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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : HABANA

328 NO.

August 24, 1951

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

Air Priority

REF :

SUBJECT: WEEKA NO. 8 FOR STATE, ARMY, NAVY AND AIR DEPARTMENTS  
FROM SAA

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SECTION I

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MESSAGE CENTER

POLITICAL

The funeral on August 17 of Senator CHIBAS, late President of the Ortodoxo Party, has been described as the largest in Cuban history. Estimates of the attendance range from 100,000 to a quarter of a million. Perhaps 150,000 would be a reasonable estimate. The size of the throng, although due in part to the dramatic nature of Chibás' death is interpreted by many as a protest against official venality.

At the grave, the new party president, OCHOA, swore that the party would follow Chibás' precepts and, especially, would not enter into political pacts with other parties.

To prevent party disintegration, the Ortodoxos considered it necessary to name a new presidential candidate at once. The day following the funeral the party leadership "proclaimed" Dr. Roberto AGRAMONTE as the party's new presidential candidate (Weeka 7, August 17) and Emilio OCHOA as the candidate for Vice President. It was announced that the appointments were subject to confirmation at the party re-organization. Agramonte, who had been the Ortodoxo candidate for Vice President on the Chibás ticket, though intelligent and respected, is a little-known, colorless figure. His appointment was, admittedly, a stopgap measure and he may be replaced as the party's standard bearer in a relatively short time. PARDO Llada has been designated as the official party spokesman to take over Chibás' weekly radio talks.

Minister of State Miguel SUAREZ Fernandez resigned his post August 22. He explained to the press that his presence at Chibás' funeral had angered certain elements of the Government and, furthermore, that he was opposed to the Government's apparent decision to do away with democratic practices within the party which would eliminate the party's "liberation". He referred of course to the special session of Congress and to the agenda item requesting amendment of the

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Electoral Code. The effect of such amendment would be to remove Suarez' power, as president of the PRC(A) Las Villas Provincial Assembly, to veto any candidate not to his liking nominated by the PRC(A), Liberal, Demócrata coalition.

Suarez has not broken completely with the Party, but there is little doubt he would do so should that serve his purposes. There is a possibility Suarez may eventually join the Ortodoxos. There is greater likelihood that he will team up with GRAU and the Republicanos in the proposed Partido de la Cubanidad. The new group would try to remove whole blocks from the PRC(A) structure or force the Prio group to cede in its favor. Either way, the development is not favorable to the Prio PRC(A) sector.

Under-Secretary Raul RUIZ is now Acting Minister of State pending the appointment of a new incumbent. Minister without portfolio Dr. Juan Antonio RUBIO Padilla, who aspires to be Cuba's Ambassador to Madrid, has been mentioned, among others, as a possible successor to Suarez.

It is not expected that Suarez will now head Cuba's delegation to the Japanese Peace Treaty Conference at San Francisco and no successor has as yet been named. Ambassador GUELL, who is now the leading delegate from the Ministry staff, assures the Embassy that Cuba will support the U.S. in every possible way at the Conference.

Cuban pessimism as to any favorable outcome of the Kaesong talks deepened as the week wore on despite Red hints that the talks might be resumed. The communist Ultima Hora of course accuses the U.S. of responsibility for "flagrant violation of the neutrality zone".

The Senate convened on August 20 and, after hearing various eulogies of Senator Chibás, adjourned until August 27 or until the House meets. The House failed to obtain a quorum and, by law, one Chamber cannot hold sessions until both are legally open for business. It is the Embassy's impression that the Special Session was called for the exclusive purpose of amending the Electoral Code prior to the party reorganization period commencing October 7. Whether or not the Government succeeds in achieving a quorum for that purpose remains to be seen.

Statements by Senators O'CONNOR and McCARRAN, and Immigration Chief WIGGINS that Cuba is a focal point from which undesirable aliens have entered the United States were published prominently in the Habana press and criticized

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editorially as being completely erroneous. A strong press release issued by the Minister of State refuted the statements and said that Cuba has taken precautions to assure vigilance over such aliens. The Minister pointed to the recent decision of the Cuban Cabinet to modify the Immigration Regulations as proof of this effort to strengthen security measures. Ambassador MACHADO's statement ridiculing the figure of 250,000 European aliens in Cuba was published prominently. The Embassy's statistics on the subject do not support the figure mentioned.

It has now been reported that the M/V "Quetzal" is in the Dominican Republic (Week 7, August 17). According to an AP report from Ciudad Trujillo published here today the Dominican Master of the vessel, Alfredo BRITO Baez, made a statement to the effect that he had commanded that same ship at the time of the Cayo Confites expedition in 1947 and had decided to deliver the ship over to the Dominicans because he was "tired of serving Communist interests in the Caribbean." He added that he had been serving abroad on special mission during the past two years and was now re-incorporated into the Dominican Navy with the rank of Captain. MASFERRER's Tiempo, on the other hand, reports, apparently without proof, that the "Quetzal" was intercepted by Dominican naval units and forced, under threat of being sunk, to proceed to the Dominican Republic. Tiempo headlined the story "Trujillo Tortures the Captain of the Quetzal". Tiempo stated that a protest in the name of the relatives of the Cuban crew members would be lodged with the Ministry of State demanding that they be returned to Cuba and calling on the Government to break relations with the Trujillo Government. Alerta also reports that Brito must have been tortured and that the story as given out is a pure invention of Trujillo to avoid international complications. The Ministry of State seems to be handling the matter with considerable calm and while it will probably request the safe return of the Cubans involved, the Ministry has given no hint that a break of relations is contemplated.

The President's brother-in-law, Representative Enrique C. HENRIQUEZ, disappeared on August 20 and it was feared for a time that he had been kidnapped. At the same time the Dominican Chargé Braulio MENDEZ departed hurriedly for the U.S. after having obtained a 4(b) returning residents' visa at this Embassy. He said his life had been threatened and he left without notifying the Cuban Government.

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Henriquez turned up two days later with a story to the effect that he had tried unsuccessfully to trap Mendez and others in a plot to assassinate him, a plot which later was to be extended to include Romulo BETANCOURT, José FIGUERES and others. He stated he would present "proof" today, including wire recordings of conversations between Trujillo agents and Cuban secret agents posing as Trujillo sympathisers, wherein the former offered \$30,000 for Henriquez' assassination.

President of the Senate "Tony" VARONA told the press that while the Government lacked legal means to stop republication of the Communist Hoy now scheduled to start on August 26, it was still possible for the Cuban masses to prevent its re-birth. This call to violence has not been well received.

The speaking tour of "El Campesino" was extended during the week to the interior of the country. The effectiveness of his tour, however, became increasingly doubtful as a large number of protests concerning his presence were published in both the more radical and conservative press. The latter, including the Diario de la Marina, based its protests on El Campesino's opposition to Franco and his record as a murderer. Alerta, and the Communist publications denounced him as an assassin paid by the United States to carry out its propaganda, and said that his visit was an insult to the intelligence of the people of Cuba.

ARMY

Negative.

NAVY

Negative.

Air

Construction of an international airport at Varadero is an item included in the new public works budget, according to Public Works Minister Luis CASERO, who emphasized that the proposed new airport will be of great commercial benefit to the entire Matanzas province. Work is expected to start soon.

Varadero, the "Blue Beach" resort of Cuba, at present boasts a small air strip which is utilized by twin-engined aircraft in national service, but is inadequate for international flight purposes.


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The building of an international airport at Varadero will make it possible to offer direct air service to Miami.

  
Duwayne G. Clark  
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim

Participants:  
DWGClark, ETCrain, RGomez,  
Schaffer (MA), Mason, Pitts (A).

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