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MEMORANDUM OF INFORMATION

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PARTICIPANTS: Sr. Vasco T. L. Da Cunha, Ambassador of Brazil
William G. Bowdler, Political Officer, American Embassy, Habana

DATE: August 7, 1956

File: Political

At a dinner given by Ambassador and Mrs. Smith at the Residence, I was approached by the Brazilian Ambassador who indicated that he wished to exchange views on the domestic political situation.

Ambassador Da Cunha stated he was growing increasingly concerned over the trend of events during the past few weeks in Cuba. The reports which he had from Oriente indicated that the Army was taking heavy losses. As a result morale among the troops was growing worse, which in turn was reflected in increasing restiveness among the officers. The detention of General SOGA de Quesada he was inclined to attribute to this, although he had heard other explanations such as Quesada's attitude on the Ventura case. I stated that the reports which we have in general coincide with his, indicating, however, that we had little which could be regarded as confirmed information.

The Brazilian Ambassador also mentioned the increase in police brutality in Habana, particularly during the past month. His sources he regarded as good. He stated that in his judgment this situation had reached such a point that he thought the Diplomatic Corps should make some type of representation to the Government. He inquired whether we were aware of what was going on and what Ambassador Smith would think of the Diplomatic Corps saying something to the Minister of State, as was done after the Haitian Embassy affair in 1956. I told him that we had received many reports of police brutality in recent weeks. As in the case of the reports from Oriente, it was difficult to verify them. As to Ambassador Smith's attitude on his idea, I suggested that he might wish to speak directly to him about it. Ambassador Da Cunha then stated that he would talk to the Papal Nuncio first to see what his reaction was.

On the outlook for a solution to the Cuban situation, the Brazilian Ambassador was very pessimistic. From a military standpoint, he stated, there was a stalemate between the Army and the revolutionary opposition which could go on for some time. In the meantime the senseless bloodshed would continue and probably get worse. The tragedy is, he went on, that there is no ready solution. The elections, if held, would solve nothing. The only other alternative would be a public uprising sparked by the revolutionary opposition or a military coup by responsible officers who were tired with the existing state of affairs. Of the two he hoped that it would be the latter and that it would come soon. He was fearful of the chaos which would follow the overthrow of the regime, and thought that a strong military junta offered the best hope for controlling mob action.

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