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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

737.00/7-952

JUL 9 1952

FROM : AMEMBASSY, Habana

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

July 9, 1952

REF :

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SUBJECT: University Professor Accused in Alleged Plot Against Government.

A plot to overthrow the Government and assassinate President BATISTA has reportedly been uncovered by the Military Intelligence Service (SIM). Dr. Rafael GARCIA BARCENA, prominent University of Habana professor and journalist, and four others were accused of leading the conspiracy. They were arrested but later released pending trial. Garcia Bárcena denied the charges.

Dr. Garcia Bárcena, one of the founders of the Ortodoxo party and at present a leader of a so-called "revolutionary" group Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario (MNR), was arrested and held incommunicado for over 48 hours before formal charges were lodged against him. Prior to the announcement of his arrest, he was reported missing and possibly kidnapped in the Habana newspapers, the police denying categorically that he had been arrested. Members of Federación Estudiantil Universitaria (FEU) threatened a student strike and street protests unless the Government should reveal his whereabouts, acting on knowledge or rumors of his detention. Garcia Bárcena reportedly left his house in the evening to meet Dr. Roberto AGRAMONTE, vice-president of the Ortodoxos and their recent presidential candidate, but was intercepted by the police. At first the police denied knowledge of his whereabouts but they later admitted his arrest, failing to list the charges. A telegram signed by Jorge QUINTANA, dean of Colegio Provincial de Periodistas, demanded guarantees for Bárcena's life from President Batista.

Following the conspiracy announcement, Batista issued the following statement: "On my return this morning, the Chief of the Army and the Police informed me of the case. The Military Intelligence Service accused Dr. Garcia Bárcena of organizing an attempt on my life, to which end he designated three individuals to check my movements this weekend, knowing that I would spend Sunday and Monday in Cardenas and Varadero, inspecting the works of dredging and others. Agents of the SIM were able to check on the sending of these persons, I am informed."

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"We have no interest in harming Dr. García Bárcena. For him, as for all other citizens, there is in Cuba an absolute guarantee for his life. The police forces understand that from this guarantee the Chief of State himself, cannot be excluded."

"It is deplorable that his family was not notified at the proper time of the arrest; but perhaps it was due to the fact that the principal chiefs did not know the situation, to the fact that the chief of the Investigations Service was not in Habana, or probably to the zeal with which the agents carried out their investigations to check the truth or otherwise of the grave imputation against Dr. Garcia Bárcena and those who appear to have been connected with him in this criminal attempt."

"The pertinent judge or court will settle the fate of the accused, in accordance with the law, and without any interference on my part."

The others charged with conspiracy are Victoriano Raul BRACERAS, Angel BOAN ACOSTA, Jose Raul ALVAREZ GONZALEZ and Valentin LOPEZ CAMPOAMOR. The Government charged that the "conspirators" had been in contact with former Minister of State SANCHEZ ARANGO and former Minister of Labor Arturo HERNANDEZ TELLANECHÉ. The former was said to have been in Camaguey recently, and the latter to have provided funds for the "plot".

#### COMMENT

The arrest of Bárcena may indicate uneasiness and continued vigilance over the security of the Batista regime and the life of the General. At any rate, the police and military are apparently under orders to act quickly in reports of militant opposition to the Government. Or, the purpose of the Government's action in this and similar cases may be to intimidate or discredit the opposition to Batista by continued harassment and by linking opposition leaders to the discredited SANCHEZ Arango. The manner in which the University professor was arrested, and held so long incommunicado, might have been calculated to inspire fear among opposition political leaders, or could have been only an instance of high-handed police methods. Coupled with the recent ban on political broadcasts, the arrests and charges probably have damaged public belief in Batista's sincerity regarding his announced plans for bonafide elections next year. Even some of his supporters, such as Ramon VASCONCELOS and Luis ORTEGA have protested the arbitrary manner of the detentions, in editorials in Alerta and Prensa Libre, respectively. Others have commented that the immediate

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result has been that García Bárcena has been swept from relative obscurity to political prominence as a result of the publicity surrounding the incident.

For the Ambassador:

*Irvin S. Lippe*

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Attaché

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