

AIR POUCH

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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM

Ambassador HABANA

TO

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

REF

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

127

April 7, 1959

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SUBJECT: Conversation with Minister of State on Pending Matters

The Ambassador called on the Minister of State, Dr. Roberto Agramonte, on April 3. The following matters were discussed:

1. Fidel Castro's Attitude toward Communism

The Ambassador expressed the view that the luncheon meeting which he had had on April 1 with Dr. Agramonte, Dr. Fidel Castro, Ambassador Dihigo, and Dr. Manuel Elsbe had been useful. The Minister agreed and said he thought progress was gradually being made toward a basis of cooperation with the United States. The Ambassador remarked that there was "still a long way to go." The Ambassador said the United States was extremely sensitive these days to expressions of an intermediate position and felt that in the conflict between the free world and Communism countries had to take firm positions. The Minister said an artificial situation had been created by Figueres' attempts to lecture Castro publicly in the meeting of March 22, and that Castro had now "returned" from the intermediate position he had taken on that occasion in pique at Figueres. Agramonte said Castro had since told him, Dihigo, and Bisbe that he recognized that Cuba was part of the American continent and accepted the obligations which this entailed. Castro had told them, moreover, that his Government was based on four nuclei of support: the 26th of July Movement, the Orthodox Party, the Catholics, and the Protestants. The Ambassador commented that Castro in his "Meet the Press" appearance on television on April 2 had left the road wide open for Communism. Dr. Agramonte said he believed that in due course Castro would close this road.

2. Castro Trip

The Ambassador requested that the Minister of State provide the Embassy with a note listing all persons who would accompany the Prime Minister on his visit to the United States. This he said, would facilitate the issuance of visas to these persons and he suggested that their passports also be sent to the Embassy for visa.

3. Assignment of Patterson and Carranza

With reference to the desire expressed by President Urrutia and Dr. Agramonte to have Mr. Patterson and Mr. Carranza assigned to the American Embassy in Habana, the Ambassador expressed pleasure at this indication of confidence in the two

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1127
Habana

persons in question, but said that both were beyond the reach of the U. S. Government to send. Patterson, he said, had resigned from Government service to go into private business, and Carranza was now working with the Government of Guatemala.

4. Release of American Citizens under Detention

The Ambassador referred to the discussion of the Nye case with Castro on April 1 and reiterated the hope that it would be possible for the Cuban Government to reach an early decision in this case in view of the great interest that centered around it in the United States. He suggested also the possible desirability of having competent specialists examine Nye's mental state. He suggested that a memorandum be sent to Dr. Castro to remind him of his intention to do something with regard to this case. Dr. Agramonte said he had sent Castro a letter from Nye's mother as just such a reminder.

The Ambassador expressed his appreciation for the effective assistance rendered by the Ministry in obtaining the release from prison of various American citizens. He promised to send the Minister a revised list of the Americans who were still under detention.

5. Wheat and Flour

The Ambassador inquired whether the Minister could tell us anything yet in regard to our note (No. 9 of January 15, 1959) with respect to Cuban restrictions on the importation of wheat and flour. The Minister consulted the Under Secretary, Dr. Aguero, who said that the matter had been referred to the Minister of Commerce and that he would follow up on it.

6. New Dispositions Affecting Imported Rice

The Ambassador stated that the new resolution requiring importers of rice to acquire one-half as much domestic rice as imported, and placing a new tax on imported rice, appeared to be in violation of Cuba's commitments in GATT. The Ambassador handed the Minister a note to this effect (No. 48 of March 30, 1959).

7. Statement of Cuban Ambassador to Japan Re Preferences

The Ambassador noted that the Cuban Ambassador to Japan had been quoted in the press as having stated in Tokyo that henceforth Japan would enjoy the same privileges as other foreign countries in shipments to Cuba, and that Cuba intended to purchase Japanese goods to the amount of the Cuban sugar bought by Japan. He mentioned that the latter part of this statement had already caused an immediate adverse reaction in the Cuban textile industry. Dr. Agramonte said he was issuing on that same day a statement to the press correcting the misapprehensions caused by Ambassador Alzugoray's statement.

8. Extradition of Cuban "War Criminals"

The Ambassador expressed concern at continued statements by high officials

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

(Classification)

Page 3
1127
Habana

of the Cuban Government charging the United States with giving a haven to Cuban "war criminals", and stated that to the best of our information no requests had yet been made by the Cuban Government for extradition of such persons in accordance with the procedures prescribed in the bilateral extradition agreement between the two countries. The Minister said that on the advice of the American firm which had been retained for prosecuting these cases, no requests had yet been made with regard to the first case, that of Rolando Masferrer, pending legislative action depriving Masferrer of his immunity as a Cuban Senator. This had now been taken care of, Dr. Agramonte said, and a request for extradition would be instituted very shortly. The Minister stated that it was true that Cubans did feel aggrieved that persons like Masferrer were being received hospitably in the United States. The Ambassador strongly emphasized that the United States should not be blamed for the failure of the Cuban Government thus far to seek extradition in accordance with the agreed procedures.

9. Visit of National War College Group

The Ambassador stated that a group from the National War College would visit Habana from May 21 to May 23 and expressed the hope that it would be possible for the group to be briefed by high officials of the Cuban Government, including if possible the Minister of State with respect to Cuban foreign policy and the Prime Minister with respect to the revolution and the revolutionary program. He said the group would like also an opportunity to call on the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Comandante Raul Castro. The Minister offered to explore this matter, and the Ambassador promised to send him a note of reminder.

10. UN Expeditionary Force

The Ambassador reverted to the subject of the UN Expeditionary Force concerning which he had spoken with the Minister on a previous occasion, and handed him an Aide-Memoire (April 3, 1958) urging Cuba's continued support. The Minister said that the Cuban Government was at the present time studying the question of its contributions to various international agencies, on a number of which he had discovered that Cuba was behind.

For the Ambassador:



Daniel M. Braddock
Minister-Counselor

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