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NO.

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INFO: Amconsul SANTIAGO DE LOS CABALLEROS

FROM : Amembassy SANTO DOMINGO

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Note: With this report the Embassy begins a series of weekly political summaries as a substitute for, but not a total replacement of, the joint Weeka, the last edition of which was dated February 4, 1968.

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1. Prospects for Broad Electoral Participation Decline

With the UCN's unexpected vote for abstention from the May 16 municipal elections (SD 2053), the scope of certain participation suddenly narrowed to the feuding Reformistas (Item 2) and the so far scattered (although growing) independent movements. External and internal abstentionist pressures immediately mounted on the PRSC (SD-2052, SD A-502) and, by week's end, sources expressed clear awareness of the vulnerability of the party's pro-election position. A reversal of the PQD's conditioned abstention is uncertain even should ex-General WESSIN y Wessin be permitted to return prior to the March 31 deadline for filing candidacies. Meanwhile, political opportunist Mario READ Vittini (whose tiny PDC had not met the requirements for Central Electoral Board --- JCE --- recognition) pressed his attack on the JCE and supported abstention as a valid opposition policy. And, feeding the fires was abstentionist El Nacional, which concocted a variety of speculative electoral pieces, primarily aimed at embarrassing the pro-election PRSC leadership.

On March 18, President Balaguer addressed the issue of spreading abstentionist sentiment (which he labelled "unjustified"), defended the climate for elections, offered to investigate alleged atropellos, and reiterated previous statements that the real cause for the withdrawal of the opposition parties was their conviction that they would lose. Balaguer responded favorably to a Listin suggestion for the establishment of an Electoral Guarantees Commission, while the Armed Forces Secretariat (SD 2046) and the Attorney General issued circulars prohibiting military and judiciary involvement in partisan political activities. Attention was also directed to voter as well as party participation, with the JCE making a forceful appeal, emphasizing the importance of the municipal elections. (LOU)

Comment: There is considerable truth in Balaguer's view that abstention has resulted from well-founded opposition pessimism as to their chances for significant victories even in the best of circumstances. However, his responses to widening abstention have not addressed themselves to dispelling the aura of "unsatisfactory electoral climate" which opposition pronouncements are creating, as well as reflecting, but seem rather to be daring opposition elements to participate against heavy odds. In conversation with the Ambassador on March 21, the President indicated he attaches little importance to the municipal elections and that he views them essentially as a rather squalid scramble for control of local treasuries. He stated his willingness to do whatever is necessary to provide as satisfactory a climate as possible for the campaign, however. We tend to attach greater importance than that indicated by Balaguer to the inauspicious narrowing of electoral participation and the prospect of a virtually unchallenged Reformista sweep on May 16. (CONF)

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2. Partido Reformista Nominates Municipal Candidates

The Partido Reformista, many of whose leading elements are confident of electoral victory "everywhere", completed the nomination of its candidates for municipal office during the past week. Following upon the nomination of PR Deputy Guarionex LLUBERES Montás to head the party's National District slate (SD-1876), Reformistas on March 14 nominated Senate President Miguel Angel LUNA Morales to head their Santiago slate and, on March 17, held nominating conventions in all other municipalities.

All convention results, most of which were engineered by party regulars for a variety of reasons (e.g., in Santiago to overturn a disastrous Reformista city administration), were loudly protested by a host of unsuccessful candidates, many of whom threatened to "impugn" one or all conventions, and a number of whom set about organizing their supporters into "independent" movements to run against party nominees. Just how many of these "independents" will actually run for election will not be known until after the filing deadline on March 31. Meanwhile, they are engaged in a nation-wide scrambling for deals with the nominees and, in some cases, with opposition elements interested in running or supporting independents. (LOU)

Comment: The Reformista campaign is in effect being run, although not necessarily coordinated -- this is virtually impossible -- from Vice President Lora's office in the Palace. The President has given Lora a free hand and, in fact, told the Ambassador this week (with only slight exaggeration) that he has not involved himself in any way in the developing Reformista campaign. Whether he will remain aloof as time goes on remains to be seen. (CONF).

3. PRD-PCD Debate, and PSP Contributes its Two Cents' Worth

The recent, at times acrimonious, but idyllically concluded debate between PRD Secretary General PEÑA Gómez and the Dominican Communist Party (PCD) (SD A-498) begot another, but lesser, exchange this week between the PCD and the Popular Socialist Party (PSP). El Nacional on March 19 carried a PSP charge that today's PCD has nothing to do with the heroic PCD tradition, that since the end of 1965 the PCD has embraced "ultraleftism" and now tries to shelter itself under the combative history of the old PSP. Two days later, also in El Nacional, the PCD retorted that deeds and not words prove who carries on the old tradition, stating that the present PSP was not formed until mid-1967, and not in 1965 as it had claimed. (LOU)

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Comment: Like the more significant PRD-PCD exchange, this week's PSP-PCD argument was marked by professions of constructive criticism and reluctance to attack mutually accepted articles of faith. (LOU)

4. Caamaño Reaction Slopes Off

Reverberations of the communist 14th of June Movement's sensational announcement March 11 placing Constitutionalist leader Col. Francisco CAAMAÑO in Cuba (SD 1995) seemed to be dying out this week, with the June 14th apparently making efforts to keep Caamaño from discredit with the non-communist left. Although the previous week had seen a lengthy radio broadcast by PEÑA GÓMEZ (SD A-499), and several statements by communist parties, official GODR, and Constitutionalist spokesmen (SD 2039), public reaction this week was limited to: (1) President Balaguer's reaffirmation that he knows nothing definite of Caamaño's whereabouts; (2) a Fragua (communist-dominated university students' group) declaration that the 14th of June was correct in announcing Caamaño's presence in Cuba as a demonstration that he has broken definitively with the U.S.; (3) a June 14th statement confirming the correctness of its earlier announcement and arguing that Caamaño's presence in Cuba does not mean that he is a communist; he is a dedicated anti-Yankee and revolutionary patriot, the June 14th said, adding that no one is transformed into a Marxist-Leninist by the simple fact of a trip to any country; and (4) a Renovación (moderate "Constitutionalist") article recapping fact and speculation concerning Caamaño, and editorializing that his presence in Cuba would be a great mistake, for no one wants either a Caamaño like Fidel Castro or a Juan Bosch like Osvaldo Dorticós (LOU)

5. Government Seeks Exit for Imprisoned Haitian Exiles

In response to mounting outcries from the press and from leftist political, students', women's, professional and other organizations, Foreign Office and Immigration officials are making new efforts to obtain visas to a third country for seven Haitian political exiles who have now been on a hunger strike for over one month, protesting their imprisonment. Charged with illegal entrance into the country, the seven had been in the national prison for over a year, but recently have been transferred to state hospitals because of their weakened condition. Dominican officials have, according to press stories, been meeting recently with French and Swiss diplomats in Santo Domingo in efforts to obtain visas for the Haitians and the Director General of Migration has expressed the hope that the exiles' problem would be solved within a short time.

One of the most vocal advocates of the Haitian group (at least four of whom were with Constitutionalist commandos in the

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1965 Revolution) has been the PRD and its affiliates. Although the party has been protesting the exiles' imprisonment from time to time during the past year, it has recently used the hunger strike and heightened public concern for the Haitians as an opportunity to mount a sustained and intensified propaganda attack demanding their immediate release. A new element was added to the propaganda when, on the PRD's radio program March 11 (Sánchez Day), a special commentary linked the Haitians' struggle against Duvalier to the Dominican people's efforts against their supposed neo-Trujillista oppressors. On that occasion, and again on March 14, a picture was painted of poor Haitians and Dominicans who in the past have often been forced to shed each others' blood in the interests of oligarchs on both sides of the common border. Virtually every PRD radio program in recent days has contained demands for the Haitian exiles' immediate release, and at week's end it was announced that FETRUDISNA, ASOCHOIN and the Municipal Workers' Union had formed a "Committee for the Liberty of the Haitian Exiles," and were preparing plans for mass picketing to begin the following Tuesday at an as yet undecided place. (LOU)

Comment: The most recent GODR efforts to rid itself of the sticky Haitian exile problem apparently concern the seven individuals who initiated the hunger strike nearly forty days ago; no mention was made of the additional three (including probable communists Daniel Sansarriq and Camile Montero) who reportedly joined the hunger strike February 26, and whom the PRD has included in its liberation demands. (LOU)

6. Diplomatic Notes

A. Nicaraguan Secretary for Foreign Relations Dr. Lorenzo GUERRERO arrived March 20 for a three-day official visit, during which he met with President Balaguer, awarded him the Order of Rubén Darío, was decorated in return, invited the President to sit as an observer at the upcoming May Meeting of Central American Presidents, his Managua and praised area-by-area economic integration. During/courtesy visit to Congress, the PRD Senators and Deputies absented themselves on the grounds that the presence there of the "Somoza's Ambassador" was "unworthy." A similar position was taken by PEÑA Gómez on the PRD's March 21 radio program when he pointed up the alleged irony of the Somoza Government -- a regime with a fatal hatred of poets and revolutionary idealists -- awarding a decoration named for the famed Nicaraguan poet, a man who loathed imperialism and tyranny. As yet President Balaguer has not announced whether he will accept the Managua invitation. (See separate airgram.) (LOU)

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B. Also decorating the President was Ambassador Sampson C. Shen, head of a special Chinese Nationalist mission on a Latin American friendship tour, whose stay here last week was well received and publicized. Dr. Shen met with various cabinet heads, went to Santiago, participated in functions with the local Chinese community and invited Secretary of State for Foreign Relations AMIAMA Tió to China in April, 1968. (See separate airgram). (UNCLASS)

C. Dominican Ambassador to Washington GARCIA-GODOY, here on consultation, told the American Chamber of Commerce in Santo Domingo on March 21 that for the continent economic integration is both "transcendental and necessary," private investment being a "preponderant factor." (UNCLASS)

D. Switzerland's Ambassador to the Dominican Republic, Dr. Jean-Louis Pahud, presented his credentials March 18. Dr. Pahud is resident in Mexico City. (UNCLASS)

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