

Air Pouch
 FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

UNCLASSIFIED
 (Security Classification)

DO NOT TYPE IN THIS SPACE

FROM: AMEMBASSY, HABANA 564
 TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.
 REF:

October 22, 1953

For Dept. Use Only	ACTION ARA-4	DEPT. 708-0	OTHER CIA-7 NAVY-3
	REC'D 4		

SUBJECT: Interview With President Batista by Mr. H. L. Matthews of New York Times

On October 17, 1953, President Batista granted an interview with Mr. H. L. Matthews of the New York Times, at which Mr. Raoul GONSÉ of El Mundo was also present. Mr. Matthews was en route to the United States after having attended the IX Conference of the Inter-American Press Association at Mexico City. It is understood that a partial report of the interview was published in the New York Times for October 17 and that other reports will follow. El Mundo for October 18, 1953, carried Gonsé's version of the President's statements during the interview and a copy of his report is enclosed. It contains significant declarations by Batista regarding censorship, the Public Order Law, and the date and kind of elections.

With reference to censorship of information media, Gonsé quoted the President as saying that "censorship is as disagreeable to me as to anyone who believes in the democratic system of government". Attributing to Batista the belief that censorship is justified only when national security is threatened, Gonsé also quoted him as follows: "I would like to make it very clear that the restrictions imposed on the Cuban press are temporary and that at no time has my government ever thought of establishing censorship as a permanent measure". The President avoided a direct answer when pressed regarding the automatic cessation of censorship if and when Article 33 of the Constitutional Statute returns to force with the expiration of the period of suspension of constitutional guarantees. According to Gonsé, "he pointed out that we are lawyers and know the laws well".

The interviewing reporters inquired regarding the Public Order Law. Gonsé said that Batista told them that "the so-called Public Order Law is an emergency effort to fill existing gaps which permitted violators of the (Social Defense) Code to avoid punishment for their crimes" and that "it is not a perfect law and will have to be modified".

FCFornes, Jr. :ep
 REPORTER

UNCLASSIFIED

ACTION COPY — DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The action office must return this permanent record copy to DC/R files with an endorsement of action taken.

937.61/10-2253

UWC

UNCLASSIFIED
(Classification)

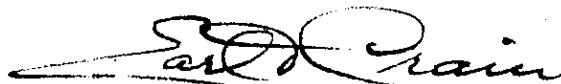
Gonsé said that, in reply to a question by Matthews regarding the date and kind of elections, "President Batista explained to him the new date set for November first of next year and his opinion favorable to general elections."

Regarding Communism in Cuba, Batista was quoted as saying that "with union liberty in this country, when some member of that party infiltrates the leadership of some union, we are accused, and when there is no infiltration or when we oppose Communism openly, as we have done, we are criticized. It's a question of 'damned if you do, and damned if you don't'".

According to Gonsé, Batista also declared that "those who are under arrest in Cuba are not so for being Communists or for having ideas but because they commit some punishable act."

In his column in Alerta for October 19, Ramón VASCONCELOS again set forth the Government's claim that opposition resulting in armed violence forced it to impose censorship, promulgate the Public Order Law and postpone elections. He declared that the information obtained by Matthews in the interview came from a "good source" and bore the "seal of official responsibility". He added that Communists are "much less active and dangerous in Cuba than in the United States" where secret material is still being "obtained, revealed and sold to the Soviets". A copy of Vasconcelos' article is enclosed.

For the Ambassador:



Earl T. Crain
Acting Counselor of Embassy

Enclosures ✓ (17)

Newspaper clippings - 2

UNCLASSIFIED