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## FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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FROM : AMEMBASSY, HABANA *AUG 18 1954* 189  
 TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

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August 18, 1954

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For Dept. Use Only	ACTION	DEPT.
	REC'D 8/19	IN OC/R-2 ARA-2 F ARMY-35 NAVY-39 AIR-24 CIA-15 OSD-4 OCB-1

SUBJECT: Joint Weeka No. 33 for State, Army, Navy and Air  
 Departments from SANA.

Part I

Political

(UNCLASSIFIED) MORALES DEL CASTILLO ASSUMES PRESIDENCY DURING BATISTA'S ELECTORAL LEAVE. On the afternoon of August 14 Andrés DOMINGO Morales del Castillo took the oath of President to serve while President BATISTA is on electoral leave. Whether he will serve till just after the November 1 elections until the new presidential term, if Batista is elected, was not announced. In an allocution to the people Morales del Castillo has promised freedom of the ballot and that he will turn the presidency over to the people's choice.

(LIMITED OFFICIAL USE) Comment. As Secretary of the Presidency and of the Council of Ministers, Morales del Castillo has been one of Batista's closest collaborators. He is expected to carry out Batista's policies and remain under his instructions, beyond having been chosen by Batista as substitute President because of his utter reliability.

(UNCLASSIFIED) CABINET CHANGES. Just before leaving office on electoral leave President Batista made a few changes in the cabinet (Weeka No. 32). Ramón O. HERMIDA, who had resigned "irrevocably" two weeks before in an intra-governmental squabble, became Minister of Interior again. After holding the portfolio of Labor for a week Ricardo EGUILIOR became Minister of Communications. He was succeeded as Minister of Labor by Ambassador NÚÑEZ Portuondo, Cuba's Permanent Delegate to the United Nations. Ernesto DE LA FE was reappointed Minister without Portfolio. President Morales del Castillo announced he would retain this cabinet.

(UNCLASSIFIED) BATISTA OPENS CAMPAIGN. Shortly after taking electoral leave President Batista was acclaimed candidate by the four coalition parties at a great political rally in the parks in

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front of the palace, thus opening his campaign. A few hours earlier he and Rafael GUAS Inclan, President of the Liberal Party, had been formally inscribed as Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates before the Supreme Electoral Tribunal by the coalition.

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) GRAU ON THE RADIO. Appearing on the Ante la Prensa program Grau once again laid it down as an essential to the elections that the voting cédulas (carnets) collected by the Government forces should be returned and that the votes should be counted immediately upon the closing of the polls. Questioned about the fitness of Castellanos for Mayor of Habana, Grau reacted somewhat sheepishly and in effect confirmed the Embassy's impression that Castellanos will be on the ballot because of the psychological effect on the voters of the candidacy of the mayor who was turned out by the March 10, 1952 coup. Grau was also thrown off stride by the panel's probings as to whether the kidnapping of NIBOT and the subsequent shooting of two police as a result of a squabble among Auténticos were not reminiscent of conditions that were associated with his period in office.

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) Comment. As anticipated in Weeka No. 32 the Nibet affair has had the effect of arousing considerable critical recollection of the prevalence of gangsterism during Grau's term of office. In the opinion of some observers the affair has definitely had a bad effect on Grau's electoral chances.

(UNCLASSIFIED) ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL SPEEDS UP ISSUANCE OF VOTING CARNETS. Acceding to a petition by Grau, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal issued instructions to all the municipal electoral offices to increase the number of employees (previously limited to two) employed in issuing duplicate electoral carnets, so that all voters might have theirs in time for the elections.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Comment. Grau has repeatedly affirmed that the Government has possession of a million or more carnets, thus paralyzing or controlling the votes of that many voters. That these carnets should be returned has been his most strident electoral demand (see preceding item). Carnets are as a matter of course gathered by the political parties during the affiliatory period. Critics of the Government claim each public employee was required to produce ten carnets and each policeman fifteen during the affiliatory period and that these have not been returned to their proper holders.

(UNCLASSIFIED) "EL EXTRAÑO" SEEKS ASYLUM. Jesús GONZALEZ Cartas, alias "El Extraño", and an associate found asylum in the Brazilian Embassy August 13. They were quickly given safe-conducts and departed for Costa Rica.

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(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) Comment. "El Extraño" is well known as a leader of the revolutionary movement against the Batista Government and was secretary of the terroristic Acción Revolucionaria Guterás movement. He has attained to something like Aureliano's fame for secretly moving in and out of the country. It is understood that he had been here for several months, but the news of his asylum came without warning. While showing that revolutionary activity continues, El Extraño's asylum is also a testimony to the continued vigilance of SIM. The news of El Extraño's appearance in an Embassy did not attract the comment it probably would have just two months ago. In the Embassy's view this may well indicate that the "Country Club affair" and Arango's subsequent asylum have damaged the romantic bloom that attached in the eyes of much of the public to the rumored movements in and out of Cuba of the revolutionary plotters.

(LIMITED OFFICIAL USE) Comment. The Embassy was confidentially informed by the Brazilian Ambassador that within a few hours of El Extraño's admittance to his Embassy, and before news of it had transpired, a phone call came from the Costa Rican Ambassador advising that the latter's mission was prepared to issue a visa to El Extraño!

(UNCLASSIFIED) "PINCHO" RODRIGUEZ IS AMNESTIED. In response to a petition from many journalists President Batista, before taking electoral leave, issued an amnesty for "Pincho" Rodríguez, sports announcer, who was serving a four-year sentence for his part in the "Country Club affair".

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) Comment. Rodríguez is a popular figure, and granting the amnesty will do Batista no harm politically.

(UNCLASSIFIED) GARCIA RAYNERI MAYOR OF HABANA. Justo Garcia Rayneri was named Mayor of Habana during the electoral leave of Justo Luis POZO.

(UNCLASSIFIED) THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF CHIBAS' DEATH. The third anniversary of the death of Eddy CHIBAS was observed with prominent mention in some of the papers, the virtual dedication to him of an issue of Bohemia, and an impressive pilgrimage to his tomb of Ortodoxos.

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) Comment. The Ortodoxo Party appears to be fading fast, and the process will be accelerated as the election campaign gathers intensity and the party hugs the sidelines. While honors are still being paid Chibas' memory, its influence in Cuban politics evanesces.

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(UNCLASSIFIED) CTC APPOINTS ANTI-COMMUNIST COMMISSION. The Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC) has appointed the Commission, which under its anti-Communist resolution of June 7 is to keep a record of all trade union leaders who have at any time been identified with the Communist cause.

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) Comment. It is hard to escape the conclusion that it has taken the CTC a very long time to get around to the appointment of this commission, especially when it is recalled how quickly and drastically it acted in drawing up the anti-Communist resolution. The new Minister of Labor, Nuñez Portuondo, has publicly pledged his cooperation in getting Communists out of the unions.

(UNCLASSIFIED) EXTRA HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS. The British Laborite visit to Moscow and Peiping was criticized by El Mundo, Alerta and Excelsior as well as by Mundo's columnist Juan Luis MARTIN. The thought that business could be done with the Communists or "peaceful coexistence" be achieved was regarded as foolish. Francisco PARES in Información thought the British were only engaging in a realistic appraisal.

Regarding Goa Diario de la Marina and Información sympathized with the Indians in their efforts to remove the last vestiges of imperialism from their territory. El Mundo columnist Martin thought NEHRU was playing the Soviet game; and Excelsior that the Goans preferred their own and Portuguese culture to that of the Indians.

The papers expressed alarm over the Chinese Communist threats against Formosa, and while some scouted these, others saw a challenge in them to American policy.

The Otto JOHN case was regarded generally as a set-back to the West, but most papers commenting on it discounted John's statements as Communist-instilled propaganda.

(UNCLASSIFIED) BRAZIL. Diario de la Marina and El Mundo viewed the political passions which have flared up in Brazil as only a minor disturbance admirably handled by President VARGAS in the dismissal of his personal guard, and predicted that a man of his solid political stature and experience would not be the least endangered by the turn of events.

#### Navy

(UNCLASSIFIED) NAVAL VISIT TO HABANA. Fourteen ships under the command of Rear Admiral Bernard L. AUSTIN, USN, paid an

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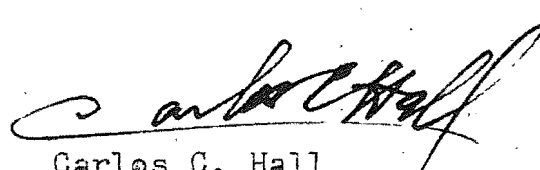
informal visit to Habana 14 - 18 August. 5000 personnel, including 1,360 NROTC midshipmen, disembarked. Among many festivities, the party for 1,000 officers and midshipmen at the Cuban Naval Academy, which was attended by President Morales del Castillo, was outstanding.

Inquiries were received from papers as to whether the visit had any connection with the transfer of office from President Batista to Morales del Castillo on August 14, but USIS effectively corrected any such misapprehension and no intimation to that effect was published.

The visitors were very well received; no untoward incidents occurred; press coverage was outstanding; and from every point of view the visit was a success.

Army, Air

Negative.

  
Carlos C. Hall  
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim

Participants: CCHall, HMRandall, JdeZengetita, ACertosimo, RGCushing, CAnderson, Eldore (MA), Rakew (NA), Krisel (NA), Slaton (AA), WBCaldwell.

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