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737.00(W)/5-856

FROM

AMEMBASSY, HABANA

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DESP. NO.

TO

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

May 8, 1956

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SUBJECT:

Joint Weeks No. 19 for State, Army, Navy and Air Departments
from SANA.

(CONFIDENTIAL) TENSION LESSENS SLIGHTLY; RUMORS OF REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITY CONTINUE. The atmosphere of tension created by discovery of the military coup planned by Col. Ramon BARQUIN early last month, the killings in Santiago on April 19-20, and the assault on the garrison at Matanzas on April 29, abated somewhat during the past week. On the surface all appeared tranquil but there was apparent a widespread belief that further plots are underway, and that further revolutionary attempts will be forthcoming. Intelligence sources have received various reports of continued unrest and plotting within the army. There are reports that several officers and soldiers of the Matanzas garrison have been arrested and brought to Habana, where they are being held incommunicado, on the basis of evidence that they were involved in the assault on the garrison there, had been supposed to assist the assailants, but at the last minute became faint-hearted and withdrew. Rumors persist that the assault was intended to be matched by uprisings elsewhere in the country which did not come off and which have been merely postponed.

UNCLASSIFIED) BATISTA VISITS MATANZAS, HONORS REGIMENT. President BATISTA visited Matanzas May 5 and bestowed the Cross of Honor on the Fourth Infantry ("Placido") Regiment, for devotion to duty, and for its valor in fighting off the assault of April 29. The President's visit coincided with the arrival in Matanzas, allegedly on a brief training exercise, of a detachment of the Mixed Tank Group, stationed in Habana. He was accompanied by a number of officials, including the Minister of Government, Santiago REY, and the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Francisco TABERNILLA. In his speech to the regiment Batista said that the Matanzas assault was not an isolated incident, and that those who had organized it were planning other assaults. He singled out the planners as the real culprits, who convinced misguided and ignorant people to attempt suicidal undertakings. It was clear that he was referring to Carlos PRIO and his associates. Batista alleged that his Government had known of the coup planned by Col. Barquin well in advance and also had prior knowledge of the Matanzas assault, leaving the clear implication that it is equally aware of plans for future attempts.

JL Topping:mbw
REPORTER

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(UNCLASSIFIED) GOVERNMENT CLAIMS JUSTO CARILLO RESPONSIBLE FOR ARMS SMUGGLING. The Government has recently discovered three small arms caches, to which it has given considerable publicity prominently featuring Brig. Gen. Rafael SALAS Caffisares, Chief of the National Police. The Government alleges that Carlos Prio and his followers have smuggled the arms into the country in connection with their revolutionary plots. Justo CARILLO, first head of the BANFAIC (Bank for Agricultural and Industrial Development) under the Prio administration, is now charged with being directly involved in arms smuggling, and a warrant for his arrest has been obtained from the Habana Urgency Court. Carillo, apparently in hiding, is still at liberty.

(UNCLASSIFIED) CRITICAL PRESS COMMENT DISAPPEARS FOLLOWING CENSORSHIP. Despite the press censorship, Habana and interior newspapers appear much the same with the exception that anti-administration columnists like José PARDO Llada and Luis CONTE Aguiro no longer are given space in Diario Nacional. Several newspapers, including the well-regarded Diario de la Marina and El Mundo, carry no editorials at all; others deal editorially only with subjects not touching on the local political situation. Bohemia magazine printed no editorial, dropped its "En Cuba" feature carried without comment the full text of the decree suspending press freedom. Bohemia carried a remarkable number of articles of scant interest to Cuban readers, probably in a subtle show of disgust over the censorship.

(UNCLASSIFIED) IAPA REPRESENTATIVE SEES BATISTA ON CENSORSHIP. Jules DUBOIS, longtime Latin American correspondent for the Chicago Tribune and chairman of the freedom of the press committee of the Inter-American Press Association, had an interview with President Batista on May 8 to express the hope of IAPA that press censorship would be lifted promptly. He afterwards quoted Batista as saying that he hoped that censorship would continue only a short while, and that he was most anxious to greet the IAPA delegates who would attend the next meeting of that organization, scheduled to be held in Habana in October. Dubois added that the President had discussed economic, political and social conditions in Cuba, on which he planned a series of articles for his paper.

(UNCLASSIFIED) GUELL MINISTER OF STATE. Gonzalo GUELL y Morales de los Rios, Undersecretary of State who has been Acting Minister for some seven months during the illness of the late Carlos SALADRIGAS, took the oath of office as Minister of State on May 2.

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) Comment. This represents the culmination of a long and increasingly distinguished career in the Cuban diplomatic service. Guell had hoped for the appointment, but had feared that he would be passed over in favor of a political figure.

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(UNCLASSIFIED) NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE VISIT.

A group of forty faculty and students of the National War College, headed by the Commandant, Vice Admiral E. T. WOOLDRIDGE, visited Habana, May 6-7. Full honors were rendered Vice Admiral Wooldridge by the Cuban army upon his arrival and departure at Campo Columbia airport. The Ambassador entertained the group that evening at a reception attended by high-ranking Cuban officers, Embassy officers, and others. The following morning the group was briefed extensively by Embassy officers in a two and three-quarter hour session. Its members expressed themselves well pleased with the Ambassador's hospitality and their briefing.

(UNCLASSIFIED) POLITICAL DISTURBANCES CAUSE BRIEF SAG IN BUSINESS ACTIVITY. Inquiries among the local business community disclose that immediately following the political disturbances during the first part of April there was a marked sag in activity in some lines, particularly in automotive vehicles and equipment. The market recovered promptly, however, and is now said to be normal.

Psychological.

(UNCLASSIFIED) NATO MEETING. The NATO meeting of Foreign Ministers and the earlier statements of Secretary Dulles concerning the broadening of NATO's strictly military base received considerable comment in the Cuban press. Most papers seemed to feel this NATO meeting was of unusual importance and that the members would be wise to broaden NATO's functions. Recognizing that this new proposed change for NATO is a result of the switch in Soviet tactics, Excelsior warned that the NATO members must not forget that the new Soviet line is only a disguise for the unchanged and unchangeable plans of Soviet imperialism. The economic battle that has commenced, this paper said, operates in favor of the Soviet Union in the sense that it can make decisions and change plans suddenly without consulting anybody, while the U.S. must not only consult other NATO members, but public opinion and Congress as well. While welcoming the U.S. change of mood in regard to widening the NATO base, Avance cautioned the Western European countries not to expect Secretary Dulles to come over with a blank check to dole out money. These countries will have to modify their attitudes and demonstrate a greater willingness to sacrifice if they expect the U.S. to sacrifice for them, Avance explained. Pointing out that there has recently been much lack of solidarity among members of the NATO pact, particularly over Crete and the French North African colonies, Información, said the proposed NATO changes are to strengthen and solidify the organization and were originally inspired by France, desperately seeking for a way to maintain a hold in North Africa. Out of this NATO meeting, said Tiempo, must come an energetic and well defined plan that will take the initiative away from the Communists, for this economic battle

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may well be the final struggle of the Cold War.

Army.

(UNCLASSIFIED) ARMY CHANGES. Recent changes in assignment of key Cuban Army officers have been officially confirmed as follows: Brig. Gen. Martin DIAZ Tamayo, presently assigned as CO of the 1st Rural Guard Regt. "MAGEO", has been relieved as Vice-President Director of the Bureau for the Repression of Communist Activities (BRAC). Colonel Aquilino GUERRA González, former CO 7th Rural Guard Regt. "GEN. CALIXTO GARCIA", designated new BRAC Director. Brig. Gen. Luis ROBAINA Piedra, former Adjutant General now designated Inspector General, relieving Brig. Gen. Martin DIAZ y Tamayo of this position. Brig. Gen. Pedro RODRIGUEZ Avila relieved as CO of the 3rd Rural Guard Regt. "LEONCIO VIDAL", and now designated as Adjutant General of the Cuban Army. Colonel José FERNANDEZ y Rey, former CO of the 6th Rural Guard Regt. "RUIS RIVERA", now designated as CO of the 3rd Rural Guard Regt. Colonel (EMS) Evelio MIRANDA y Rodriguez is now designated CO of the 6th Rural Guard Regt. Colonel (EMS) Fermin De la C. COWLEY y Gallego, replaced Col. Guerra González as CO of the 7th Rural Guard Regiment. (Col. Cowley had been assigned to replace Col. Ramón Barquin as Military Attaché in Washington, but this was cancelled two days later. His replacement in that position is not now known). Colonel Pedro A. BARRERA y Perez, assigned as CO of the 10th Inf. Regt. EMS has been relieved of this command and assigned as CO of the 1st Inf. Regt. "4th OF SEPTEMBER". Former CO of the last Inf. Reg. Col. Ignacio LEONARDY Castells has been placed on detached service with the Office of the Quartermaster General. Col. Alberto DEL RIO Chaviane moves into the position of Col. Pedro BARRERA y Pérez as CO of the 10th Inf. Regt. EMS.

Navy, Air.

Negative.

Arthur Gardner

cc: AmEmbassies, Ciudad Trujillo and Port-au-Prince.

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