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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

MAY

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FROM

AMEMBASSY, HABANA

830

DESP. NO.

TO

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

REF

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	5/21	ARMY-35
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		AIR-24
		CIA-16
		OSP-2

SUBJECT:

Joint Weeka No. 20 for State, Army, Navy and Air Department-DCR-2
ments from SANA.

(UNCLASSIFIED) PRIO AND ASSOCIATES LEAVE. On May 9 Carlos PRIO ex-President and principal opposition leader, accompanied by aide Rafael IZQUIERDO, suddenly left by air for Miami. The two were escorted to the Habana airport by a group of national police, and taken directly to the departing plane. A day later Carlos HEVIA, likewise an ex-President and Presidential candidate of Prío's party in the abortive 1952 elections, also left with his wife. Prío's departure climaxed increasingly strong denunciations of alleged conspiratorial and revolutionary activities on his part by the Government, and increasingly strict surveillance of his movements. In a report to Government leaders extensively covered in the press, BATISTA has since alleged that the Government has long known that Prío continued conspiring after his return last August, in spite of his repeated public declarations to the contrary, and that he signally failed to keep any of his agreements with the Government. Representatives of the Government had finally been defied by Prío, who had declared that they had only three alternatives: "kill me, jail me, or expell me". Prío, he said, had left the country voluntarily.

(CONFIDENTIAL) Comment. Prío's departure has created comparatively little stir in Cuba. This is partly due to the existing censorship, but it is probably additionally due in large part to the general feeling of apathy concerning the activities and fortunes of Prío and his immediate associates felt by the majority of the Cuban people. Such comment as the Embassy has heard has been anti-Batista rather than pro-Prío. The Cuban press has reported, without comment or prominence, Prío's and Hevia's difficulties in attempting to obtain entry into the United States. Meanwhile, with a view to substantiating its charges concerning Prío's conspiratorial activities, the Government has submitted an extensive complaint to the Habana Urgency Court, couched in general terms, alleging that Prío has been responsible for virtually every disturbance of the past several months.

JL Topping:mbw

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REPORTER

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(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) THE PROBLEM OF ELECTIONS. With Prió out of the way at least temporarily, the Government appears to be making tentative efforts to reach a modus vivendi with the opposition on the matter of elections and the duration of Batista's term. Articles have appeared in the press suggesting that "authoritative sources" consider that it might be possible to agree on partial elections in 1957 and general elections in 1958. There is no reason to feel that a formula which postulates Batista serving through 1958 would be any less distasteful to the opposition now than in the past.

(UNCLASSIFIED) CUBAN-DOMINICAN RELATIONS. Relations between Cuba and the Dominican Republic took a decided turn for the worse when Cuba declared Lic. Federico LLAVERIAS, Dominican Ambassador here, persona non grata. The Dominican Republic immediately retaliated by declaring the Cuban Ambassador in Ciudad Trujillo persona non grata. It was rumored that the Cuban action was based on recordings made by Senator Rolando MASFERRER of a conversation in which the Dominican Ambassador had tried to influence him to join TRUJILLO in an attempt to overthrow President Batista. The papers have now published what are alleged to be transcripts of extracts of these recordings. They would indicate that Ambassador Llaverías had indeed made such an effort. Earlier President Batista had intimated, in a public speech in which he alluded to Llaverías' attempt to suborn Masferrer, that the case before IAPC might be reopened.

(CONFIDENTIAL) Comment. Masferrer would appear about the last person in Cuba that the Dominicans might reasonably attempt to suborn: he was prominently identified with the Caye Confites expedition and through attacks on Trujillo in his Tiempo en Cuba and in the Senate bears a large responsibility for the present state of Cuban-Dominican relations. He is ambitious, clever, unscrupulous and conscious of the value of publicity, and might well be capable of perpetrating a recording hoax. Moreover, the alleged transcript does not read as though it could be a recording of Llaverías. His alleged remarks are disjointed, repetitive and vague. Llaverías prides himself on being a literary man and is fluent and flowery in his speech.

(UNCLASSIFIED) TIME MAGAZINE BANNED. Circulation of Time magazine's Latin American edition, printed in Habana from plates flown from Denver, was banned in Cuba for two straight weeks under the censorship. Life en Español, which is printed in the United States, was not allowed into Cuba on May 15. Censors seized all copies, reportedly because of photographs purporting to show that the Cuban military shot two handcuffed prisoners after the May 5 Matanzas assault.

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(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) The May 14 edition of Time was not allowed to circulate in Cuba, but the censors did not act fast enough to prevent 60,000 copies from being sent by air to other Latin American countries. They objected to an article on the Matanzas insurrection which listed the insurgent dead as including "two shot after they had been captured and returned to the barracks in handcuffs". The May 21 edition also was banned by Cuban censors mainly because of a reference to Prio being "forcibly bundled aboard a Miami-bound plane". The censors would not permit the edition to leave Cuba for other Latin American countries, and Time declined to modify its text. Time arranged to have the May 21 edition printed in the United States for Latin American distribution two or three days delayed.

(OFFICIAL USE ONLY) REACTION TO "CONFERENCE" SUGAR BILL. The Cuban reaction to the conference version of the sugar bill pending in our Congress was about what was expected. Officially and publicly leaders of the local industry and its organizations declared that Cuba had not received the treatment to which it was entitled. Privately, they appeared to be quite satisfied, probably because they had feared something worse. Political opponents of the regime and some newspapers can be expected to continue to cry of unjust treatment, but the criticism will probably not last for any length of time.

(UNCLASSIFIED) CUBANA INAUGURATES NEW YORK FLIGHTS. On May 12 Cia. Cubana de Aviación inaugurated its direct Habana-New York flight, using Lockheed Constellations Super G's. Scheduled departure was considerably delayed by a last-minute decision by President Batista to attend pre-flight festivities. A number of Cuban journalists and other prominent figures were guests of the airline on the inaugural flight, and many of the principal figures of the Latin American consular corps in New York accepted the line's invitation to be its guests on the return flight to Habana the following day. For the time being Cubana plans to operate the flight on a round trip basis six days a week.

Psychological.

(UNCLASSIFIED) CYPRUS. The situation in Cyprus, worsened by last week's hanging of the two Cypriot insurrectionists, brought forth a number of editorials in the Cuban press. While the commentary was not all one-sided, sentiment leaned very definitely in favor of the Cypriots.

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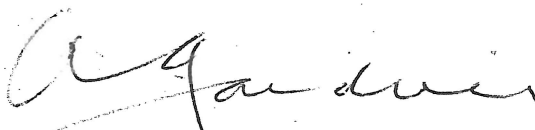
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Prensa Libre went farthest in condemning the British for their forceful attempt to quell the rebellion and for last week's execution. Overlooking the strategic importance of the island the Western powers as well as the Turkish minority, this paper strongly attacked British policy in Cyprus as "criminal" and "ruthless", supporting the Cypriots as rightfully fighting for their independence from an "imperialist" power and saying that Cyprus is Greek and always will be Greek. Alerta on the other hand, while recognizing that the Cyprus revolt was a colonial problem of the British Empire, pointed out the strategic importance of the island not only to Britain but to the Western alliance, since it is the closest military base to the Suez Canal and nearest to the dangerous Arab-Jewish conflict. Alerta also brought out the fact that the Turkish minority on Cyprus constitutes one-fifth of the population, whose rights must be recognized and safe-guarded if England does not also wish to alienate Turkey. Avance deplored General Harding's execution of the Cypriot prisoners, stating that such reprisals only result in counter-reprisals, further atrocities and a strengthening of the will to revolt, and that Britain should know this from past experience, Información agreed that, without doubt, these two hangings weakened the British position on the island and greatly accelerated the movement for liberation.

Army, Navy, Air

Negative.


Arthur Gardner

cc: AmEmbassies, Ciudad Trujillo and Port-au-Prince.

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