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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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DESP. NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

July 11 1957

REF :

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	7-4	USCA-10 Army

SUBJECT:

Joint Weeks No. 27 for State, ~~Foreign~~ ~~and~~ ~~Departments~~
From SANA.

(UNCLASSIFIED) GOVERNMENT RALLY IN SANTIAGO DE CUBA. Although no candidates have yet been announced for the 1958 elections, the Government Coalition Parties kicked off their campaign on Sunday, June 30 with a much publicized mass "peace" rally in Santiago de Cuba. Hailing it as a great success, some newspapers reported the attendance as high as 100,000. Eleven speakers, including Vice President Rafael GUAS Inclan, expressed the regime's hopes for peaceful elections in 1958 and its firm intention of turning over the government to the successful presidential candidate. Santiago was tense preceding the rally, with numerous acts of terrorism and sabotage. The city was heavily patrolled by police and military forces; persons entering the city were searched for arms and explosives and at least five men, including two soldiers, were killed by gunfire on June 30. The rally was covered by American newsmen including Larry Allen of Associated Press.

(CONFIDENTIAL) COMMENT: Apparent objectives were to show the country, and particularly Santiago, that the Government is in firm control, and to reprimand Santiago for insubordination. Many Santiago residents previously asked that the meeting not be held because of the unsettled political situation. Contrary to newspaper reports, our Consul in Santiago reports the attendance at approximately 5,000, with about half brought in from outside the city. Security patrols -- which for some time past have been armed with submachine guns and rifles -- were supplemented for few days before rally by squads of civilian strong-arm men (reportedly in the employ of Senator Rolando MASFERRER), heavily armed and wearing baseball caps to distinguish them. From June 25, onward there were increasing reports of rebel terrorism and police brutality. Many Santiago residents stayed indoors during weekend or left town altogether.

(UNCLASSIFIED) REBEL AND TERRORISTIC ACTIVITY. The Cuban Army announced that on June 30, near Palma Soriano, Province of Oriente, Government forces surprised a group of rebels, took 15 prisoners and seized their camp containing large stocks of arms and equipment.

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REPORTER

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There was a definite step-up of terroristic activity during the past week with reports of bombings and sabotage from all parts of the island. A bomb factory was discovered in Habana and there were bomb explosions throughout the week, climaxed by some 12 or more explosions and arson attempts on June 30 (including some in movie houses). Terroristic activity continued in Santiago de Cuba, Matanzas, and Bayamo, and in Camaguey armed men "used" their way into a radio station and broadcast complimentary statements about the "26th of July" Movement and Fidel CASTRO.

(CONFIDENTIAL) COMMENT. The Army Attaché has been informed that 7 rebels were killed, in addition to the 15 taken prisoner, during the June 30 encounter near Palma Seriano. He was told that this news is not being publicized because it is counter to the "Peace" theme of the June 30 Santiago de Cuba mass rally.

There are rumors that Raul CHIBAS, former Ortodoxo leader, and Felipe PAZOS Roque, leading intellectual oppositionist -- as well as PAZOS' son -- have joined CASTRO in the Sierra Maestra mountains. This information, if true, would be quite significant as both men have large followings.

(UNCLASSIFIED) CONGRESS AND 1958 ELECTIONS. Congress adjourned June 28 but will reconvene in special session, reportedly on July 15, to consider the Electoral Code and "other urgent matters". The Code follows the general pattern of the 1943 Code and its main points propose elections on June 1, 1958, direct vote, cancellation of voters' identity cards (Carnets) and issuance of new ones, an increase in the number of Senators from 54 to 72, making 20 the legal voting age, certain controls over the organization of parties and political groups, and a supervised ballot count.

The Government Coalition Parties have begun their 1958 presidential campaign but the opposition remains divided. Emilio (Millo) OCHOA has repeated that his Ortodoxo (Cuban People's Party) faction will not participate in elections until there is an appropriate guarantee of personal liberties.

(CONFIDENTIAL) COMMENT. The picture is a strange one: the Government Parties seem to be busily preparing for the elections which may end their tenure while the oppositionists who have asked for early elections and who accuse the Government of not wanting to hold elections are practically at a standstill. There still are no developments indicating that the various oppositionist groups will develop an effective united front or that they will stand behind a single anti-Batista candidate.

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LABOR

(UNCLASSIFIED) SAMALEA NEW SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE FEDERATION OF ELECTRIC PLANT WORKERS. Oscar Samalea Valdes was elected secretary-general of the Labor Federation of Electric, Gas and Water Plants at the National Congress of the Federation, called into extraordinary session in Habana on June 5. Although Samalea's election was a foregone conclusion, a surprise element was injected into the Congress when delegates from five of the six provincial unions affiliated with the Federation abstained from attending the Congress. The 102 delegates from the Habana Province Union, however, would be sufficient to out-vote the combined delegate vote (42) of the other five provincial unions.

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) COMMENT: Pursuant to the election of Samalea, who replaces Angel COFINO as Secretary General of the Federation, it was officially announced that (a) the provisional governing board appointed on April 12 by the Government to intervene the Federation has been dissolved and (b) the military supervisor, Lt. Colonel José Figarolo Enfante, appointed on May 21, to restore normal operations within the electric plants, has been withdrawn.

On the surface, conditions now appear normal in the electric industry but there still exists considerable unrest and resentment among the workers. This stems from the fact that several electric workers have been in jail (on July 2 most of these workers were released) and that many followers of Cofino resent the forced elections imposed by the provisional governing board at the behest of the CTC.

PSYCHOLOGICAL

(UNCLASSIFIED) The Cuban press singled out for major attention this week the Soviet naval movement in the Mediterranean -- the sale of three submarines to Egypt and the passing of several Soviet warships through the Dardanelles. Most papers considered the latter move not only a Soviet attempt to bolster Egypt and Syria, but a good chance to get a look at the NATO naval maneuvers now starting in the Mediterranean. Both Diario de la Marina and Información felt that the naval power of the West was still far too superior to the Soviet's for this move to be of any serious military threat, and therefore may be a political one -- an attempt to weaken or breach the Baghdad Pact. On the other hand, Excelsior thought there was a real military danger to the West and noted the growing power of the Soviet submarine force and the report that the Soviets are building up Albania into a major submarine base. This paper, admitted, however, that the presence of Soviet warships in the Mediterranean was probably also a political move to prove to Egypt and Syria that the Soviets too could display naval force in that area. Información added that the sale of the three submarines to Egypt will greatly strengthen Egypt's threat to Israel, for along

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with control of the Suez Canal these will enable her to blockade the Israel coast almost completely. Alerta interpreted the Soviet naval move to mean that the USSR considers the Near East to be definitely within her sphere of interests. Avance said that it was mainly to spy on NATO naval maneuvers. This paper attacked the Communist claim that this action was no different than the decision to reinforce South Korea with modern arms.

ARMY

(UNCLASSIFIED) PRISON SUPERINTENDENT COLONEL UGALDE CARRILLO INDICTED. Colonel Manuel UGALDE Carrillo, Superintendent of the penitentiary in the Isle of Pines, was indicted on 28 June 1957 by Judge Antonio BARRERAS Martinez Male on charges of mistreatment of political prisoners. The charges were brought about by lawyers representing prisoners. The indictment also included Major Pedro RODRIGUEZ Cote and Lieutenant Luis M. Montesino.

(CONFIDENTIAL) COMMENT: Fear has been expressed many times both publicly and privately for the life of Colonel Ramon BARQUIN Lopez and his associates now serving time on the Isle of Pines. This court action against UGALDE Carrillo may be one method of BATISTA's to spike rumors about BARQUIN's safety and at the same time keep strongman UGALDE Carrillo in charge of the prison. (See WEEKA No. 38, 1956).

(UNCLASSIFIED) GENERAL PEDRO RODRIGUEZ AVILA RETURNS AS ADJUTANT GENERAL OF THE ARMY. The following changes of assignments have taken place within the Cuban Army effected by Presidential Decree, July 1, 1957:

1. Brig. Gen. Pedro RODRIGUEZ Avila was relieved as commander of Rural Guard Regt. No. 1 "MACEO", Santiago de Cuba and reappointed Adjutant General of the Army, his previous assignment.
2. Brig. Gen. Luis ROBAINA y Piedra was relieved as Acting Adjutant General, reverting to his permanent assignment as Inspector General of the Army.
3. Colonel Ramon CRUZ Vidal was officially appointed Commander of Rural Guard Regiment No. 1 "MACEO", Santiago de Cuba. He had been acting as Chief of the Regiment since 10 June 1957 when Brig. Gen. RODRIGUEZ Avila was taken ill and had returned to Habana. (See WEEKA No. 24 dated 12 June 1957 and R-51-57).

(CONFIDENTIAL) COMMENTS. The assignments from which RODRIGUEZ and ROBAINA were relieved were temporary and they have simply reverted to their permanent posts. The selection of CRUZ Vidal to command the key Rural Guard Regiment is something of a mystery. He is a weak, incapable commander of very doubtful morals.

NAVY - AIR: Negative.



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