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E.T. Long - ARA - 9/20/78
FOI 820723 Rabasa

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

F 780011-0187

DATE: July 25, 1953 DC/R
file

SUBJECT: Luncheon Conference with Ambassador Concheso

PARTICIPANTS: Ambassador Concheso, Cuban Ambassador
Mr. Wellman, MID

COPIES TO: ARA - Mr. Mann; Mr. Woodward
Embassy Habana

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DATE 7/31/00 BY 737.00/7-2553

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Ambassador Concheso requested Mr. Wellman to have lunch with him on July 25 in advance of his departure for Cuba on July 27. The Ambassador stated that he intended to spend the entire month of August in Cuba. He said that he had been invited by President Batista to accompany the Batista family to Varadero for at least part of the time. There was discussion of the following subjects, on each of which a separate memorandum is being made:

1. Revolutionary activities of Cuban exiles in the United States.
2. Political situation and possible political settlement in Cuba.
3. Communist influence in Cuba.
4. Payment of American private claims.
5. Settlement of position of foreign accountants.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

E.T. Long - ARA - 9/20/78
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Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: July 25, 1953

SUBJECT: Political Situation and Possible Political Settlement in Cuba

PARTICIPANTS: Ambassador Concheso
Mr. Wellman, MID

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Ambassador Concheso argued that the proposition of Dr. Cosme de la Torriente for a restoration of the 1940 Constitution which he admitted had considerable popular support, would be impossible legally and constitutionally. He contended that a constitution can be imposed in one of two ways, namely, (1) by a constitutional assembly elected by the sovereign people, and (2) by a coup d'etat which imposes a constitution by the authority of force. He said that while the Batista Government had the authority to destroy the Constitution of 1940 and to impose a new constitution, neither it nor the Supreme Court had the authority (the poder constituyente) to restore the 1940 Constitution.

Ambassador Concheso expressed the opinion that the Supreme Court would deny the appeal against the 1952 Constitutional Statutes after permitting Zaydin, who is arguing the appeal, to talk as long as he wished against the Batista Government.

The Ambassador referred to President Batista's plan to have partial elections in June 1954 and thereafter to have a plebiscite on the 1940 Constitution. He said that it was possible that Batista might change this plan and have at the same time both general elections and a plebiscite on the Constitution.

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The Ambassador expressed doubt that it would be feasible to establish a "neutral" provisional government to supervise the elections. He questioned whether any individual or group in Cuba is neutral. He observed that Batista has a very good record for fair supervision of elections and abiding by the result though it might be adverse to him or his party. Ambassador Concheso acknowledged that the present governmental situation is a temporary one and that Cuba must return to democratic government since the genius of the Cuban people requires it.

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Mr. Spalding
Mr. Fishburn
DCR files

E.T. Long - ARA - 9/20/78
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Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: July 25, 1953

SUBJECT: Communist Influence in Cuba

PARTICIPANTS: Ambassador Conchoso, Cuban Ambassador
Mr. Wellman, MID

COPIES TO: ARA - Mr. Mann; Mr. Woodward
Embassy Habana

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Mr. Wellman referred to the adverse publicity which the Batista Government had received in Newsweek as a result of the election of five communists to the directorate of the Tobacco Workers Federation. He told the Ambassador that the political opposition to President Batista had alleged that there are communists in the Cuban Government and that it is under communist influence. He told the Ambassador that this had provoked inquiries from members of the United States Congress, in reply to which the Department had pointed out the evidence of anti-communist attitude and activity of the Cuban Government.

The Ambassador expressed interest in the publicity in Newsweek. He commented that the sindical elections under Batista are free, whereas there was a totalitarian control of labor unions under the Auténticos.

The Ambassador said that he would explore while in Cuba the possibility of promulgation of the anti-communist law which has been under consideration. He recalled that he had obtained from the Department copies of United States legislation and expressed the opinion that it could not serve as a pattern for Cuba. He observed that it would be necessary under Cuban law to identify ("typify") the activity or affiliation and not be sufficient to stipulate that it is illegal to plot the overthrow of the government by force or violence. The Ambassador said that he had

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sent to the Cuban Government a draft project of law which he had prepared. He expressed the opinion that the law could provide that a communist could not be a member or officer of a labor union. He declared that there would be more difficulty in eliminating communists from education, particularly from teaching in the public schools. He said that while many communists in the field of education are well known, e.g. Marinello, others are not known. He also observed that an attempt to have Marinello and other communist teachers dismissed because they are communists would provoke a mixed reaction. He said that some might criticize such action as another example of the "Batista tyranny".

The Ambassador acknowledged that reports of current activity by communists in positions in the Ministries of Labor and Education should be looked into. He pointed out, however, that many Cubans who were communists or affiliated with the communists when relations were good with Russia are among the strongest anti-communists now.

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E.T. Long - ARA - 9/20/78
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Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: July 25, 1953

SUBJECT: Revolutionary Activities of Cuban Exiles in the United States

PARTICIPANTS: Ambassador Concheso
Mr. Wellman, MID

COPIES TO: ARA - Mr. Mann; Mr. Woodward
Embassy Habana

THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS NEITHER RECOMMENDATIONS NOR CONCLUSIONS OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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Ambassador Concheso said that after he had made arrangements at the suggestion of President Batista to return to Cuba on July 27, he had received a cablegram from the Minister of State, who did not know of his plans, also requesting that he return on that date. The Ambassador said that he thought the instructions from the Minister of State might be related to the seizure by the Cuban Navy in Habana during the past week of arms and munitions brought into Cuba from the United States. He said that his Naval Attaché had reported this seizure to him.

The Ambassador said that President Batista was surprised at the freedom which Prio and his associates have in the United States. He recalled that he had been unofficially in contact with the Department of State regarding the activities of the Cuban exiles subsequent to the Dallas and Fort Worth incidents and the Mamaroneck arms seizure. He was therefore aware of the action and investigations of United States law enforcement agencies.

Since the Ambassador had referred to United States obligations to enforce its neutrality laws, Mr. Wellman observed that the United States Government also must be careful not to bring legal action against a distinguished ex-President of a friendly country in the absence of clear proof of violation of United States laws. Ambassador Concheso said that he recognized this and observed that he had not been asked to make any official representations to the Department of State on this matter.

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Ambassador Conchoso expressed the conviction that Prio is supplying the funds for the purchase of arms and munitions and also for recruitment. Since the Ambassador referred to the Caribbean Legion in this connection, Mr. Wellman observed that there appears to be no evidence that any considerable group of persons has been recruited either in Mexico or in adjoining countries for an expedition against Cuba.

Ambassador Conchoso expressed the opinion that Prio was crazy (loco) in wanting to bring about a "Bogotazo" in Cuba.

Ambassador Conchoso stated that the recent visit of ex-President Arevalo to Cuba where he saw President Batista had caused concern to the Governments of Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic and Venezuela. He said that he had been with Ambassador Sevilla-Sacasa when President Somoza had phoned the Ambassador expressing concern. He said that he would find out more about the meeting of Batista and Arevalo when he went to Cuba.

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