



PLAZA 9-2700

JOHN DAVID GRIFFIN
PUBLIC RELATIONS CONSULTANT

21 June 1954

TO MVD
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MID: ARW

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Enclosed you will find an article by Dr. Carlos Prio Socarras which appeared on the editorial page of the Hearst newspapers on June 2nd. I am also enclosing a copy of the editorial page of yesterday's New York Journal-American which concerns itself with the current situation in the Caribbean area. This also appeared in the rest of the Hearst newspapers.

As you probably know, Dr. Prio is recognized as the foremost anti-Communist leader in Latin-America today. Upon the forceful overthrow of his Government by Dictator Batista, who has been associated with the Communists since 1938, Dr. Prio sought refuge in this country.

Shortly after he arrived here, Dr. Prio was indicted by the United States Government on a charge of "conspiring" to ship arms to Cuba for the purpose of overthrowing the Batista Government. A State Department spokesman, at the time of Dr. Prio's arrest, said that the reason for the indictment was to prevent bloodshed in Cuba.

Because Batista has been spilling blood ever since his anti-democratic grab of power in 1952, and since he has been furnished with American weapons to maintain himself in power, this statement - and, indeed, our whole policy regarding the establishment of a brutal police-state in Cuba - has provoked a bitter reaction not only in Cuba, but throughout Latin-America.

May I respectfully suggest that our apparent indifference to the excesses of the Batista dictatorship, and our harrassment and persecution of Cuba's freely-elected, anti-Communist President, are not serving the prestige of the United States in Latin-America, and are playing into the hands of Batista's Communist allies?

It seems rather strange to me, Mr. Secretary, that our Government would openly intervene in Cuban affairs, and it seems even stranger that the Government would support a Dictatorship headed by a pro-Communist and at the same time arrest a man who was freely elected to the Presidency by the Cuban people, and who is a known anti-Communist.

I would certainly appreciate your views on this matter.

It is my duty, Mr. Secretary, to mention at this time to you that I am a registered agent of Dr. Prio's and have been since late in January of this year.

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Looking forward to seeing you and with every best wish,
I am

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John David Griffin". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

JOHN DAVID GRIFFIN

JDG/jc
Enclosures

The Honorable Walter B. Smith
Under Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D. C.

THE RED threat in Latin-America finds some U. S. neighbors alarmed, some apathetic, some even sympathetic to Communist cause. Yesterday Hearst Newspapers correspondents reported these findings:

Mexico

Soviet embassy here is Latin-American GHQ for Moscow. Mexican officials either maintaining strict silence regarding Red infiltration in Guatemala or they pass the buck.

Reliable sources say privately, however, that Mexico never will agree to any sort of collective action against Guatemala.

Openly, Mexico has accepted explanation that Iron Curtain arms shipment—despite its size for such a small country—was needed to maintain internal security.

Rank and file vociferous in charging that U. S. is blowing up Communist issue in Guatemala as smoke screen to protect United Fruit Company's interests. This strikes responsive chord among Mexicans, remembering their own fight with U. S. and British oil companies when Mexico nationalized petroleum industry in 1938.

Cuba

Threat of Communism here raging since 1938, when the then (and now) dictator Fulgencio Batista directed legalization of Communist party, delivered Cuban labor unions into hands of Communist organizer, Lazaro Pena.

Only last March 11, Batista declared Communism "eradicated" from Cuba. Yet, on March 25, Pena was given passport to Moscow for "fresh instructions" from Křemlin—his sixth trip in 20 months. Havana dispatch said he was to learn "new party line on so-called aid to Guatemala."

Dr. Carlos Prio Socarras, exiled Cuban president elected in 1948 on strictly anti-Communist platform, has repeatedly stated that Batista is strongest and most reliable fellow traveler in this hemisphere, points to his nomination on Communist ticket in 1940. (See facsimile at right →).

Honduras

This next-door neighbor to Red-dominated Guatemala is living in deadly fear. Heightening dread is recent election, which showed surprisingly strong leftist trend, inspired by Guatemalan agents.

Honduras army only 2,500, compared to estimated Guatemalan force of 6,000 men. U. S. arms shipped here come nowhere near matching Red munitions sent to Guatemala.

Government leaders hesitant to make tense situation more critical by assailing Guatemala. They go along with Washington however, by considering Guatemalan situation threat to Panama Canal.

Honduras is exile soil where many Guatemalans, fleeing wave of terror, found sanctuary and plotted revolt. These include Carlos Castillo Armas, former Guatemalan army chief who has emerged as leader of anti-Communist forces.

Nicaragua

Probably the staunchest U. S. neighbor below the border. When Washington put on pressure, Nicaragua promptly broke off relations with Guatemala.

Blame for recent assassination attempt on life of President Somoza, pop-

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He adds, however,
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Dear Mr. Griffin:

The receipt is acknowledged of your letter of June 21, 1954, to the Under Secretary of State, commenting upon the indictment of Dr. Carlos Prío Socarras, ex-president of Cuba, and upon the policies of the United States toward Cuba. Thank you for enclosing a copy of an article by Dr. Prío which appeared on the editorial page of the Hearst Newspapers on June 2, together with a copy of the editorial page of the New York Journal-American of June 20.

As you know, Dr. Carlos Prío Socarras, former President of Cuba, was indicted on December 4, 1953, along with several other Cuban nationals and American citizens, on a charge of conspiracy to export arms illegally from this country. A superseding indictment adding other persons and alleging further violations was issued on June 1, 1954. The Department of State had arranged in November 1952 for Dr. Prío to be advised informally that indications had been received that he or his associates were engaged in activities which might be in violation of United States laws and international agreements, and that the consequences of continuing such activities might be arrest and prosecution.

United States arms export controls are considered to implement the obligations of the United States under the Convention on Duties and Rights of States in the Event of Civil Strife signed at Habana in 1928, to which the United States, Cuba and fifteen other American Republics are parties. The action taken by the United States in enforcement of its laws and in recognition of its international obligations had no connection with the internal political situation in Cuba, which is exclusively a Cuban concern. The report that a State Department spokesman said at the time of Dr. Prío's arrest, that the reason for the indictment was to prevent bloodshed in Cuba is untrue.

The

Mr. John David Griffin,
Public Relations Consultant,
125 East 50th Street,
New York 22, New York.

Stamp: [Illegible]

The United States Government has maintained diplomatic relations with the Government of Cuba since the recognition on March 27 of the regime which came to power by the military coup of March 10. This regime which was in control of the territory and organs of government of Cuba gave assurances of its capacity and willingness to honor its international obligations to the United States, including those under the bilateral military assistance agreement dated March 7, 1952, between the United States and Cuba.

The Department of State cannot become involved in the allegations by one group of Cubans against another with reference to the internal political situation in Cuba. The United States has, however, a legitimate interest in any evidence of communist penetration in this hemisphere. On the basis of the information available it is believed the present government of Cuba, like the previous Cuban government of Dr. Prío, is anti-communist and is interested in eliminating from Cuba the interventionist activities of international communism.

You refer to your registration under the Foreign Agents Registration Act as an agent of Dr. Prío. Copies of your letter and of the Department's reply are accordingly being sent to the Department of Justice.

Sincerely yours,

For the Secretary of State:

Charles K. Burrows
Director
Office of Middle American Affairs

cc: Dept. of Justice
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