

AIR POUCH JUN 21 1955

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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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FROM: AMEMBASSY, HABANA

1275

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

June 21, 1955

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SUBJECT: Joint Weeka No. 25 for State, Army, Navy and Air Departments from SANA.

(UNCLASSIFIED) PRIO ACCUSED OF TERRORISTIC PLAN. A police report was submitted to the Havana Urgency Court in which ex-President Carlos PRIO Socarrás and his followers were accused of putting into execution a terroristic plan adopted as a result of the failure of their revolutionary plotting. It was charged that this plan consisted of two phases: a first phase begun early this year of sugar cane burnings, provoking labor conflicts, sabotaging communications, and fomenting student strikes; and a second phase of bombings that have already begun and attempts on individuals that are in preparation. Various persons were named in the report, with specific acts of terrorism ascribed to several of them.

The Urgency Court ordered the arrest of 17 of the persons accused in the report, including Prío. Of these, Pascasio LINERAS, textile labor leader who just returned from exile in the United States, has been jailed, and Raúl CASTRO Ruz, recently released from jail under political amnesty together with his brother, Fidel CASTRO, leader of the Santiago uprising in 1953, has sought asylum in the Mexican Embassy.

(LIMITED OFFICIAL USE) Comment. The police report has all the appearances of being a frameup. It pictures a rather too grandiose and all too inclusive plan to be entirely credible. Furthermore, it is much too pat and detailed in its accusations. There can be several motives behind it: natural harassment of persons known to have no love for the regime; stage setting for additional accusations and harassment of others; and depiction of a background of terrorism against which the slaying of Jorge AGOSTINI (see Weeka No. 24) could be justified. (See despatch No. 1268, June 17, 1955.)

(UNCLASSIFIED) OPPOSITION NEWSPAPER SUSPENDED. By a resolution of June 16, the Minister of the Interior ordered the suspension of La Calle, the out-and-out opposition daily that first appeared on April 2, 1955, and already had some trouble with the authorities (see Weekas Nos. 15 and 23). The paper was accused of "inciting to violence, breaking the harmony among the citizens, lessening the prestige of the institutions of the State, and affronting authorities."

FCFornes, Jr. :mbw
REPORTER

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and officers." It was further alleged that La Calle was founded with \$30,000 of Prío money and that "directed and oriented by Communist elements and subsidized by subversive elements, La Calle is being used by insurrectional political elements as an appropriate vehicle to maintain an abnormal condition in the country". It was charged that the newspaper was an instrument in the terroristic campaign ascribed to Prío and his followers (see above).

The Chibás Ortodoxos, the Prío Auténticos, and the journalists' association of Havana Province have protested the suspension as an infringement of freedom of expression.

(LIMITED OFFICIAL USE) Comment. La Calle did have a leftish tinge and did carry Commie-line articles and editorials from time to time. However, it printed more USIS material than any other paper in Cuba and its over-all tone was vehemently and uncompromisingly oppositionist.

The charge that this Ortodoxo-oriented and ostensibly financed paper was founded with Prío money is difficult to believe. One commentator observed ironically that the accusation achieved "amazing unification" in La Calle of opposing Ortodoxos, Prío Auténticos, and Communists.

The suspension removes an increasingly annoying thorn from Batista's side. According to reports, La Calle increased its circulation from a few thousand to about 25,000 at the time of the shutdown.

The case is going before the courts and it remains to be seen whether the government's interpretation of the limits imposed by law on freedom of the press will be upheld. (See despatch No. 1271, June 20, 1955.)

(UNCLASSIFIED) SEQUEL TO AGOSTINI KILLING. The widow of Jorge AGOSTINI Villasant, slain on June 9 in an alleged gun-battle with the authorities (see Weeka No. 24), filed a court complaint because of the death against Lt. Julio C. LAURENT, the officer in charge of the Naval Intelligence Service detachment involved in the shooting. Summoned to court, Lt. Laurent repeated the official version of what happened.

(LIMITED OFFICIAL USE) Comment. It is doubtful that Mrs. Agostini will be able to establish in court her version that her husband was brutally and deliberately murdered, even though it may be true.

Reports have reached the Embassy that Agostini was working on a plan to assassinate Batista. One of these adds that the authorities had notified his family that his undercover activities, especially those aimed at Batista's life, could no longer be tolerated

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and that if he did not leave the country, he would be eliminated. These reports are regarded as probably true. The Embassy's knowledge of Agostini indicates that he certainly possessed the personal courage and disregard for danger to undertake an assassination mission.

(UNCLASSIFIED) CONSOLIDATED RAILROADS STRIKE ENDS. The illegal and unofficial strike on the Consolidated Railroads that broke out upon the announcement of the government's decision in the dispute pending between the system and its workers (see Weeka No. 24) came to an end. An agreement was effected between the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC) and the Railway Brotherhoods on the one side and the Camaguey military commander and a Ministry of Labor representative on the other. The agreement provided for little more than discussion of the government's decision with the Minister of Labor.

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) Comment. While neither the CTC nor the Railway Brotherhoods was supposed to have anything to do with the strike (and the former probably did not), their signatures to this agreement were enough to end the stoppage. There may be slight changes made in the decree embodying the government's decision, but it is not very likely that any will be far-reaching. CTC sources say there is still hard feeling among the Consolidated workers and are not certain that trouble may break out again. So far, however, the government has acted with apparent fairness to the company and with firmness, but not arbitrariness, towards workers who seemed intent on changing a government labor decision by tactics that in Auténtico administrations generally succeeded.

(UNCLASSIFIED) COMMUNISTS REMOVED FROM TOBACCO WORKERS UNION OFFICES. A Ministry of Labor resolution ordered Inaudi KINDELAN, organizational secretary of the H. Upmann tobacco union, and Carlos RODRIGUEZ, who held the same position in another tobacco company union, removed from those offices. The executive committees of the unions were ordered to name replacements for the two men.

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) Comment. The two men had earlier headed a Communist attempt to break up a meeting of an Havana federation of tobacco workers. Formal complaints against them had been brought in court by union officials. It is perhaps because of these antecedents that the resolution, instead of intervening the two unions, simply ordered them to remove and replace the men.

(UNCLASSIFIED) ARGENTINA. Cuban newspapers viewed the revolt against Perón as a natural consequence of his attacks on the Catholic Church, and many predicted that he has not seen the last of uprisings against his regime. Diario Nacional thought that this was the beginning of the end for Perón, saying that the Argentine leader has emerged weaker instead of stronger from the uprising, and that other attempts, better organized and more forceful, are to be expected. The paper predicted that foreign governments, including the United

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States, will now think twice before continuing political relations with a regime which has been excommunicated. Diario Nacional pointed out that Perón is weaker than ever, but more dangerous because he is in a corner and may swing to ultranationalism. That paper and Excelsior scoffed at Perón's charges that the Communists sacked the churches and blamed the Peronistas for the outrages. Winner or loser in the current struggle, Perón has lost sympathy both within and outside of Argentina, Excelsior said, and has not seen the end of revolution because last week's events showed clear disgust over Peronista tyranny. Diario de la Marina denied that excommunication of Perón's regime led to the rebellion, saying the Church does not incite people to civil war and revolutionary plans were well advanced when the Vatican's action was made known. El Mundo termed Perón's measures against the Catholic Church incredibly stupid and said it was easy to see that the religious sentiments of the Argentines would be stirred up to the boiling point against him. Alerta said that Perón cannot count on sympathy abroad or in his own country because his administration of Argentina has resulted in reduced standards of the economy, public morality, social structure, and now religion. Avance said revolutions are not a nice thing but sometimes are the only way for a people to get out of its difficulties.

Army

(UNCLASSIFIED) TRANSFER OF REGIMENTAL COMMANDERS. On June 14, 1955, Colonel Alberto DEL RIO Chaviano was relieved of command of the First Rural Guard Regiment at Santiago de Cuba and transferred to the Second Rural Guard Regiment at Camaguey, replacing Colonel Leopoldo PEREZ Coujil. Lt. Col. Angel GONZALEZ Alonso, the Executive Officer, has temporarily assumed command of the First Rural Guard Regiment. Colonel Pérez Coujil was transferred to the Army General Staff, but is presently on leave status with no specific assignment as yet. He had been in command of the regiment in Camaguey only since January 1955 when he was transferred from the Fourth Rural Guard Regiment at Matanzas.

(LIMITED OFFICIAL USE) Comment. Colonel Del Río Chaviano has lately been the target of bitter attacks in the press because of his alleged brutality after the Santiago uprising in July 1953. The most bitter and outspoken of these diatribes was that by Fidel CASTRO, (leader of the attackers on the garrison), which appeared in a recent issue of the magazine Bohemia (see Weeka No. 22). Del Río enjoyed a very bad personal reputation in Oriente Province and was disliked intensely by the people, particularly in Santiago. His long overdue transfer may tend to ease the tension in Oriente.

It has been reported that Pérez Coujil had been criticizing government policy in the Consolidated Railroad strike in Camaguey and had offered to arrange a personal interview with Batista for the union leaders. When Batista learned of this he called the Army Chief

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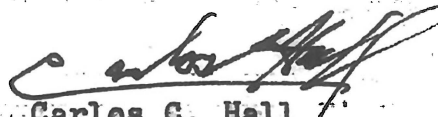
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of Staff by telephone and directed that Pérez Coujil be relieved immediately and that Del Rio Chaviano be ordered to Camaguey. Thus two problems were solved at the same time.

Navy, Air

Negative.



Carlos C. Hall
Chargé d'Affaires, A.i.

Participants: CCHall, HMRandall, JPHoover, CFPick, Jr., FCFornes, Jr., JdeZengotita, WBCaldwell, RGCushing, GDAnderson, Elmore (MA), Treadway (MA), Slaton (AA).

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