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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : ANEMBASSY, HABANA

1216
DESP. NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

February 6, 1953
DATE

REF :

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
FEB 9 1953

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SUBJECT: New FEU Officers and FEU Program of Opposition to Batista

In elections on January 24, 1953, Joaquín PELAEZ Canellada was elected President of the FEU (Federación Estudiantil Universitaria) for 1953, to succeed Alvaro BARBA.

In addition to the President, the executive board of the FEU is composed of the Presidents of the student organizations of the 13 schools of the University. For 1953 the executive board is made up as follows.

- 1st Vice President: José HIDALGO Peraza
- 2nd Vice President: Francisco ALVAREZ
- Secretary General: Gastón DEL PINO
- Vice Secretary: Omar CASTANEDA Cifuentes ✓
- Cultural Secretary: José FERNANDEZ Beceiro
- Secretary for External Relations: Antonio RABASSA
- Press and Propaganda Secretary: Carolina COMESAÑAS
- Financial Secretary: Benigo HERNANDEZ
- Social Aid Secretary: Matías VARAS
- Organization Secretary: Germán MORE
- Sports Secretary: Danilo BAEZA
- Rural Affairs Secretary: Agustín VALERO
- Social Affairs Secretary: Armando FLEITES

Joaquín Pelaez is 22 years old and a student in the School of Architecture. He was elected President by a vote of the electoral panel (with the same composition as the executive board shown above) of seven ballots in his favor against six ballots in blank. The latter are presumed to have been cast in anticipation of defeat by the supporters of Alvaro Barba who was disappointed in his ambition to be reelected.

It is unlikely that the change in Presidents will bring any modification of the FEU program of opposition to BATISTA. According to FEU pronouncements, this program espouses the cause of no particular political party but maintains the traditional independence of the students. The FEU advocates

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the restoration of the 1940 Constitution and the 1943 Electoral Code and elections without Batista in power. It believes that the objective of "restoring liberty and democracy to Cuba" can be achieved only through the united opposition of all groups, regardless of political creed. According to the FEU's new President, such unity would be solely for the purpose of fighting Batista and would not be intended for the formation of a coalition government once successful in its aim of restoring democracy. The FEU does not reject the possibility of violent opposition to the present regime and often refers to the past resistance of university students, particularly against MACHADO. Peláez recently said that "if the regime now governing in Cuba persists in maintaining itself in power by prolonging the dictatorship or by means of rigged elections, it will have to be fought as did our predecessors in '30, '95 and '68".

The FEU advocacy of a united opposition falls in perfectly (but probably not intentionally) with the Communist strategy. The Communists have long been urging a united front of opposition to Batista. An obvious reason for doing this is that such a front would demand the restoration of the 1940 Constitution and the 1943 Electoral Code which would permit the Communist party to continue to live as a legal entity which it cannot do so long as the Batista legislation remains in force which requires a higher number of affiliations than the Communist party can get. Other reasons for the Communist enthusiasm for a united front are the greater opportunities that would be afforded for fomenting disorder and trouble to harass the regime and the greater scope the Communists would have in a unified opposition to participate independently as well as to influence and infiltrate other parties and gain other advantages for themselves.

The FEU has shown no unwillingness to cooperate with the Communists and participate in Communist-inspired activities along lines that further or appear to further the FEU campaign for increased unity of action, especially among youth organizations. This was recently shown by the participation of Peláez and Barba, among other youth leaders, in a "Martí Congress for the Rights of Youth", an activity that seemed pretty obviously Communist-inspired and as much devoted to political opposition as to youth problems.

There is nothing whatever to show that the FEU is taking any part in strictly Communist activities. It is evident, however, that it means literally what it advocates regarding "unity of opposition regardless of political creed" and is not disposed to reject Communist cooperation because it disagrees with Communist dogma.

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The Embassy has obtained no evidence to show that any of the new officers of the FEU are Communists, fellow travelers or Communist sympathizers. In fact Joaquín Peláez roused Communist ire when, after an interview with him had been published in the Communist daily Hoy, he issued a statement that "the FEU holds as its ideal in this struggle the achievement of those conquests the Cubans deserve, and denies that those foreign doctrines are capable of doing so that reject family, liberty and religion". The danger of the situation seems to be that the FEU believes that cooperation with the Communists is justified on the theory that it adds to the strength of united opposition and considers itself capable of controlling Communist maneuvering to gain through the FEU advantages not contemplated in the FEU program.

For the Ambassador:



Earl T. Crain
Acting Counselor of Embassy

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