F. Correll

Distribution by Embassy: AmEmbassies, Port-au-Prince, Ciudad Trujillo;
AmConsulate, Santiago de Cuba
NA (7); AA(2); NA(5).

CONFIDENTIAL