

AIR POUCH

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737.11/7-254

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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMEMBASSY, HABANA

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DESP. NO.

JUL 7 1954

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

July 2, 1954

DATE

REF : -

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	REC'D	OTHER
	ARA-4	CCIR-2 OLI-6 P-1 EURIX-1
	7/7	CIA-7 USIA-10 NAVY-3

SUBJECT: Information Office Issues Statement Defending Batista Against Charges of Sympathy with Communists.

Under date of July 1, 1954, the office of Publicity and Information of the Presidential Palace, which took over many of the functions of the now abolished Ministry of Information, issued a statement to refute stories allegedly published in the United States on the basis of accusations by ex-President PRIO which characterize President BATISTA as being "friendly with the communist party". The Embassy has been told that the statement was issued in English to the American wire services, The New York Times' representative and the Havana Post, and that it was written by Batista's public Relations man, an American citizen. The statement was supplied to the Embassy by Enrique PIZZI de Porras, director general of the OPI, and a copy is enclosed.

No Spanish text of the statement has appeared in Habana newspapers, but some carried a brief summary as reported by the Associated Press. A copy of the summary published by Información is enclosed.

For the Ambassador:


 Carlos C. Hall
 Counselor of Embassy

Enclosures:

- ✓ 1. Copy of statement.
- 2. Press clipping - Información.

FCFornes, Jr./ cv
REPORTER

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ACTION COPY - DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The action office must return this permanent record copy to DC/R files with an endorsement of action taken.

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The following statement was issued today by the Office of
Publicity and Information of the Presidential Palace - July 1/54.

During the past few weeks certain newspapers in the United States have published stories which, directly or by implication, have attempted to characterize President Fulgencio Batista of Cuba as being friendly with the communist party. In every case the stories were based on the completely false and malicious accusations being made in the United States by former President Carlos Prio.

While we believe that the prime purpose of Prio's activities is to divert North American public attention from his own past relations with communists in Central America, we feel that publication of the absurd statements of Prio may do serious damage to Cuba, to the good relations between the peoples of the United States and Cuba and to President Batista. For that reason we would like to refer to certain historical facts with the hope that the newspapers which have published the fabricated information will be able better to judge the true situation with regard to communism in Cuba.

We are certain that Prio would rather not have the people of the United States know, particularly at this time, that in 1951, while serving as President, he established and maintained relations with certain groups of communists in Central America and that he made an unauthorized trip to Guatemala in that year, to confer with communist agents and communist sympathizers. On that occasion Batista, then a member of the Cuban Senate, wrote a letter to Prio and warned him against making such a trip without the specific authorization of the national congress. The warning was ignored and Prio has never given the Cuban people a satisfactory answer for such an unprecedented trip to Central America.

We are certain also that Prio would like very much to divert public attention from the criminal charges pending against him in the federal courts of the United States and in Cuba.

The accusation has been made repeatedly that the communist party supported the candidacy of Batista in the presidential elections of 1940. It has also been said that the communist party were friendly to Batista in 1948 and 1950.

(sic)

In charging the/Batista had the support of the communist party in 1940, Prio is using the old weapon of telling half-truths. The fact is that during that period sides were being

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chosen for World War II and the governments of the United States and Great Britain, as well as other Allied powers, were actually seeking the support of Soviet Russia for the fight against the Axis powers. The charge that the communists supported Batista in 1948 and 1950 is a plain lie. In 1948 Batista was the successful candidate for the Senate on the ticket of the Liberal and Democratic parties. In those same elections Prio was elected to the presidency and his candidacy had the indirect support, at least, of the communist party. This same communist party support was offered to Batista in 1948 and he flatly refused to accept it.

(sic)

Furthermore, it is an undeniable fact that during the administration of President Grau San Martin, in 1944, Prio as a Senator and as Minister of Labor, helped the communists to make their gratest (sic) inroads into the ranks of Cuban labor unions. There is nothing in the record to show that Prio did one single thing to prevent the infiltration of communism, although he occupied one of the most important posts in the Grau government. It is also true that shortly after Grau San Martin went into the presidency in 1944, Carlos Prio made a pack with the communist controlled CTC (Confederation of Cuban Workers) by which the communists were given certain very coveted patronage privileges in payment for their support of the Grau-Prio government.

In order to put the record straight, we believe it important to point out these additional facts:

When President Batista came into power in the spring of 1952 he found that the Soviet Russian Embassy in Havana was actually the headquarters for communist espionage and intrigue being carried on throughout the Western Hemisphere. As many as 250 communist agents were housed and trained at the embassy at one time and they enjoyed all the privileges of legitimate diplomat. This had been going on for several years during the administration of Carlos Prio and nothing had been done to destroy this threat to the democratic nations of America. On the contrary, Prio permitted communist agents to infiltrate into Central America through the "espionage mill" being operated by the communists in the Soviet Embassy in Havana.

Within weeks after he came into power in March of 1952, President Batista cancelled the diplomatic privileges of the communist agents and broke up the communist spy nest. His actions led to a complete severance of relations with the Soviet Union.

During the past few months the government of President Batista has taken the following specific steps to combat communism:

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1. Closed the communist newspaper, HOY.
2. Passed a law prohibiting the employment of communists in any public service, such as the national, provincial or municipal governments of Cuba.
3. Passed a law making it a prison offense to send communist literature or propaganda through the mails, or by any other means or distribution.
4. Passed a law providing for the deportation of foreigners engaged in communist activities, including the dissemination of communist propaganda.
5. Established a permanent, active commission of cabinet ministers to study and recommend ways and means of combatting communism in labor unions and in public services.

A communist sympathizer would hardly sponsor such stringent measures against communism and the enactment of these laws should provide a very emphatic answer to the ridiculous accusations against President Batista, which have been inspired by Carlos Prio and published in certain newspapers in the United States.

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PALACIO

Acusado Prío de haber favorecido al comunismo

"Oculta que en 1951 mantuvo relaciones con grupos de Centroamérica"... Declaración de un vocero oficial

"Fué a Guatemala sin permiso, para conferenciar"

~~Sugerencias de industriales para la Ley de Estimulación... Este mes inaugurarán 12 comedores populares~~

El director de la Oficina de Publicidad e Información de Palacio, señor Enrique Pizzi de Porras, hizo ayer unas declaraciones a la Prensa Asociada, que a su vez las transmitió al extranjero en la forma siguiente:

"En una declaración formal el Gobierno acusó hoy al ex presidente Carlos Prío Socarrás, de favorecer la infiltración comunista en América Central.

"Enrique Pizzi de Porras, vocero de la presidencia, expidió una declaración negando los cargos formulados por Prío Socarrás en los Estados Unidos, en los que hizo aparecer al Presidente Fulgencio Batista como simpatizante del comunismo cubano durante su pasado Gobierno.

"Pizzi de Porras dijo: "Estamos seguros que Prío preferiría que el pueblo de los Estados Unidos no supiera ahora, especialmente en estos momentos, que en 1951, cuando era Presidente, estableció y mantuvo relaciones con ciertos grupos de comunistas en Centroamérica. Y que realizó sin autorización un viaje a Guatemala en ese año, para conferenciar con agentes comunistas y con simpatizantes comunistas".

"La declaración también enumeró las medidas positivas tomadas contra los comunistas y el comunismo en Cuba desde que Batista ha estado en el poder, incluyendo la terminación de las relaciones con la Unión Soviética y las medidas para extirpar la influencia comunista en Cuba".