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March 20, 1953

REF : *[Signature]* Date of Action 3-23-53

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SUBJECT: Joint Weeka No. 12 for State, Army, Navy and Air Departments from SANA

Part I

Political

(RESTRICTED) Federico FERNANDEZ Casas, ex-Senator and wealthy Ortodoxo leader of Oriente Province, registered the Partido del Pueblo Cubano (Ortodoxo) under the provisions of the 1952 Electoral Code, as amended. Fernández Casas is not one of the outstanding Ortodoxo leaders, except possibly in his own Province, and it seems unlikely that he and his equally second-rank collaborators can muster a very significant popular following or succeed in actually organizing the party with the number of affiliations demanded by the Code.

The Emilio OCHOA faction of the old Ortodoxo party immediately expelled the Fernández Casas group. The Roberto AGRAMONTE faction has thus far confined itself to condemning the "lack of discipline" and reportedly is divided as to whether to support Fernández Casas or punish him drastically. As far as is known Agramonte has not yet committed himself.

It is possible that the registration of the Ortodoxo party will provide a means whereby substantial Ortodoxo elements, principally from the Agramonte side, may participate in the elections now scheduled for June 1954. On the other hand, it is also possible that Fernández Casas' action may result in creating a third group at odds with the two into which the weakened Ortodoxos are already split.

(UNCLASSIFIED) The Government was severely criticized by the press, the radio and probably a good segment of the public for suspending four political commentators, including José PARDO Llada, from the air for from five to 15 days. The action of the Minister of Communications brought a sharp protest from the national newspapermen's organization as a violation of freedom of the press and radio. This protest was

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later endorsed by the association of broadcasters. Pardo Llada's original five-day suspension was trebled because of the broadcast during his regular time of a blistering letter attacking the Government's action. The Minister of Communications said that Pardo Llada had to be silenced "to maintain a climate of order and respect in the activities of certain commercial radio stations".

(RESTRICTED) Emilio Ochoa and José Pardo Llada underwent another in the series of arrests they have been subjected to in the last six months. This time they were detained in Santiago de Cuba and taken to Holguin, Ochoa's home town, apparently in connection with the seizure of a machine gun which allegedly had been sent from Habana to Holguin. The two were fairly promptly released by the local Urgency Court. It seems clear that the police are particularly sensitive to the doings of Ochoa and Pardo Llada. This may indicate that the Government considers their faction of the Ortodoxos the most dangerous one.

(RESTRICTED) Ramón GRAU San Martín appeared on the popular "Meet the Press" television show which had been recently renewed after being off the air since the end of last September. The ex-President was in good form and put on a display of verbal and mental agility that baffled his interrogators. His most important statement was to the effect that he would not participate in the elections announced for 1954 if they did not include a presidential election, which as at present planned they do not.

(UNCLASSIFIED) The situation created by the March 10 student disorders and their aftermath (see Weeka No. 11) has returned to normal. The student strike ended with the provisional release of those who had been arrested. Later the Urgency Court acquitted, apparently for lack of evidence, most of the students charged with creating disorders, and the prospect is that the rest who are still to be heard by the Court will be similarly treated.

(UNCLASSIFIED) The Second Session of the Committee on Work on Plantations of the International Labor Organization, which opened in Habana on March 16, continued its meetings which are scheduled to last until March 28.

(UNCLASSIFIED) A Japanese Trade Delegation, in Habana since March 11, has concluded its conversations and is preparing to depart. The Japanese are reported to have said they were not here to buy sugar at this time but to discuss

with the Ministry of State the relaxing of tariffs on certain Japanese goods in order to compensate somewhat for the several hundred thousand tons of sugar they have been purchasing annually. The recent sale of 27,000 tons of sugar to Japan at 3.27 cents per pound F.O.B. Cuba reportedly had no connection with the current visit of the Japanese.

Psychological

(CONFIDENTIAL) The offices of La Ultima Hora, the Communist weekly magazine, were raided by Government agents. Apparently the place was pretty well wrecked and considerable material carried away. It is reported that the Communist party will endeavor to exploit this raid, together with the suspension of the radio commentator programs, as proof of the Government's plans for a general suppression of all civil liberties and an attack on all opposition groups that reject any cooperation with the regime, especially the Communists, the "spearhead of the fight for a return of the democratic rights of the people".

(CONFIDENTIAL) It was reported that at an informal gathering of the Cabinet at the country home of the Minister of the Interior, a principal topic of discussion was the proposed anti-Communist legislation (see Weeka No. 9). It appears that an original draft decree had been considered "too strong" but that a modified version may now be ready for consideration by the Council of Ministers. Such "toning down" would follow conservative opinion which has approved the idea of legal means of controlling Commie activity but has warned against the possibility of such a legitimate objective being exceeded.

The Communists continue to proclaim on every conceivable occasion that anti-Communist legislation is designed also to suppress any and all activities to which "it might suit the Government to attach a Communist label".

Army, Navy

Negative.

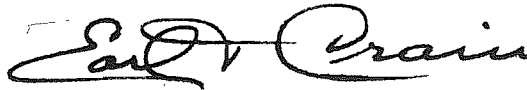
Air

(RESTRICTED) Major General Roger RAMEY and Major General Robert WALSH, U. S. Air Force, were awarded the Cuban Order of Military Merit, First Class, with white insignia, on March 16, 1953, by Major General TABERNILLA,

Chief of Staff of the Cuban Army at Ciudad Militar in Habana. After the presentation they were invited to the Palace where they were received by the President.

COMMENT: The presentation of the awards indicates the Cuban Army's desire to continue its close cooperation with the U. S. Armed Forces. Generals Ramey and Walsh were instrumental in establishing the USAF Mission to Cuba and in negotiation of the Military Aid Agreement with Cuba.

For the Chargé d'Affaires, a.i.:



Earl T. Crain
Acting Counselor of Embassy

Participants:

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