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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMEMBASSY, HABANA

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DESP. NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

July 3, 1953 *stat*
DATE

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SUBJECT: **Joint Weeka No. 27 for State, Army, Navy and Air Departments from SANA** *Vincent*

Part I

Political

(UNCLASSIFIED) Elder Statesman Mendieta Calls for General Elections. Col. Carlos MENDIETA, ex-President and elder statesman, on June 25 issued a call for a patriotic effort to solve the country's abnormal political situation on the basis of general elections held under absolute guarantees. President Batista immediately issued a non-committal statement saying that due to his patriotic background Mendieta always merited "respectful attention." Later (June 28) he stated in an exclusive interview with the Miami Herald that he was undecided whether he would be a presidential candidate in 1954. He expressed confidence that he could win in an election. Other political leaders have seized on Mendieta's proposal as an opportunity to return to political normalcy and have proposed that the partial elections scheduled for June 1, 1954 be made general to include the Presidency and that they be held under Mendieta as Provisional President. Col. Mendieta is currently engaged in a series of conversations with political figures in and out of the Government in an effort to reach a constructive agreement.

(RESTRICTED) Comment. Mendieta's plan must of necessity remain in the talking stage until such time as Batista indicates its acceptability to him. Many doubt he will do this, but it is not an impossibility. This is indicated by his statement regarding his presidential candidacy since, in order to run for the Presidency general elections would have to be called. The possibility of general elections may prove a powerful stimulant to the scattered Ortodoxo factions to unite in an effort to gain the Presidency. In this connection the Ortodoxo leader, Roberto AGRAMONTE, recently stated he would not participate in elections unless they were general and backed by full guarantees.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Batista-Prío Polemic. Following reports last week that Prío had suffered an attack of appendicitis and a statement by a Government spokesman that he was at liberty to return to Cuba, Prío reportedly announced June 29 that he would not return while Batista remained as dictator. He also reportedly stated that

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if Batista did not solve the problem of returning to the 1940 Constitution a revolution against him could take place at any moment. He also accused Batista of having many Communists in his Government.

Batista replied (in the Miami Herald interview referred to above) expressing confidence that "no major revolt" would break out in Cuba; that he has "adequate protection" throughout the island, and that he has the Army, Navy, the Police and the people "united against any uprising."

Members of Batista's Cabinet joined in the polemic, the Minister of Defense announcing that the Armed Forces constitute a "monolithic shield" to guarantee the Republic. The Minister of Information opined that Prfo's propaganda on supposed invasions was designed to damage the Cuban economy.

(CONFIDENTIAL) Comment. The Embassy assumes Batista is correct as regards the support of the Armed Forces. It doubts that the people are in any mood at this time to unite in support of Batista or any other Cuban political figure unless it be a man such as Mendieta who promised a return to democratic processes.

(RESTRICTED) Incident at Navy Headquarters. Unusual activity around Navy Headquarters June 27 led to rumors that an attempt to seize the Headquarters had been made by persons unknown. It appears now that a test alert was arranged for the benefit of newly installed Commodore Rodriguez Hernandez, but that insufficient warning had been given. As a result, some shots were fired and several men were injured in a staircase pile-up before order could be restored.

(CONFIDENTIAL) Comment. This incident would suggest certain nervousness among those defending the Navy Headquarters as well as some lack of military discipline and training.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Government Action to Curb Irresponsible Reporting. The Minister of the Interior suspended the noontime one-hour television newscast of Telemundo for two days in a Government campaign against irresponsible reporting. Telemundo on June 28 reported erroneously that Police Chief Rafael Salas Cañizares had been "detained." All radio and television stations were warned that the transmission of "false rumors" of a political nature would result in severe sanctions.

(CONFIDENTIAL) It has been learned that the SIM posted a representative in at least one newspaper to prevent publication of further speculation regarding the above-mentioned Navy incident. This paper had published the report through the expedient of burying it in an article on another subject.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Severe Outbreak of Equine Encephalomyelitis.

The severe outbreak of equine encephalomyelitis in the three eastern Provinces of Cuba is reported to have claimed several human lives and killed more than 20,000 horses or about 5% of the equine population since early June.

Local laboratories are reportedly working at top speed to produce vaccines while the Government is said to be purchasing as much vaccine as possible from the United States. Little actual progress appears to have been made so far in controlling the disease. Probably less than 5% of the horses in Cuba have received the first vaccination.

With the advent of the rainy season and the normal increase in the mosquito population, one of the main carriers of the disease, national and local health authorities throughout the island, but especially in eastern Cuba, are said to be concentrating on a personal hygiene campaign to minimize the danger to human beings.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Cuban Delegation Departs for ICFTU Congress in Stockholm. Headed by EUSEBIO MUJAL, Cuban Federation of Labor (CTC) Chief, the Cuban delegation of labor leaders to the Third Congress of the ICFTU, at Stockholm, left Habana July 1 for the Congress. (See Weeka No. 26).

(CONFIDENTIAL) According to a CTC source, Marcos HIRIGOYEN (See Weeka No. 27, July 3, 1952), Transport Workers leader who has been "in exile" in London, will attend the Congress and then be permitted to return to Cuba by President Batista.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Selection of Communists to Help Lead Tobacco Workers Union. Numerous labor leaders have denounced the selection of six Communists as members of the Executive Committee of the Tobacco Workers Federation, and the support given this action by Eusebio MUJAL, Secretary General of the CTC. Prior to leaving for the ICFTU Congress at Stockholm, Mujal stated that the action did not represent a CTC-Communist pact, but rather exercise of the tobacco workers of their right to "democratic selection" of their leaders. The Workers Bloc of President Batista's Partido Acción Progresista and the Youth Wing of Mujal's own Partido Laborista were included among the labor elements which criticized the Tobacco Workers' action.

(RESTRICTED) Comment. Mujal is understood to have maintained close control over the Tobacco Workers Federation since its last Congress in December 1951, and it therefore appears unlikely that he felt forced to join forces with the Communists to retain power in this large (90,000) labor group. The other interpretation advanced is that Mujal chose to reinvoke a "communist threat" in Cuban labor, to hold over the heads of labor leaders United States

at the Stockholm Congress.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Return to Habana of Cuban Head of A.T.L.A.S.
Following his return to Habana June 24, Fernando PEREZ VIDAL, Cuban "labor leader" recently selected at Buenos Aires as Secretary General of the ATLAS, issued a statement calling for the "independence and autonomy . . . of peoples . . . south of the Rio Grande . . . now submerged by capitalist exploitation."

(CONFIDENTIAL) Local sources do not yet reveal whether Perez Vidal will remain any length of time in Habana, to attempt to exploit his new eminence as Secretary General of the ATLAS, or return promptly to the organization's headquarters at Buenos Aires. Cuban Federation of Labor leaders discount the possible impact of the movement on Cuban labor.

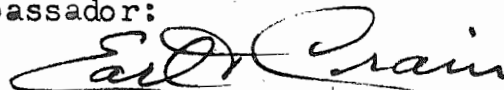
(UNCLASSIFIED) Trip of Milton Eisenhower. The Habana press carried regularly the wire-services' stories of the visit to Venezuela and Colombia of Milton Eisenhower, but only José María CAPO, foreign affairs analyst of the Diario de la Marina expressed himself editorially on the subject of Dr. Eisenhower's South American trip. While recognizing the element of good will behind the trip, Capó questioned the value of the official information which would be provided Dr. Eisenhower and deplored the brevity of his stay in the various countries.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Ecuadorian Ambassador Presents Credentials.
The new Ecuadorian Ambassador to Cuba, Jorge VILLAGOMEZ, presented his credentials to President Batista July 1.

ARMY, NAVY AIR

Negative.

For the Ambassador:



Earl T. Crain
Acting Counselor of Embassy

Participants:

ETCrain, JCanter, ETerrell, BRGrooks,
Elmore (MA) Rakow (NA), Mason (AA)

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