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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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FROM : AMEMBASSY, HABANA

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TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

DESP. NO.

January 31, 1956

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	041-10	R M/R-2 ana-4 90-2 JCA-10
	2-1	USIA-8 Army-35 May-39 air-2

SUBJECT: Joint Weeka No. 5 for State, Army, Navy and Air Departments from SANA.

via 16 OCB-2 OSD-2

(UNCLASSIFIED) OPPOSITION AGREES TO DISCUSS POLITICAL PROBLEMS. When BATISTA's letter to Cosme DE LA TORRIENTE (see Weeka No. 4) was made public, it was revealed that the President had not acceded to the opposition demand for a prior commitment regarding general elections nor had he set a date for a further interview with the head of the "Society of Friends of the Republic" (SAR). Instead, he repeatedly made the point that their previous meetings had been for the purpose of examining the problem, reviewing the fundamental points at issue, and establishing the bases for further discussion by commissions representing the opposing sides. He confirmed that he "preferred" not to express an opinion regarding the kind of elections to be held but to leave "the appropriate solution" for agreement between the commissions. He concluded by declaring that he had conferred "full powers" on the commission already designated by the government coalition parties.

The opposition groups met with the SAR to consider Batista's letter and eventually decided to name commissioners even though their conditions for doing so had not been met. Accordingly three commissioners each were designated by GRAU's Auténticos, PRIO's Auténticos, CHIBAS' "unified" Ortodoxos, ANDREU's Demócratas, and PARDO Llada's "Movement of the Nation". Unanimity was lacking since the miniscule "Movement of Radical Liberation", which was one of the groups backing the SAR, refused to go along with setting up a commission unless assurance of general elections before 1958 were received from the government side.

The question that has now arisen is whether Carlos MARQUEZ Sterling and his "free" Ortodoxos and Federico FERNANDEZ Casas and the "registered" Ortodoxos are to be represented on the opposition commission. Both groups want to be and there is no objection from the government commissioners. However, opposition exists among the "unified" Ortodoxos who do not recognize the dissident Marquez Sterling and Fernández Casas elements.

FCFornes Jr; JdeZengetita; Cmdr. K. Krisel:mbw

REPORTER

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It is expected that meetings of the commissions will begin this week.

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) Comment. The original decision of the opposition groups not to name commissioners without assurances of general elections at an early date was criticized as a tactical error and a refusal to explore all possible means of arriving at a solution of the political problem, even though the particular means proposed by Batista might prove dilatory and unfruitful. The decision to proceed with the commissioner idea despite Batista's refusal to commit himself was undoubtedly reached in recognition of the justice of this criticism and of the fact that the opposition had little choice to do otherwise if it had any hope of breaking the existing impasse. However, even before meetings of the commissioners start, some opposition leaders are expressing themselves pessimistically regarding the outcome and it is possible to suspect that the groundwork is being laid for charges of government "intransigence" as responsible for possible failure to come to any agreement.

(UNCLASSIFIED) MARTI ANNIVERSARY AND STUDENT DISORDERS. January 28th was the anniversary of the birth of José MARTI, the Washington of Cuba. Flowers are customarily laid at his statue in Havana's Central Park by various civic organizations and school children. Although not authorized to do so because of the possibility of disorders disturbing other ceremonies, members of the University Student Federation persisted in an attempt to lay a wreath and make speeches. The effort was frustrated by the police with numerous arrests. There followed protest manifestations by other students at the University, with gunfire reported and more arrests. In all about 40 students were apprehended and some 15 "Opposition Women" were taken into custody. The students claimed that one of their number was wounded. The most spectacular episode was the escape of several students, including the president of the FEU, from the "Black Maria" in which they were being taken to jail. On the 30th, the Havana Urgency Court promptly ordered provisional liberty for the arrested women and a good number of the students, with the release of most of the rest in prospect.

Student brushes with authorities on Martí's anniversary were reported from Santiago de Cuba and other interior localities. Some students were injured in these disorders.

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) Comment. These disturbances, while less serious than those of last November and December, indicate that the students continue determined to seize every opportunity to show their anti-regime sentiments by activities that are bound to result in clashes with the police and disorders of varying degrees of seriousness, with possibilities of personal injuries.

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(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) FIDEL CASTRO'S REVOLUTION AND MARTI. Reports of the revolutionary activity of Fidel CASTRO Ruz among Cuban émigrés, especially in the United States, made it plain that he compares his "July 26 Revolutionary Movement" (the date being that of the attack on the Moncada barracks led by him in 1953) with the activities of idolized Cuban hero José Martí. Castro emphasized Martí-like purity of motives and claims that his "Movement" is against not only the Batista regime but also all the "bad" governments and governors Cuba has had.

The Martí motif is again apparent in a Castro leaflet that circulated last week and which reads as follows: "Citizen: Honor Martí this January 28 - Help the Revolution by giving a day's salary as your brother of the Emigration will do - If you don't know a responsible figure of the Movement in your locality, make your contribution reach Fidel Castro through an opposition figure that merits your confidence - July 26 Revolutionary Movement."

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) Comment. Opinion continues to be that while Fidel Castro may have the will and enthusiasm, he lacks the means for successful revolution.

(UNCLASSIFIED) TIME BOMB IN SANTIAGO. The press reported that there had been found unexploded in Santiago de Cuba an explosive device consisting of several sticks of dynamite, timed by means of an alarm clock to go off an hour after it was found. It had been planted in an area devoted to storage facilities for gasoline and other combustibles. Assuming the correctness of the report, it is obvious that the results of the explosion, had that occurred, of a device as powerful as that described in the locality where it was said to have been found, could have been very serious indeed.

(UNCLASSIFIED) MINISTER OF HEALTH DIES. Dr. Alberto RECIO Ferns, Minister of Health and Public Welfare, died on January 28, 1956. This is the second death in Batista's cabinet in less than three months, the first having been that of the Minister of Education last November. Dr. Recio had just been granted sick leave of absence because of his health and Dr. Carlos SALAS Humara, administrative Under Secretary, had already taken over as acting Minister.

(UNCLASSIFIED) LABOR LEADER-CONGRESSMEN END HUNGER STRIKE. After receiving the visit of the Cardinal-Archbishop of Habana and attending his argument that as Christians they could not take their own lives through a hunger strike, Congressmen Conrado BECQUER, Conrado RODRIGUEZ, and Jorge CRUZ Pérez ended their strike on January 26 after a fast of 160 hours. While they had

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received the visits of opposition leaders such as former Presidents Grau and Prío, few non-partisan commentators had expressed sympathy for them. CTC and FNTA Secretaries General MUJAL and MARTINEZ had remained unmoved by the efforts of Angel COFINO, Secretary General of the Electric Plant Workers, to arrange a compromise solution to the dispute that had led to the hunger strike.

Psychological

Negative.

Army

Negative.


Navy

(UNCLASSIFIED) VISIT OF CHAIRMAN OF AEC. Rear Admiral Lewis L. STRAUSS, USNR, Chairman of the United States Atomic Energy Commission, arrived in Havana on the evening of 26 January 1956, for a five-day vacation visit. He was accompanied by his wife, son, and daughter-in-law. While in Havana, Rear Admiral Strauss saw Ambassador Arthur GARDNER; the Cuban acting Minister of State, Gonzalo GUELL; and the Chairman of the Cuban Nuclear Energy Commission and Minister without Portfolio, Gustavo GUTIERREZ, who is also President of the National Economic Council. Rear Admiral Strauss is returning to Washington today. Due to his old friendship with the Ambassador, Rear Admiral Strauss' informal contacts with the Cubans were particularly fruitful.

Air

Negative.

For the Ambassador:


Vinton Chapin
Counselor of Embassy

cc: AmEmbassies, Ciudad Trujillo, Port-au-Prince.

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