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Habana, June 13, 1945

Air Mail

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: Report of interview of ex-President BATISTA  
appearing in Mafiana, Habana, June 4, 1945.

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,  
Washington, D.C.

Sir:

I have the honor to refer to recent communications from the Embassy regarding ex-President BATISTA and to report that the June 4, 1945 issue of Mafiana, a minor sheet closely associated with Batista's henchman Jaime MARINE before the latter took up residence outside of Cuba, carried a somewhat lengthy interview granted by Batista to the newspaper's editor, José LOPEZ VILABOY in New York on May 28.

The answers which Batista is reported to have given to the questions regarding his return to Cuba and his opinion of the attacks constantly being made against him by the administration are worthy of careful consideration.

Respecting his return to Cuba, which it will be recalled, he has often announced as scheduled for June, Batista reportedly stated as follows:

"There is nothing definite about my return for the moment. I have various projects and visits to make before I return; moreover I will wait for the reorganization of the parties and the partial elections to be held. It is necessary that public matters in Cuba be straightened out in the initial stages without my personal presence. My ideas and thoughts fill a large portion of the history of my country. The present government announced improvements and promised new things, when it was the opposition, which should be carried out under its direct responsibility. I do not desire that the official failures of this administration be attributed to my sympathizers or to my personal activities. I believe, however, that developments which make a mockery of the Constitution and prevent a well-ordered and self-respecting life require the determination of all Cubans to aid the government in solving the problems, or to make it answer for its

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acts within the framework of the laws so that it may serve in an adequate and responsible manner the people who elected it. I will be amongst these latter but under conditions wherein my conduct may not be used to justify the deviation from the right path by leaders or organizations, or used as the basis for excuses for unjust persecutions of those who exercise the right of freely expressing an opinion or of calling themselves my friends. I have desired and still desire to devote myself to activities which will keep me away from public affairs, but everything seems to indicate that I will have to return to active politics in the future. I WILL NOT RETURN FOR THE TIME BEING. My friends and followers are at liberty to act. They may follow the dictates of their conscience. My advice is that they take an active part in politics, that they work and carry out their duties, doing nothing which will give the Government any reason to accuse them of imaginary conspiracies."

However turgid the style of this reported statement, one revelation of importance seems clear enough: Despite his numerous previous assured pronouncements that he would return to Cuba in the current month of June, Batista seems now to have found good reason to abandon that proposal and to state unequivocally that he will not be coming home for some time. This is of considerable significance. For the first time he is not so tongue-in-cheek cocksure about his own indispensability. He may, of course, surprise everybody by suddenly turning up. This seems unlikely, however, in view of the knowledge he must have that there are elements here who would not hesitate to shoot him down.

In answer to the question as to what he thought of the continued "allusions and threats" against him by Dr. GRAU San Martin, General Batista was reported to have stated as follows:

"I do not know what to attribute that tendency to. I always gave consideration and offered assurances to the chief of the opposition. I never mentioned him to offend or much less to threaten him. I referred to him as the opposition leader or as the President of the Republic. I also did so with a high degree of respect for his condition as a representative citizen and leader of a good portion of Cuban public opinion. Neither partisan passions nor accusations made against him were of any avail or had any influence on me. In the elections held last year he defeated a friend of mine who was the candidate of the parties of my administration. When he won I acknowledged the will of the people. He visited me at the Palace and I gave him an abrazo and congratulated him as a Cuban. We saw each other several times during my remaining four months in the Presidency. Our relations were cordial and gentlemanly. Later, on

October 10

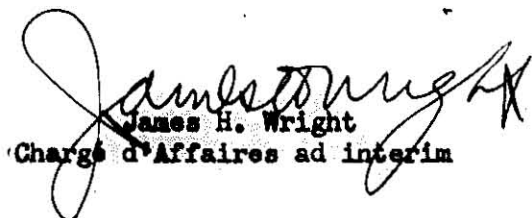
October 10 of last year, I turned over the Presidency to him at a public ceremony in the presence of the Supreme Court, as required by the Constitution, and with the assistance of the Diplomatic Corps, journalists and a huge public. Again there were abrazos, handshakes and smiles. I left him there as the voters wanted on June 1. I have travelled the length of the continent. Cuba has received honors for which I am grateful. As President of the Republic he was respected in all my statements. The Executive, the Legislative and Judicial powers were respected by me. I paid homage to liberty, to the freedom of the press, the free expression of thought and conscience; the civic prestige of our people and the honor of the nation were proclaimed high and wide every time I had an opportunity. Then what is the reason for such allusions and threats as Grau makes to me? Why did he say of me / in connection with the rumored conspiring with PEDRAZA in Mexico / that while he had no proof of my evil intentions, on the other hand he had no proof that I was not plotting against him?"

In these statements of ex-President Batista there may be detected, in addition to the plaintive note of sorrow for himself that he should be so unjustly treated by those who now wield the power that was for so long his own, an unmistakable breach in his own self-confidence. There appears for the first time to be some doubt in his mind as to the fulfillment of his own frequently and coyly avowed intentions to return, only at the call of the people themselves, of course, to retrieve them from the mess which he expected Grau would have gotten them in by now. He seems to betray a trace of suspicion that perhaps things will not go quite the way he had anticipated. Perhaps he never thought that the many failures, shortcomings and flagrant misdeeds of his regime would be made so much of and so effectively by the succeeding administration.

Neither the over-all current political picture nor Batista's place in it can be devised at the moment with any great degree of clarity. There is the possibility, however, remote though it may be, that the new and more salubrious political climate ushered in by Dr. Grau may be just different enough to prove uncongenial to the survival of what may have become the relatively primitive or transitional equipment possessed by Batista and his regime. It is remotely possible that he is becoming a moribund though by no means dead political duck. In the interests of the United States' relations with Cuba, and of Cuba itself, it is to be hoped that such may prove to be the case. It would be, however, the peak of over optimism to count him out at this early date.

Respectfully yours,

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James H. Wright  
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim