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737.00 (W)/3-1452

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMEMBASSY, Habana Action Assigned to 1501

March 14, 1952

DESP. NO.

DATE

MAR 14 1952

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

Air Priority

PRIORITY

REF :

24

For Dept.

Use Only

SUBJECT: Weeka No. 11 for State, Army, Navy and Air Departments
From SANA

Action Office Symbol (AD)

F78-01-0783

Name of SECTION I

DECLASSIFICATION DATE 11/28/96

PER H Ryan

OFFICE ARA

POLITICAL

FADRC FOI CASE NO. 5-6584

The Government of Carlos PRIO Socarras was overthrown in the early morning hours of March 10 by the ex-President of Cuba, General Fulgencio BATISTA, in an almost bloodless 1/ military coup. Junior and retired officers in military installations took over command almost simultaneously. With the exception of one battalion (technically a regiment), the status of which was for a time uncertain, all military forces in the Habana area went over to Batista immediately. Before the evening of March 10 the military transition was complete and all military organizations throughout the Island had declared their allegiance to Batista. No fighting took place. Military commanders either surrendered peaceably or were restrained from resisting. Since then wholesale changes have been made in the command of the Armed Forces. The junior officers responsible for the coup have been promoted. The ranks were informed on March 10 that the pay of enlisted men had been raised to a minimum of \$100 a month, that of policemen to \$150 a month. This measure went far to assure the continued support of the military.

President Prio failed in an attempt to convene the Congress early Monday morning and finally issued a statement calling on the people to resist (although he reportedly told his Palace guards not to resist). Although the statement was later published by the press, it was not broadcast due to the fact that Batista's men had occupied all broadcasting stations, as well as all other communication centers. Batista's men occupied the CTC labor headquarters, the Capitolio, the City Hall (Habana's Mayor CASTELLANOS, the only Mayor removed from office, has been replaced by Justo Luis DEL POZO) and were soon in complete control of Habana. President Prio left the Palace at 8 a.m. March 10 and was lost sight of for a time but was later found to have obtained asylum at the Mexican Embassy, along with his Ministers of State, Defense and Interior, and other personalities. Batista evidently made no attempt to detain him.

1/ Two policemen were killed.

ETCrain:ep

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President Prío with his family and several other officials of his Government, including his Minister of Interior, Segundo CURTI, and his Minister of State, Aureliano SANCHEZ ARANGO, departed in a Mexican commercial plane for Mexico on the morning of March 13. Other ex-Cabinet Ministers are now in the United States. Some are still in Cuba. Ex-President of Venezuela, Romulo GALLEGOS, after having obtained asylum at the Guatemalan Embassy, departed later for Mexico. Romulo BETANCOURT went to the United States en route to Costa Rica. Juan BOSCH reached the Guatemalan Embassy and presumably is still there.

Leaders of the political parties allied with the Auténticos have initiated conversations which they hope will lead Batista to return Congress to normal functions and pave the way for prompt return to Constitutional Government. The plan involves the resignation of President Prío, Vice-President ALONSO PUJOL, and the President of the Senate, and election as President of the Senate of a Senator satisfactory to Batista. The new President of the Senate would become Provisional President of the Republic. However, President Prío did not resign before leaving Cuba for Mexico. Vice-President Alonso Pujol, on the other hand, has stated that he will leave his resignation with the Congress when he departs from Habana for Miami on March 16.

At 6 p.m. on March 10 Batista addressed the nation in a radio broadcast from Camp Columbia. He stated he had seized power because the Cuban people could not tolerate further gangsterism and graft and because he had learned that Prío, having lost faith in the ability of his candidate (HEVIA) to win the June 1 elections, had planned to cancel them on April 15, perpetuating himself in power. Batista said he wished to establish a regime based on order, progress, law and justice; that it would remain in power only for the time necessary to achieve those objectives, and that immediately thereafter elections would be called. Batista stated that the revolutionary movement would comply fully with all obligations contracted with the United Nations and that it would fulfill all conventions, pacts, commitments and treaties of an international character.

The Official Gazette of March 10 published a Proclamation to the people of Cuba signed by Batista in his new capacity as Prime Minister, stating the Revolutionary Junta (the group of young officers who carried out the coup) had decided he should assume office as Chief of State, organize and direct the Executive and Legislative Powers, discharging, with the advice of the Council of Ministers, all the powers and functions of these two branches of government. Batista's Proclamation

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said he accepted this mandate, assuming the office of Chief of State and declaring vacant all the positions exercised by the former Executive Power.

The Proclamation stated (1) the functions of Congress were suspended but its members would continue to receive their legal emoluments until some other decision were reached in accordance with the circumstances. In the meantime the legislative power is to be exercised through ("por") the Council of Ministers. (2) The courts continue in their functions with the total support of the Government. (3) The Law of Public Order (suspending Constitutional guarantees) is invoked and the right to strike is suspended for 45 days. (4) Public works under construction as a result of public bids shall be continued. (5) The Government will comply with all conventions and international agreements, bilateral as well as multilateral, or emanating from decisions of the United Nations, as well as all domestic commitments as long as the one or the other is in accord with the Constitution or emanate from the laws. (This same language is used in the note to the Embassy announcing the new Government.) (6) The Constitution and laws remain in effect as long as they do not conflict with the regime now established and subject to the modifications which the public needs require and are agreed upon by the Council of Ministers.

The Capitolio (legislative building) remains closed and Congressional immunity has been suspended.

Much is being made of the impending arrival tomorrow of Senator Miguel SUAREZ Fernandez, ex-President of the Senate, from self-imposed exile in Europe. After his break with Prió, Suarez tried hard to form an opposition electoral alliance with Batista. It is not impossible he may now offer significant co-operation in the consolidation of the new regime.

Immediately after the coup became known the CTC under MUJAL attempted to bring about a general strike. However, Batista's men occupied the CTC headquarters and the general strike failed completely. Under Batista's prodding, labor throughout the Island is on the job.

While the long-term effects of the coup remain to be seen, the fact remains that Cuba has been set back many years in its development of constitutional processes. The June 1 elections have been cancelled and it is not known at this time when elections may be held--presumably not until Batista feels conditions are favorable to his plans.

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The Dominican Republic was the first to recognize the Batista regime. Since then Venezuela and Nicaragua have recognized it.

ARMY

Following is the list of new Army key assignments:

Chief of Staff: Major General Francisco TABERNILLA y Dolz
(formerly retired)

Inspector General: Brigadier General Martin DIAZ y Tamayo
(formerly Captain)

Adjutant General: Brigadier General Eulogio A. CANTILLO
y Porras (formerly Colonel and Chief
of Air Force)

Quartermaster General: Brigadier General Luis ROBAINA y
Piedras (formerly Captain)

Chief, Regiment No. 1: Colonel Alberto R. del RIO y Chaviano
(formerly Captain)

Chief, Regiment No. 2: Colonel Aquilino GUERRA y Gonzalez
(formerly retired Major and one-time
Army Liaison Officer)

Chief, Regiment No. 3: Colonel Pedro A. RODRIGUEZ y Avila
(formerly 1st Lt.)

Chief, Regiment No. 4: Colonel Ramon E. CRUZ y Vidal
(former status unknown)

Chief, Regiment No. 5: Colonel Damaso SOGO y Hernandez
(formerly Captain)

Chief, Regiment No. 6: Colonel Jorge GARCIA y Tunon
(formerly Captain)

Chief, Regiment No. 7: Colonel Juan ROJAS y Gonzalez
(formerly Captain)

Chief, Regiment No. 8: Colonel Jose FERNANDEZ y Rey
(no change in command here)

Chief, Regiment No. 9: Colonel Leopoldo PEREZ y Coujil
(formerly 1st Lt.)

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Chief, Regiment No. 10: Not yet appointed.

Chief, SIM: Major Fernando CRUZ y Vidal
(former status unknown)

Chief of National Police: Colonel Rafael SALAS y Canizares
(formerly 2nd Lt.)

NAVY

The rebellion in the Cuban Navy was carried out by a retired Navy Commander Rodriguez CALDERON who has become new Navy Chief. He was assisted by three junior lieutenants, one of whom had been discharged from the Navy in 1944 for misappropriation of funds. These latter three have now been promoted to Captain's rank and have assumed charge of the three main departments. The Chief of Direction Department is Pedro de la CONCEPCION; of the Inspection Department, Juan CASANOVA Roque; and of the Administration Department (including Fiscal Accounts), Arias Echevarria, the lieutenant involved in the 1944 theft of Navy funds. These four individuals, assisted by seven other men, captured Naval Headquarters in the early hours of March 10. They then sent out messages to all Naval posts telling of the fait accompli and ordering all hands to follow orders issued by the new Commander-in-Chief. The naval phase of revolt was over in five hours. Almost all senior officers have been discharged without pensions. Nepotism is beginning to show up in the wholesale promotions now being pushed through by executive decree. The Batista group in the Navy appears most anxious to resume normal relations with the U.S. Naval Mission and Naval Attache; however, only minimum informal liaison is being maintained.

COMMENT: The loss of the majority of senior officers, coupled with the feeling of discouragement among the remaining old-time officer corps at the drastic change in the top command, will undoubtedly result in a serious set-back to Naval operations and training. Further, Batista has abrogated all executive and legislative powers to himself, and hence will influence decidedly the future course of the Cuban Navy.

AIR

Within three hours after General Batista took over the Government of Cuba on March 10, 1952, he advised the Chief of the USAF Mission that the Bilateral Military Assistance Agreement which was signed March 7, 1952 by the Prío Government would be recognized by the new Batista Government.

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Batista made a specific point of advising the Air Mission Chief of this almost immediately after taking over.

Brigadier General Eulogio CANTILLO, new Adjutant General of the Army, who formerly was Chief of the Army Air Corps, has presented a revised edition of the new Army Air Force Organization (see Weeka No. 4, Jan. 25, 1952) to General Batista for approval. This revised organization plan increases the size and strength of the squadrons by approximately one-fourth by providing for four flights per squadron instead of three as originally proposed. General Cantillo expects the new organization to be approved in a very short time.

Colonel Manuel Larrubia, a retired Army Major, has been designated as Chief of the Army Air Corps. Colonel Larrubia is not rated pilot. Major Pablo ALONSO, oldest rated pilot in the Army Air Corps, continues in his previous assignment as deputy Chief of the Army Air Corps. Within the Air Corps, the only promotions so far were four second lieutenants who were promoted to Captain. Each of these officers have completed more than seven years service and there has been no apparent reduction in the morale of the other lieutenants who were not promoted.

COMMENT: The promotion of Colonel Cantillo from Chief of the Army Air Corps to Adjutant General of the army will undoubtedly improve the position of the Air Corps relative to the other combat units of the Army. As Chief of the Air Corps, Colonel Cantillo worked diligently to improve the effectiveness of the Air Corps and as Adjutant General he is in a position to carry out his previous plans. Although he is not a pilot he is very air-minded and learned much about air operations while he was associated with the Air Corps. General Batista's personal interest in the Bilateral Agreement was expressed prior to General Cantillo's acceptance of his new position and does not appear to have been due to General Cantillo's influence.

For the Ambassador:

Earl T. Crain

Earl T. Crain
First Secretary of Embassy

Participants:

DGClark, ETCrain, REGomez,
EMTerrell, Ryan (NA),
Elmore (MA), Mason (AA)

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FROM : AMEMBASSY, HABANA

Action Assigned to 1500

March 14, 1952

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

Action Taken

AIR PRIORITY

MAR 14 1952

REF : F780011-0382

SUBJECT: Weeka No. 11 For State, Army, Navy, and Air Departments
From SANA

Date of Action 3-17-52

Action Office SANA

Name of Office SECTION II

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ECONOMIC

The sudden impact of the Batista revolution upon the commercial community was by no means as serious as was first feared and as the week progressed a rising tide of confident expectation has been reflected from all areas of the country. On Monday afternoon a general strike order, issued by the Executive Committee of the Cuban Confederation of Labor, resulted in minor difficulties. Some textile and pharmaceutical workers left their jobs, a limited number of dock workers refused to report, aviation workers at Rancho Boyeros went out, suspending most commercial flying, and there was minor trouble on the railways. There also were several very short-lived strikes at sugar mills. Fortunately, by Tuesday morning the CTC, which had called the general strike in support of the Prfo Government and in opposition to the Batista coup, had thought better of its position and all workers were back on their jobs. During the rest of the week there has been no reported labor trouble of any kind.

While business in general took expedient precautions on the first day of the revolution with many establishments being closed, by the following day practically all were again open. The commercial banks remained closed on Tuesday but by Wednesday had also resumed business. This somewhat longer period of closure by the banks may have been influenced by the uncertainty surrounding the National Bank of Cuba and the new Agricultural and Industrial Development Bank. Both of these federal institutions have now reopened but their respective Presidents, Felipe PAZOS of the National Bank and Justo CARRILLO of the Bank of Development, have resigned as have several of their principal assistants. It has been announced that Rufo LOPEZ FRESQUET, previously Vice President of the Development Bank, has now taken over that organization as well as the National Bank as temporary President.

The latter part of the week has witnessed a procession of delegations to the Presidential Palace and to the various Ministries to register support for the new administration. On Thursday General Batista received in rapid succession representatives from the National Association of Cane Planters (who had previously called upon the Minister of Agriculture), the Habana Stock Exchange, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the Habana Clearing House. It is understood that the representatives from the Produce Exchange and the

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F780011-0383

Chamber of Commerce of Cuba will call on Batista early next week. Typical of the statements made by these delegations was that of Jose Ignacio de la CAMARA, the President of the Habana Clearing House, who assured Batista that, "We are working normally and we come to offer you our respects and to say that we will continue to work, as always, for the good of the country and for the national economy." The National Association of Sugar Mill Owners has called upon the Minister of Agriculture registering its support of the new government. A delegation of public works contractors called upon the Undersecretary of Public Works and was assured that all projects started or planned by the Prfo administration would be continued and completed.

Probably the principal reason for the collapse of labor opposition to the revolution was the new government's prohibition against strikes for a period of 45 days. The new Labor Minister, Jesus PORTOCARRERO, upon taking office, lost no time in placing himself at the disposal of the labor leaders and in indicating that labor benefits achieved during the past several years will be recognized and protected so long as these have a proper legal basis. It is reported that Eusebio MUJAL, the Secretary-General of the Cuban Confederation of Labor, does not enjoy the confidence of the new government and that his days of influence are probably numbered. Nonetheless, the Executive Committee of the Confederation of Labor is still functioning, has consulted at length with the Labor Minister, and it is understood that it will shortly also consult with Prime Minister BATISTA. There are reports that the new administration would look kindly upon a labor congress to elect a new Executive Committee for the CTC and if this development should occur it is likely that a number of labor leaders who have previously identified themselves with the Batista Party, the PAU, will appear on the Committee for the first time.

The first meeting of the new Council of Ministers was held on the afternoon of Wednesday, March 12. Among the new Ministers appointed were: Alfredo JACOMINO, Minister of Agriculture; Jose MENDIGUTIA, Minister of Public Works; Jesus PORTOCARRERO, Minister of Labor; Marino LOPEZ Blanco, Minister of Finance; Oscar de la TORRE, Minister of Commerce; and Pablo CARRERA Justiz, Minister of Communications. A non-Cabinet but nevertheless influential appointment, that of President of the National Development Commission, went to Amadeo LOPEZ Castro, an old and trusted friend of Batista. At its first meeting the Council of Ministers discussed a number of urgent problems such as the water supply for the larger Cuban cities, the need for low-cost housing, and the improvement and widening of the National Highway. The Council also came up with a plan for the solution of the Habana meat scarcity through the utilization of the credit of 500,000 pesos approved by the Prfo administration (see Weeka No. 9), which will be used to make subsidy payments to cattle producers, to encourage the sale of beef animals for public supply. This plan presumes a subsidy ranging from 10 to 15 pesos per animal, has the agreement of the Cattle Producers Association, and

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has the virtue of not increasing the retail price of beef in the city, where such an increase would be strenuously resisted by most of the population. It is hoped that this decision will restore normal supplies of beef for Habana within the very near future.

The all-important sugar industry has taken the Batista revolution in its stride and apparently there has been no recession in the heavy volume of milling and production of the raw product. While the international market picture has not improved to any extent, the price situation has taken an upturn due in part, according to reports, to a demand from U. S. refiners to replenish low stocks. It is also reported locally that there has been heavy buying of sugar futures (Contract 6) by private capital searching for a comparatively short-term investment of a six months' period. It appears that due to the influence of this private capital a much more bullish atmosphere has developed, prices have firmed, and those holding a short position for May and June delivery have been forced into the market to cover at the higher prices. This is, of course, largely a temporary situation which does not influence the probability that Cuba's 1952 bumper crop may still be confronted with distribution difficulties in the international market later in the year.

The Belgian trade mission arrived in Cuba from Mexico on schedule, that is, March 9, but it is reported that as a result of the developments of the week the mission members have accomplished nothing. There are indications that it may proceed on its itinerary to other Latin-American countries and return to Cuba at a later date.

For the Ambassador:

Wayne G. Clark
Wayne G. Clark
Counselor of Embassy

Participants:

DGClark, ETCrain, REGomez, EMTerrell
Ryan (NA), Elmore (MA), Mason (AA)

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Port-au-Prince

Mr. Wellman

MA (4) for USARCIB and USARFANT
AA (1)
NA (2) for Guantanamo

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