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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMEMBASSY, HABANA

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DESP. NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

January 26, 1953
DATE

REF :

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SUBJECT: Reported Intention of Authorities to Close Communist Party Offices

On January 21, 1953 a meeting in commemoration of LENIN's death was held in the headquarters in the Luyanó section of Habana of the Communist Partido Socialista Popular. The meeting had not progressed far when, according to reports, agents of the SIM (Servicio Inteligencia Militar) instructed that the audience be informed over the loudspeaker system that the meeting was terminated. Although there were protests from the audience of about 500 persons and shouts against the Government, the meeting stopped without violence or any strong show of opposition.

Members of the Communist party on the speakers' platform were taken into custody by the SIM. They were Anibal ESCALANTE, César ESCALANTE, César VILAR, Carlos FERNANDEZ, José Miguel ESPINO, Antonio PEREZ, Manuel ALMUINAS, Oscar VARELA, Ramón PUERTAS and Pedro SERVIAT. These individuals were taken to the SIM headquarters for interrogation, after which they were released.

The meeting was broken up in spite of the fact that it had reportedly been authorized by the Ministry of the Interior. The SIM apparently seized pictures of Lenin and STALIN, flags, pamphlets and other propaganda material and was said, particularly by the Communist Hoy, but also by El Mundo, to have destroyed furniture and equipment in the headquarters.

This raid by the SIM becomes particularly significant in the light of information subsequently obtained by the Embassy from the officer in charge of the SIM. This official stated that it was the intention of the SIM to close all offices of the PSP "within a few days". It was indicated that this action would be based on the fact that the PSP did not file, within the time limit imposed by the 1952 Electoral Code, a petition for authorization to organize as a political

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party. In consequence it has no legal existence even as a party in embryo and the SIM thus could find justification for the repression of political party activities not sanctioned by existing legislation. The chief of the SIM would give no indication whether similar action was contemplated against the Ortodoxo party.

The SIM's plan in all likelihood was cleared with BATISTA. If carried out it would be a final step in the elimination of the Communist party as a legal entity, the first stage of the process having been the requirement in the 1952 Electoral Code that in order to organize, a party must have the support of six per cent of the total electorate, a requirement that even the Communists admitted the PSP could not meet. By way of explanation, it may be pointed out that the "total electorate" is the total number at any given time of voters who have been registered and have received electoral identity cards bearing photographs. As of December 8, 1952, the total electorate was 2,484,369.

For the Ambassador:



Earl T. Crain
Acting Counselor of Embassy