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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMEMBASSY, HABANA

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DESP. NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

September 9, 1952

DATE

REF :

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SUBJECT: President Batista's September 4 "Soldiers' Day" Speech

President Fulgencio BATISTA delivered a speech, broadcast over a nation-wide hook-up, on September 4, the 19th anniversary of the 1933 military uprising which led to the eventual seizure of power by Batista, then a sergeant. The day was celebrated as "Soldiers' Day" and the speech was given at Camp Columbia (Ciudad Militar) before Cuban officials and the military establishment at that post. An official holiday was declared for Government employees but business in general went on as usual.

In his speech President Batista described what he termed the corruption and abuses of the Prío administration, which he said it had become necessary to terminate. Batista said that his Government respected freedom of thought and promised tolerance in connection with the purely political activities of opposition political parties. He warned against excesses, however. The President reaffirmed the Government's determination to hold general elections, the date for which was set for the third Sunday in November 1953 by the Constitutional Statutes promulgated April 4, 1952.

The address was probably of interest principally because President Batista gave therein his version of an alleged plot by President Prío whereby Prío allegedly had planned to call off the general elections scheduled for June 1, 1952 and remain in power as a dictator. He asserted that Prío had planned to stage his coup on or about April 15, 1952. It will be recalled that in Batista's first address to the nation on March 10, the day he seized power, he made this same accusation against Prío. The present accusation is therefore a reaffirmation, with additional details.

President Batista said that President Prío had conversed with high-ranking officers of the Armed Forces, announcing to them his proposal to prevent the defeat of his candidate, Carlos HEVIA. Batista said that although President Prío was not unaware that groups of pistoleros in his service planned to assassinate Batista, he (Batista) nevertheless tried to head off

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the movement which was to bring about Prío's downfall. Batista said that in view of his information he had written several notes to the Vice President of the Republic (ALONSO PUJOL) and had also notified the newspaper Alerta of the Government's plans.

Batista stated he also wrote to President Prío, reminding him of his responsibility in connection with plans that were afoot to assassinate him (Batista) and accusing Prío of having flown secretly to Central America for the purpose of conspiring against neighboring countries. Batista said he had placed a copy of his letter to Prío "in sure hands" to be published in the event he (Batista) were assassinated.

Regarding the alleged Prío plot, Batista stated that during the first week of February 1952 he was visited by his old friend, Dr. Juan J. REMOS, who told him he had information of the gravest import. According to Batista, Dr. Remos said that President Prío had informed him (Remos) that if it became obvious, by means of public surveys or otherwise, that it was impossible for Prío's candidate to win, then Prío planned to stage a coup d'etat in the very near future, giving April 15 as the latest date for the coup. Batista said "I deduce from these words that he would assume direct command as Supreme Chief of the Armed Forces [at this point Batista guffawed and the several hundred soldiers listening to him guffawed], ignoring the fact that he had been made President of the Republic through the favor of his chief [Grau] without the support of the popular masses nor the devotion of the soldiery. He would be unable to maintain himself, in any way whatever, in power or in command. I was surprised and stupefied. What I had just heard was terrible and, with all consideration for my friend, it was hard for me to believe it."

Batista said that shortly thereafter he received the second news of Prío's proposed coup. He said that José GARCIA Montes, PAU leader in the House of Representatives, told him that during a luncheon with the Vice President the latter had expressed his fears that President Prío would attempt a coup d'etat about the middle of April or the beginning of May if his presidential candidate did not acquire sufficient stature to appear as a possible winner. Batista said that Justo Luis del POZO, an old political friend, had informed him that he had been told by Government officials that the President was apparently not going to relinquish power. Batista said he heard the same story from members of the Armed Forces, including the police. These groups also kept him informed as to the President's plan to "kill all opposition party leaders" in retaining power by force.

The President went on to say that he had been informed by his colleague, Anselmo ALLIEGRO, that President Prío approached

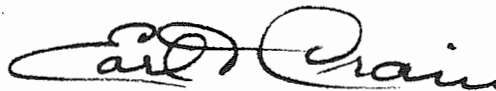
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Alliegro during the Rancho Boyeros agricultural exposition (Feb. 22-March 2) and that Prfo had seemed worried regarding an opposition victory in the elections. Prfo reportedly said that he had tried to get in touch with Batista but that Batista had made such an approach impossible. Prfo was reported as stating that the Government must win "by any means" and asked Alliegro to use his influence with Batista to enter into an electoral pact to that end. Prfo was quoted as stating that "here we can permit everything except an Ortodoxo victory . . . I am not going to do what Batista did who was so foolish as to turn power over to his enemies knowing that he would be persecuted."

Press clippings reporting President Batista's speech are enclosed.

For the Ambassador:



Earl T. Crain  
Acting Counselor of Embassy

Enclosures

Press clippings

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## Batista Details Alleged Plot By Prio To Retain Control

President Batista yesterday gave the people the "inside story" of the March 10 coup d'etat by which he assumed power in a major radio address to the nation delivered on the occasion of Soldiers Day. The President, speaking from Camp Columbia, Cuban army GHK, for the first time cited dates and names to support his oft-repeated contention that his bid for power was made only because the then Prio government itself planned an April revolution which would have led to "chaos and anarchy."

"Life, family and history were at stake" when he reached his decision to take over control of the government, in the face of the "irresponsibility" of the then Chief Executive, Batista told the troops under his command and his radio audience.

The "decisiveness" of the surprise March 10 coup d'etat "kept the nation from bloodshed and anarchy," he added. The "progressive, democratic and revolutionary government" established after that historic date, he emphasized, "will be consolidated, developed and carried on with the aid of God and the warm support of the people."

Batista said that although he knew paid assassins of then President Prio planned his (Batista's) assassination, he (Batista) had tried to avert the overthrow of the Prio government.

He said it was during the early part of February that an old friend, Professor Juan J. Remos, called on him to report that Prio himself had told him (Remos) that he (Prio) was going to stage a revolution, and that it would come off not later than April 15.

A few days later, Batista added, Jorge Garcia Montes, one of the leaders of the political party he presided, told him that then Vice-President Alonso Pujol had commented at a luncheon that he was afraid that Prio would try to retain power by violence if the candidate of the government's political combine did not by May 1 show up as a likely winner in the 1952 general elections.

Friends of his in the army, navy and police forces were telling him at the same time that so-called "action groups" loyal to Prio were unifying under Prio's direction "to provoke disorders at a given moment, kill the principal opposition leaders and attack police stations," Batista said.

But it was not until he heard a report from Dr. Anselmo Alliegro on a conversation which he had with Prio in the early days of March that the need for quick and decisive action became imperative, Batista recalled.

Alliegro told him, according to Batista, that he (Prio) was willing to effect a political alliance with Batista to form a bloc which would guarantee victory in the general election "because we cannot permit the Ortodoxos (Cuban People's Party) to win."

Prio described the Ortodoxos as a group motivated "by hate and resentment... who would not respect even the sanctity of the family," Batista said he was told by Alliegro. The then President showed Alliegro the texts of intercepted telephone calls between Ortodoxo leaders which, Prio said, had indicated to him that it was a case of "kill or be killed."

if I did not lend my aid to the republic... Life, family and history were at stake."

From that day on, Batista said, "time was of the essence, and from that instant on there was no rest... I had not only the aid of those with whom I was in contact, but also of men from all units of the army, navy and police force... So many, so valiant, so decided and so loyal

a case of "kill or be killed."

~~Prío~~ was quoted as saying: "I am at a crossroads, and the only way out is through triumph, triumph at any and all costs... I have everything necessary to resolve this situation, even to the most extreme and violent methods."

Batista said that he considered Prío's statements so ill-advised and irresponsible "that I realized that there was no other solution in sight... Chaos would result

and police force... So many, so valiant, so decided and so loyal comrades through their decisive action ~~will not let our blood~~ and anarchy."

Batista, who as a sergeant led the Sept. 4, 1933, military uprising, told his military listeners in conclusion, "Comrades, we must clear away the rubbish from the road as before, to continue the march as yesterday, to give our country the best of ourselves tomorrow as well as today."