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FROM : HABANA 211 February 1 1950

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REF : Embtel 57, January 27, 1950; Embassy's despatch No. 190, T OF STATE
January 30, 1950.

SUBJECT : REPUBLICAN PARTY WITHDRAWS FROM GOVERNMENT ALLIANCE. POLITICAL
RESIGNATION OF REPUBLICAN CABINET OFFICERS. SITUATION. DCR
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The political alliance between the Government's PRC(A) "Autentico" Party and the Republican Party, which had endured since 1944, came to an end on January 27, 1950. On that date the Republican Party president, Dr. Guillermo ALONSO Pujol, who is also the Vice President of Cuba, addressed a letter to President PRIO announcing that the alliance no longer existed. President Prio had requested the resignation of the Republican Minister of Justice, Dr. Ramon CORONA, on January 26 on the grounds that Dr. Corona no longer enjoyed the President's confidence. The resignation was tendered verbally on January 27 and on January 28 a Presidential Decree appeared in the Gaceta Oficial accepting the resignation.

Immediate cause for the President's request that Corona resign was the latter's participation in political negotiations between the Republican Party and opposition leaders (and ex-Presidents) GRAU and BATISTA. This, however, was merely the culmination of a break that has been building up since the conclusion by the Autenticos of a separate pact with the Demócratas. This pact, entered into over Republican protests, had tended to weaken Republican power and influence since it enabled the Autenticos 1) to lean less heavily on the Republicans for support, and 2) to play the Demócratas off against the Republicans. The latter, seeing themselves placed in an untenable position boding ill for their political future, decided to strike out on an independent line, but gathering in along the way such opposition allies as they could.

The first serious rift occurred when President Prio successfully supported his brother Antonio (ex-Minister of Finance) as the Autentico candidate for the office of Mayor of Habana in the June 1, 1950 elections. The President, with the 1952 presidential succession in mind, apparently considers it desirable for a member of his family - and party - to hold down Cuba's No. 2 political post. The Republicans, on the other hand, felt they could not accept this arrangement. They then took the present Mayor of Habana (who succeeded to the office upon the suicide of the late Mayor Supervielle), an Autentico, into the Republican Party and nominated him as the Republican candidate for the post. This was generally considered as the real break to be formalized at the first

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opportunity. As indicated above, the opportunity came when Dr. Corona, a Cabinet Minister, personally participated in political negotiations with opposition leaders.

In his letter of January 27 Sr. Alonso Pujol referred to Dr. Corona's resignation and, in addition, transmitted the formal resignations of Minister of Communications, Sr. Arturo ILLAS Cuza and of his own son, Sr. Guillermo ALONSO Bermudez, the Under Secretary for National Defense, also members of the Republican Party. Dr. Alonso Pujol recalled that the alliance between the two parties had resulted in the election of two successive Autenticos as Presidents of the Republic, the latter being President Prio himself. He admitted having negotiated with opposition groups for local pacts in connection with the forthcoming municipal elections, but stated this had been done with the President's prior knowledge and consent. (Corona's position is that he participated not as a Cabinet officer, but as Republican Party leader in Oriente Province.) Dr. Alonso Pujol called attention to Prio's alliance with the Demócratas, entered into independently and without the consent of the Republicans, affirming that the Republicans had the same democratic right.

Out of the welter of recrimination emerges the fact that the President of the Republican Party has asserted in writing that the alliance which resulted in the election of two Presidents of Cuba no longer exists. This fact gives rise to a new political situation wherein the various political groups will endeavor to line up new alliances or even to form entirely new parties.

The departure of the Republicans from the fold of government parties will open the field for further participation in the Government by the Prio faction of the Autentico Party itself, to that extent strengthening the group in question. (Prime Minister VARONA has indicated the future Cabinet may be composed entirely of Prio Autenticos with perhaps one or two apolitical technicians known for their ability and probity.) It will also prepare the ground for increased Liberal participation in the Government, but not necessarily in the Cabinet since the Liberals declare they want only local municipal pacts with the Autenticos in return for Liberal support of Antonio Prio's candidacy in Habana (the consensus is that an over-all national pact between Autenticos and Liberals will not be forthcoming at this time).

On the opposition side there are indications that an electoral pact may be entered into by the Republicans and the rebel Autentico group under Grau's leadership. Batista has

participated in these discussions and may decided to join the "united opposition" against the Prios. Batista has already indicated that he is prepared to scuttle his brother "Panchin's" candidacy for Mayor of Habana under Batista's PAU banner. As Governor of Habana Province, "Panchin" has acquired certain influence, but in a recent test of strength within the PAU came out a poor second to his brother, the ex-President of Cuba.

The Communists, who have no chance as a party (the PSP), are opposed to any democratic government in power and have already announced they are prepared to retire their candidate (Communist leader Anibal ESCALANTE) in favor of a united opposition candidate. Whether or not their participation is accepted, the Communists are expected to join the opposition on a national basis reserving the right to make any local deviations that might better serve Communist interests.

The only remaining major party not discussed thus far is that of Eddie CHIBAS, leader of the PPC (Partido del Pueblo Cubano), who insists - and apparently will continue to insist - on a completely independent line free of any connection with "dishonest" groups (comprising, as far as Chibás is concerned, all other political parties). The PPC candidate for Mayor of Habana is Manuel BISBE. While the PPC concedes that Bisbé has little chance in the Habana mayoralty campaign, many of Chibás' followers cling firmly to the belief that the revulsion of voters against dishonesty will sweep Chibás into the Presidency in 1952 by a wide margin. This belief is not shared by the "practical politicians" of Cuba who, nevertheless, could be mistaken.

The degree to which ex-President Grau will succeed in wresting power from the Prio group within the Autentico Party and the extent to which such strange bed-fellows as Alonso Pujol, Grau and Batista, et al, will succeed in forming a united opposition are unknown political factors (entirely apart from future economic and financial developments) on which considerable additional light must be shed before any accurate appraisal of present or future electoral strength of the opposing political groups could be attempted.

The Machiavellian mentalities of both Grau and Alonso Pujol also add elements of uncertainty to the present situation. No one really knows whether Grau's activities are directed towards a complete split in the Autentico Party or whether he is merely attempting to apply pressure on the Prio group to force it to renew his presidency of the Autentico Party and to restore to him much of the influence he formerly exercised in party conclaves. Alonso Pujol is

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almost equally unpredictable. Since the issue at stake is political power rather than political theory, Alonso Pujol would be capable of returning to the government fold should such a step be made attractive to him. Nevertheless, it seems probable, at the moment at least, that he will continue his present efforts to line up a solid opposition. In so doing his line of reasoning may be that neither Grau nor Batista would ever agree to support the other, but might be induced to join forces in backing an opposition candidate for Mayor of Habana, probably the present Republican incumbent, Sr. Nicolas CASTELLANOS, in 1950, and the Republican Party president, Dr. Alonso Pujol, for President in 1952.

At the present time there are many who feel that Antonio Prio does not have a chance in the 1950 elections and that the Prios will be broken politically in the 1952 elections. Others feel equally strongly that with control of the Government nothing can stop Antonio Prio either in 1950 or 1952.

The foregoing considerations are, of course, based on the assumption that there will be no interruption either in government stability or in the normal democratic processes as exercised in Cuba.

For the Ambassador:



Earl T. Crain
First Secretary of Embassy

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