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TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

May 31, 1955

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SUBJECT: Joint Weeka No. 22 for Army, Navy and Air Departments from SANA.

(UNCLASSIFIED) AUTENTICOS CALL UPON EXILES TO RETURN; PRIO'S REACTION. The executive committee of the Prío Auténtico faction headed by "Tony" VARONA issued a statement in which, while deploring government "repression" following the recent political amnesty, leaders of the party in exile were urged to return to Cuba to share the responsibilities of leadership during the period opening up as a result of amnesty.

Apropos of this statement, the Diario Nacional interviewed ex-President Carlos PRIO Socarrás in Miami by telephone. Prío said that he agreed with whatever the party executive decided but did not believe that "at this moment one could say whether one ought to return to Cuba or not". He thought that "with the passage of time and observing the effectiveness of the guarantees that in the practical order the regime may offer all the Cuban people, it will be possible for one to decide about the possibility of returning".

On May 26th, Luis Gustavo FERNANDEZ, former administrator of customs in the Prío régime and private secretary to Prío since he went into exile, returned to Cuba. Upon arrival he stated to the press that he had returned "in order to determine whether peaceful co-existence is really possible for all Cubans". He added that "Prío will come back to Cuba when guarantees are a reality".

(UNCLASSIFIED) Comment. Prío's attitude as thus indicated marks a change from his previous adamant refusal to consider returning to Cuba so long as Batista was in power. If his precursor, Fernández, runs into no trouble, it may yet be that Prío will try to find means of coming home with such dignity as may be possible for a former but ignominiously ousted President.

(UNCLASSIFIED) HEAD OF DEMOCRATA PARTY RESIGNS. The resignation of Santiago VERDEJA Neyra as president of the Democrata party was accepted by the party's national executive committee on May 26th. As the reason for his insistence on resignation, Verdeja gave the demands on his time of his duties as Minister of Defense. Francisco (Panchín) BATISTA y Zaldivar, Governor of the Province of Havana and

FC Fomes, Jr. :mbw
REPORTER

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President BATISTA's brother, succeeded Verdeja as president of the Democrata party.

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) Comment. While the Minister of Defense is to a considerable extent a figurehead, with the chiefs of the armed forces often dealing directly with Batista, it is quite likely that Verdeja finds his functions interfered with by political activities, especially in view of his advanced age.

(UNCLASSIFIED) FIDEL CASTRO ATTACKS SANTIAGO ARMY COMMANDER. Col. Alberto DEL RIO Chaviano will be remembered as the Army commander at Santiago de Cuba at the time of the uprising there in July 1953. He still holds this post and not long ago wrote to the press defending himself against attacks for occurrences under his command, both recently and at the time of the uprising. In the issue of Bohemia dated May 29, 1955, there appeared a virulent reply to the Colonel by Fidel CASTRO Ruz, the now amnestied leader of the revolt. The entire tone of Castro's letter is indicated by the headline under which it was published - "You lie, Chaviano!" Castro accused Del Rio Chaviano of murdering prisoners taken during the Santiago uprising and of brutality, corruption and graft, and offered to debate his charges publicly and in detail.

The Minister of the Interior called Castro's letter an "alarming symptom" indicating that the recent political amnesty stimulated "the adoption of attitudes" that constitute a threat to public peace and tranquillity. The Minister said that both the Government and the courts would take appropriate action to prevent or punish "such a criminal, irresponsible and intolerable attitude".

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) Comment. Ever since he emerged from jail under political amnesty, Fidel Castro has lost no opportunity to further his pretensions as a martyr to freedom and a patriot seeking to overthrow tyranny and oppression. It would seem only a matter of time before Castro again finds himself in trouble with the authorities. Castro's stricture of Del Rio is believed justified.

(UNCLASSIFIED) BOMB AT MINISTRY OF LABOR. On May 28th a bomb was found in a doorway of the Ministry of Labor, which was closed at the time. The bomb did not explode, thanks to the prompt action of the watchman who found it and extinguished the fuse. The Minister of Labor charged terrorists with the attempt and expressed "absolute certainty that the organized labor movement of the country ... is incapable of performing acts of this kind".

(UNCLASSIFIED) TOBACCO UNION LEADERS REQUEST ENFORCEMENT OF ANTI-COMMUNIST LAW. It was reported that leaders of tobacco worker unions had called on the Minister of Labor in an effort to secure enforcement of anti-Communist Law-Decree No. 1975 of January 27,

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1955, which prohibited Communists from holding executive positions in unions. The leaders complained that nothing had been done about a list of Communists holding office in tobacco unions they had given to the Ministry of the Interior in order that appropriate investigation be made by the Bureau for the Repression of Communist Activities (BRAC) and a report submitted to the Minister of Labor on the basis of which he could remove the Communists from office.

(LIMITED OFFICIAL USE) Comment. It is too early to judge whether this complaint of government inactivity in cleaning Communists out of tobacco unions is due to a continued soft attitude toward Communists or crypto-Communists in unions or to the possibility that the BRAC was so recently formed that it is not yet prepared to assume the responsibilities for which it was created.

(UNCLASSIFIED) WIFE OF COMMUNIST LEADER CONVICTED OF PASSPORT FRAUD. Zoila CASTELLANOS Ferrer, wife of Lazaro PENA González, Communist labor leader, was convicted on May 26th of fraud in connection with an application for a Cuban passport (see Weeka No. 46, 1954). Convicted with her was another woman who had aided in the fraud. Mrs. Peña testified that for more than a year she had been trying to join her husband in Mexico and had resorted to fraud because of her failure to obtain a passport legitimately. She was fined 50 pesos but immediately thereafter was granted the benefits of amnesty Law-Decree No. 1991 of January 27, 1955.

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) DRAFT AGREEMENT ON IMPORTS OF RICE FROM U.S. Agreement was reached during the past week on the procedures to govern Cuban imports of rice from the United States. Agreement will be consummated by an exchange of notes replacing those exchanged on December 17, 1952. The draft agreed upon by the negotiators provides that the basic rice quota of 3,250,000 quintals will, as now, become effective on July 1 of each year. Instead of announcing a preliminary deficit quota on the same date, as provided in the old agreement, the deficit quota, if needed, will be announced not later than February 15 of the "rice year" (July 1 to June 30), actual imports under it to be allowed entry into Cuba beginning on April 1. Assignment of individual quotas to Cuban importers will be announced not later than June 20, as regards the basic quota, and not later than February 25, as regards the deficit quota.

The draft agreement is subject to approval by the United States Government.

(UNCLASSIFIED) EUROPE. Cuban editorial writers and commentators viewed the projected Big Four Conference with varying degrees of apprehension. Diario Nacional thought the USSR would make every effort at such a conference to bring about a neutralization of Germany, a process which the paper ventured would eventually mean the delivery of 70,000,000 Germans and the best

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industrial machinery in Europe into Soviet hands. Diario Nacional viewed the Soviet move to liberate Austria as little more than a propaganda effort aimed at winning a bigger prize: Germany. Along the same line Excelsior cautioned against too much optimism in connection with Russia's apparent new peace offensive, saying the surprising Soviet agreement on freeing Austria may well have been bait to catch a bigger fish, Western Germany. Diario de la Marina praised Secretary Dulles' warning regarding Soviet motives, saying that there is no evidence that the Russians have changed their basic plan for world conquest. Excelsior considered any high-level meeting of nations as important to international peace but viewed the forthcoming Big Four Conference with little hope. The paper said the Soviets have violated 50 out of 52 treaties, so that the world, so often disillusioned, can no longer put faith in the Russian world. Alerta cautioned that before the free world views the forthcoming Big Four talks with too much optimism it should reflect on the number of countries and the millions of people subjugated by the Russians in the past decade. El Mundo warned that the Moscow-Peiping axis still has three unwavering goals--the destruction of NATO and SEATO and the elimination of Titoism-- and that any international conference, on whatever level, will be used by the Soviets to further these aims.

(UNCLASSIFIED) BRITISH ELECTIONS. The Conservative triumph in Britain was hailed in the Cuban press as auguring well for the free world. Diario Nacional termed the outcome a setback for Russia and a victory for the democratic world since the British Conservatives are better disposed than the Laborites to cooperate with the United States on international questions. The political atmosphere of the free world is now clearer than in many years, the paper said. Alerta praised the British system of government for its ability to adapt to the realities of the times and felt the Eden victory signifies greater British cooperation in western defense plans. Excelsior called the Tory triumph a frank repudiation of Laborite policies, both domestic and international, and an escape from what it called the costly nightmare of socialist experimentation.

Army, Navy

Negative.

Air

(UNCLASSIFIED) NEW CHIEF OF CUBAN AIR FORCE. Lt. Colonel Carlos TABERNILLA Palmero has been promoted to Colonel and designated Chief of the Cuban Air Force, to fill the position left vacant by the recent death of Colonel Carlos PASCUAL Pinard (see Weeka No. 20). The vacancy of Lt. Colonel left by his promotion was filled by the promotion of Major Marcelo TABERNILLA Palmero

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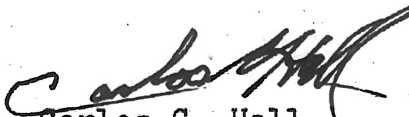
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who will continue to perform his duties as Chief of Operations, under Lt. Col. Guillermo E. CORVO y Alzamora of the light bomber squadron, according to an announcement of May 27, 1955, by the Chief of Staff of the Army.

There has been no organizational change made as yet, other than in Colonel Carlos Tabernilla's position. Since a second in command of the Air Force has not been designated, it is presumed that several duty changes will be made in the near future.

For the Ambassador:


Carlos C. Hall
Counselor of Embassy

Participants: CCHall, HMRandall, JPHoover, CFPick, Jr., FCFornes, Jr., JdeZengotita, REWhedbee, RGCushing, CDAnderson, Elmore (MA), Krisel (NA), Slaton (AA).

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