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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMEMBASSY, HABANA

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TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

October 31, 1956

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SUBJECT: Joint Weeka No. 44 for State, Army, Navy and Air Departments from SANA.

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(UNCLASSIFIED) CHIEF OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE ASSASSINATED.

About 4'clock in the morning Sunday, October 28, as he and his party were preparing to leave the crowded centrally located night club "Montmartre", Chief of the Cuban Military Intelligence Service (SIM) Lt. Col. Antonio BLANCO Rico was killed by gunfire. Lt. Col. Marcelo TABERNICA Palermo, youngest son of army chief of staff Brig. Gen. Francisco TABERNILLA Dolz, a member of the party, was injured. His wife and the wife of another member of the group, were also wounded. The assailants escaped, and an exceptionally intensive search by the National Police and the Military Service has thus far failed to locate them. The police have released a statement tentatively identifying them as Dr. Juan Pedro CARBO Servia and Luis FERNANDEZ de la Camara. Both are known terrorists, previously involved in insurrectionary activities.

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) Comment. All indications are that the assassination of Lt. Col. Blanco was the work of those few elements of the opposition advocating terrorism as a weapon against the Batista regime. The killing appears to have been carefully planned. He was ruthlessly mowed down at a predetermined spot. As head of the SIM, Blanco was an obvious target for assassins, particularly so since he was accustomed to move about alone and unarmed. He had an excellent reputation among his associates, and was respected even by the opposition for his intelligence, balance, and sense of justice. All the principal opposition groups joined the Government in condemnation of his killing. The fact that the killers injured innocent women bystanders was repugnant to the Cuban press and public.

In statements to the press immediately after the affair, President BATISTA maintained that it was the work of extremist elements who, failing in their efforts to bring about an insurrection, had in desperation resorted to terrorism in the form of planned killings of high officials. He maintained that the Government had known for the past two months that such attempts were projected against the Presidents of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, Senator Rolando MASFERRER, and others. He

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REPORTER

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**CONFIDENTIAL**  
(Classification)

Page 2 of  
Encl. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Desp. No. 260  
From HABANA

said that such a course had been agreed upon by ex-President Carlos PRIO, the leaders of the Federation of University Students, Dr. Fidel CASTRO Rus, leader of the "26 of July" Movement, and others. He pointed out that the affair was timed to coincide with the meeting in Habana of the Inter-American Press Association, in an attempt to demonstrate to the press of the hemisphere that his regime was unpopular and unable to maintain order. He said that the Government, the armed forces, and the Cuban people were unalterably opposed to such actions. In conclusion he declared that the Government was confident of its ability to maintain order, and that the murderers would be captured and turned over to the proper courts for judgment. While the Embassy's evaluation of the motivation of the assassination coincides with that given by Batista, no evidence has been made public which would definitely implicate those he alleges are the planners and instigators of the action.

(UNCLASSIFIED) POLICE KILL TEN IN HAITIAN EMBASSY. All of the Government's investigative and law enforcement bodies embarked on an intensive search for the killers immediately upon the assassination of Lt. Col. Blanco Rico. There were numerous arrests and questionings throughout the following day. Then on Monday, October 29, the police, personally led by their Chief, Brigadier Gen. Rafael SALAS Cañizares, attacked the Haitian Embassy residence, exchange gunfire with those inside, and killed ten Cuban civilians who had sought refuge there. Gen. Salas was seriously wounded in the affair and is still in critical condition. Two additional police officers were wounded. There were no survivors among the civilians other than the Embassy cook. The Government maintains that the police entered the building in response to a telephone call from an unidentified person, probably an Embassy servant, requesting assistance in ejecting some people who had forced their way in, and that Gen. Salas was fired on when he entered. A statement has since been issued identifying the dead, six of whom had sought asylum in the Haitian Embassy in late August and had apparently been living there since. The remaining four had entered that morning.

(UNCLASSIFIED) HAITIAN GOVERNMENT PROTESTS. The following evening, Tuesday October 30, the Haitian Chargé d'Affaires Dr. Gustave BORN, (the new Ambassador, Jacques. A. FRANCOIS, has not presented his credentials yet) held a press conference at which he stated that there had been no call for assistance from any Haitian official or employee at any time. He said that he and his associates had gone out to lunch, and upon returning found the residence under assault by the police. He acknowledged that those within the house were shooting at the police. He maintained that he had been manhandled and prevented at gunpoint from entering. He said that the affair was an unrequested, unprovoked and unjustified violation of the right of diplomatic immunity, and that

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**CONFIDENTIAL**  
(Classification)

Page 3 of  
Encl. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Desp. No. 260  
From HABANA

his Government was protesting most strongly to the Cuban Government. In that connection, he released copies of what he said was a telegram sent by President Batista to President MAGLOIRE of Haiti, mentioning the "fraternal sentiments" uniting their two countries, and reaffirming his "personal friendship" and the "highest regard" of his Government.

(CONFIDENTIAL) Comment. There were many eyewitnesses of the affair, several of them Americans, none of whom were injured. Nevertheless, there is much confusion surrounding it, and the details are not clear. The police had been maintaining a watch on the Haitian and other Embassies in order to prevent, if possible, attempts by persons associated with the killing of Lt. Col. Blance Rice to obtain asylum. They knew of the six already in the building, and reportedly saw at least some of the later arrivals enter. They were also aware of the movements of the Haitian personnel, and it was probably more than coincidence that the assault took place when there were no Haitians present. But the Embassy understands that the Haitians were becoming increasingly irritated at the continued presence of the original group, and that Berne, the only Haitian present at the time, objected unsuccessfully to the entry of the additional group, at least some of whom forced their way in through the back, and left the house in despair - obviously within view of the police. Whatever the original intentions of the police, the affair got out of hand with the early wounding of Gen. Salas, and the attack was then pressed ruthlessly. Newsmen who managed to enter the house shortly afterwards describe it as a shambles, bathed in blood. They, and some among the police, say that contrary to official declarations most of the civilians were unarmed.

(CONFIDENTIAL) OTHER DEVELOPMENTS. Batista, and other principal figures of the Government, have repeatedly stated that constitutional guarantees including freedom of the press will not be suspended. They express deep regret over the affair of the Haitian Embassy, but apparently feel that it will not be followed by other violence. Isolated and apparently unrelated incidents have occurred. A small bomb exploded at the side entrance of the Habana municipal government building the night of October 29. Another bomb was thrown at the home of an alderman in the city of Santa Clara. The police broke up a series of student demonstrations in Santiago on the 29th, and there are said to be several students injured and others detained. The Council of the University of Habana, alarmed over the situation and the possibility of violence involving the students, suspended classes for the 30th and 31st. The police are still conducting an intense search in Habana for the alleged killers of Blance Rice, and during the past two days there have been several reports of raids and seizures, sometimes accompanied by gunfire. But while the recent happenings are a principal item of conversation, the people do not appear to be

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**CONFIDENTIAL**  
(Classification)

Page 4 of  
Encl. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Desp. No. 260  
From HABANA:

unduly alarmed, and the city seems nearly normal.

Batista made strenuous and apparently sincere efforts to handle the killing of Lt. Col. Blance Rice and the search for his murderers in a thoroughly legal and proper manner, without violence and with due regard to individual rights. The regrettable affair of the Haitian Embassy, however, has again exposed the administration to charges of unwarranted violence.

(UNCLASSIFIED) IAPA MEETING IN HABANA. Editors and publishers from almost all nations of the hemisphere met in Habana from October 24 to November 1 in the XII annual conference of the Inter-American Press Association (Sociedad Interamericana de Prensa). The Executive Committee, as its first matter of business, passed unanimously a resolution introduced by Dr. Herbert MOSES of Brazil (indirectly engineered by USIS) expressing sympathy with the Hungarian people in their rejection of Communism and "our sincere hope they may soon recover their inherent human right to freedom of expression." The resolution added that the IAPA hoped no American republic would ever suffer similar bloodshed "as the result of the suppression of the people's right to know and to express their opinions."

Highlight of the meeting was the presentation of the Freedom of the Press Committee's country-by-country report on October 30. This report, read by Jules DUBOIS of the Chicago Tribune, found that six countries - Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Nicaragua, <sup>Bolivia</sup> and Paraguay - have no freedom of the press, and observed that press restrictions in general are as bad as, or worse than, the previous 12 months. However, the report praised rapid advances toward complete press freedom in Argentina and Peru. The adverse report on Colombia and the Dominican Republic drew heated floor debate sparked by delegates representing government-controlled papers. The clean bill of health given the Cuban press inspired a fiery rebuttal from Luis Orlando RODRIGUEZ, owner of the closed opposition newspaper La Calle, and resulted in the IAPA's promise to attempt to bring about restoration of the paper to its owner. The expulsion hearing of Stanley ROSS, editor of Diario de Nueva York who admitted authorship of a letter to Generalissimo TRUJILLO offering to make the paper an undercover apologist for the Dominican leader, resulted in a 36-0 vote, with two abstentions, to drop him as an associate member of the IAPA. He remained at the meeting, however, as representative of the newspaper, which is itself a member.

### Psychological.

(UNCLASSIFIED) POLAND-HUNGARY. Havana dailies were unanimous in the opinion that recent events behind the Iron Curtain were not only of potential danger to the USSR, but also spelled trouble to

**CONFIDENTIAL**

CONFIDENTIAL  
(Classification)

Page 5 of  
Encl. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Desp. No. 260  
From HABANA

the satellite countries as well. Excelsior stated that scattered uprisings in Budapest had grown to full-scale revolution proportions and that the entire country was trying to free itself from the Communist yoke. The newspaper was also of the opinion that the Soviet control over the satellites has weakened to such an extent that Moscow must be expressing concern. Referring to the massacres by the Red Army, Excelsior stated that Soviet tanks could crush the Hungarian rebels, but that Moscow would be branded before the world as an imperialistic aggressor. Diario de la Marina looked upon the recent events in Poland and Hungary with optimism, and observed that the revolution behind the Iron Curtain showed that chinks were being made in the iron ring where the concentration of Soviet power rests. Publico predicted increased Soviet pressure in the satellites as a result of the recent uprisings, and forecast an even greater struggle to come. This newspaper felt that the Iron Curtain countries were looking to the West for help in their struggle for freedom, and concluded that the West must meet this challenge. Avance observed that the Polish and Hungarian uprisings were not against Stalinism, but rather against the present Soviet regime. Información pointed out that the USSR has lost control in Poland, and that the new Polish brand of Titoism, although still Communistic, is a brand of Communism without Moscow ties. Información stated that the new Soviet experiment of giving more autonomy to the satellites is a dangerous one and may work to Moscow's disadvantage.

Army.

(UNCLASSIFIED) Upon the assassination of Lt. Col. Antonio Blanco Rico (28 Oct. 56), Colonel Pedro A. BARRERA y Pérez of the Cuban Army has been designated Acting Chief of SIM (Servicio de Inteligencia Militar), as of 29 Oct. 56.

Colonel Hernando HERNANDEZ y Hernandez has been designated acting chief, replacing wounded Chief of the National Police Corps, Brig. Gen. Rafael SALAS Cañizares, 29 Oct. 56.

Navy, Air.

Negative.

  
Arthur Gardner

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