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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMEMBASSY, HABANA

1865  
DESP. NO.

May 29, 1953  
DATE

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

REF : D-1709, May 29, 1953

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	REC'D May 30	OTHER	

SUBJECT: "Meet the Press" Television Interview of Pelayo CUERVO Navarro.

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The despatch under reference reported that ex-Senator Pelayo CUERVO Navarro, apparently a sympathizer with the Emilio OCHOA faction of the Ortodoxos, seems to be implicated in the revolt plans that Prío Auténticos and Ochoa Ortodoxos are rumored to have laid.

On the night of May 26, 1953, Cuervo appeared on the "Meet the Press" program televised over CMQ. His statements in reply to the questions of the interviewing journalists gave reason to believe that he would be entirely willing to join in revolutionary activity against the BATISTA regime. In addition, it was quite possible to believe that his interview may have been designed to rouse support among the people and the armed forces for some such revolt as that rumored to be planned by Auténtico-Ortodoxo elements.

Part of Cuervo's interview was devoted to an exposition of his views regarding the proper Ortodoxo line to follow. By now such definition of position by an Ortodoxo has become standard and almost indispensable procedure and Cuervo's interview in this respect is not particularly significant.

In another part of the interview Cuervo denounced administrative corruption in the present regime in general terms and then proceeded to details, including names, of cases in the Ministry of the Treasury that he considered proved his charges of graft and corruption. He also accused unspecified high-ranking military officers of gaining financially and, by implication, improperly from the operation of the national lottery.

What might be termed the "subversive utterances" of Cuervo during the interview can be classified as setting forth four separate points of view.

FCFomes, Jr.:ep  
REPORTER

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1. Pelayo Cuervo implied or stated no less than six times that he believed that violence would be justified in the event that a peaceful solution cannot be found for Cuba's political problems. For example, he said: "I do not believe that it is a reprehensible thing when an ethical and juridical sense directs insurrectional violence to overcome a situation." What he thought about a peaceful solution was indicated when he said: "I have always thought that the presidency of Batista or his presence at the head of the Government excludes any national solution." He also declared "You can be perfectly sure that if the possibility of a democratic solution is shut off here, then I will join in what may have to be done and in what the circumstances demand . . . I have three grown sons who I believe will accompany me in such solution and in such action . . ."

2. Cuervo insisted that there is an "attitude of rebellion" among the people which "necessarily has to find its course." He may have left himself open to charges of inciting to rebellion when he said: "As soon as there is a propitious situation, I am sure that the Cuban people will fulfill their duty, as has always happened."

3. Another theme to which Cuervo returned several times was that the Army was sensitive to the will of the people and would bow to it, knowing that the "moment is drawing near when the voice of the people is going to rule." He expressed complete certainty that the "Army does not follow the dictator Batista" since the March 10 coup was the product of "16 military traitors" and not of the Army.

4. Twice Cuervo seemed to be hinting at forthcoming events that would prevent elections from being held. Of course, he may have meant that Batista himself would cancel elections, but that does not appear to be the sense of the following statement: "I have the most complete certainty that these registered parties (under Batista's Electoral Code) are not going to the June elections because such elections are not going to be held here simply because something is going to happen in Cuba in which the will of the people is going to rule."

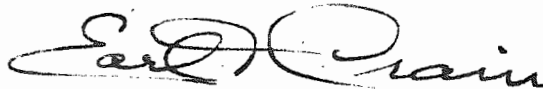
Cuervo was arrested by the SIM (Military Intelligence Service) as he left the broadcasting station following the "Meet the Press" program. He was later released and it was reported that criminal charges would be brought against him for defamation. It was reported today that he had been re-arrested upon orders of the Army General Staff, a step that may have been taken because he was apparently intending shortly to leave the country to attend the rumored Auténtico-Ortodoxo meeting in Montreal.

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The Minister of the Treasury and the Army Chief of Staff both issued statements regarding the Pelayo Cuervo statements. The former offered a public explanation of the cases cited by Cuervo as evidencing corruption. The latter challenged Cuervo to produce evidence of his allegations regarding the Army and army officers and warned that measures had already been taken and would be put into effect without hesitation to suppress any attempt to disturb the peace.

For the Ambassador:



Earl T. Crain  
Acting Counselor of Embassy

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*9/11/65*