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APR 12 1968

DATE: April 7, 1968

FROM : Amembassy SANTO DOMINGO

SUBJECT : Weekly Political Summary No. 3 (March 29-April 4, 1968)

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Introduction

The past week was characterized more by interest in and reaction to international news concerning Viet-Nam and the US electoral campaign (Item 6) and in two impressive infusions of loan capital (Item 1), than by developments in what thus far has been a singularly uninspiring electoral campaign (Items 2,3). A spate of terrorism and disturbances in Santo Domingo schools attracted considerable attention (Item 4); the usual charges of repression resulted from police arrest of some 40 municipal workers at a union electoral meeting; and the Santo Domingo water shortage continued unalleviated, while President Balaguer announced plans to drill a well field at Haina, in hopes of providing a stopgap solution. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

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Drafted by: See last page: csw Drafting Date: Phone No.: Contents and Classification Approved by: DCM: FJ Devine

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1. President Announces Tavera Dam Financing; Over \$53 Million in Loans Authorized in Two Days

In a surprise nation-wide radio-TV address heralded by screaming sirens and intense though short-lived speculation, President Balaguer at noon on April 2, announced that the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) had earlier that morning approved a loan of \$22.9 million that will finance 66.3% of the cost of building the \$34.5 million first stage of the Tavera hydroelectric project. The previous day the President and the Ambassador had signed PL 480 and supporting assistance agreements totalling \$30,356,000 (\$14,256,000 and \$16.1 million, respectively); under the supporting assistance agreement, RD\$7 million are reserved for the Tavera project. The remaining RD\$4.6 million for the project's first stage will be put up by the GODR. Balaguer announced that the IDB loan agreement would be signed in Santo Domingo on April 29, and that IDB president Felipe Herrera and an unidentified high US official would attend the ceremony.

The news of the Tavera loan was received with great satisfaction by the GODR, the press and the population at large, and with considerable chagrin by the opposition, most of which, including the PRSC, maintained public silence on what everyone else, including the PRSC privately, seemed to consider to have been Balaguer's major accomplishment since he took office. Discordant notes were sounded by the Moscow-oriented PCD and by PRD Senator CASIMIRO Castro (whose party ignored the issue), both of whom were highly suspicious of the alleged ulterior motives of the "Yankees". Even leftist-nationalist El Nacional could do no worse than express back-handed praise for Balaguer on this almost mystical Dominican issue (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

Comment: To most Dominicans, Balaguer has accomplished the impossible by achieving what no Dominican government has been able to do since the Tavera project began acquiring its present status as the supreme symbol of Dominican development in the late 1950's, i.e., he has persuaded the USG that he is viable enough to risk the project. The IDB decision is, in itself, probably the most significant shot in the arm Balaguer has received since inauguration. Coupled with the new AID agreements, Balaguer has--to the average Dominican--received over \$53 million in new assistance this week. This most impressive figure will go a long way toward helping him further to consolidate his administration, but it also increases the pressure on his opposition to make any move it may be contemplating against him before his position is further strengthened. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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2. Electoral News

The electoral horses finally appeared to be moving up to the starting gate this week, after another delay while the Central Electoral Board (JCE) finished sorting out the field. In various actions this week, the JCE (1) finished its examination of the 52 "independent" movements, reportedly authorizing 49; (2) extended for five days the period during which political parties could present their candidates (seemingly at the request of the PRSC -- SD 2140); and (3) authorized an additional three-day extension to the independents, for the same purpose. Meanwhile, seemingly carrying forward the previous week's efforts to reassure all of the fairness of the elections (SD A-592, Item 1), President Balaguer declared that the GODR would continue public works efforts in all regions, regardless of the electoral results, and Municipal League head GOMEZ emphasized that steps had been taken to prevent use of local government funds for partisan political purposes.

Among the political parties, the PRSC's National District President, MATOS Rivera, declared that a satisfactory climate for elections exists in the capital (SD 2140), while the abstentionists kept up a sputtering attack from the sidelines. The nature of the PRD's non-electoral campaign remained unclear (Item 3), and Secretary General PEÑA Gómez called eight PRD-linked independent candidates to the capital for consultations of an unknown nature. UCN President FERNANDEZ Simó again explained the motives for his party's abstention, PQD Secretary General JIMENEZ continued to assert that his party was preparing for elections if Wessin were allowed to return, and a group of PDC committees carped at the Electoral Board, the Social Christians and a variety of other targets in a paid communiqué. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

Comment: The week's most noteworthy electoral development was an apparent shift of forces in the National District election, following the failure of the JCE to recognize two independent movements with center-left appeal. The simultaneous recognition of three other capital-based groups, backed by dissidents of the PR, PRD, and PQD, threatened to detract center-right support from the official Reformista Candidate (Guarionex LLUBERES), while seemingly leaving the remainder of the spectrum to the Social Christian candidate, "Felo" FLORES. More disquieting were increasing rumors that abstentionist elements might resort to violence, including assassination of political leaders, to disrupt the electoral campaign. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

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3. PRD Continues to Hammer Out Electoral Position

The PRD's political week centered around questions concerning the party's electoral attitudes, and whether rumored PRD/GODR talks might yet result in mutually agreed postponement of the municipal elections. Secretary General PENA Gómez led off by answering Sen. Casimiro Castro's call for an anti-electoral front (SD A-592, Item 2), stating that such a grouping already is an accomplished fact, but that an attempt to formalize it would endanger overall opposition unity by alienating rightist, moderate, or extreme leftist groups, each of which would be uncomfortable with the others. (Note: An anti-electoral front would lack the PRSC, which, while an important element of the opposition forces, has thus far maintained its determination to contest elections.) President Balaguer characterized persistent reports of GODR/PRD negotiations aimed at electoral postponement, (SD A-592, Item 2) as "speculation and fantasy", and said the idea of constitutional modification toward this end was "absurd". (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

Comment: Notwithstanding the Presidential denial, however, it seems that the idea is still being discussed by elements within the PRD; members of the Congressional bloc told Embassy officers this week that, although they believe postponement would not benefit the PRD, the matter is a subject for active discussion in party councils. Intelligence sources provide continuing indications of second thoughts by Peña Gomez and other PRD leaders concerning the high price of electoral abstention in loss of patronage and other bases of party power. (CONFIDENTIAL)

4. Secondary Schools Endure Troubled Week

Strikes and terrorism involving secondary schools threatened for a while this week to cause the virtual paralysis of the Santo Domingo public secondary schools, following the beating of one teacher, the shooting (not fatal) of another and a series of student strikes and demonstrations. At week's end, most schools had returned to normal, but at the worst trouble spot--the Republic of Paraguay School--a group of students had begun a hunger strike, demanding re-enrollment of expelled companions (SD A-539). (UNCLASSIFIED)

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Comment: The disturbances and terrorism appear extreme leftist in origin, and the Secretary of State for Education, Fine Arts and Public Worship has attributed the shooting to an extreme leftist plot to intimidate teachers. Certainly the MPD and UER have been closely associated with press accounts of the incidents, and the wounded (female) teacher had been the object of threats by student members of the MPD. Even leftist-nationalist El Nacional editorialized that the act could well be related to one of the "extremist political groups". (SD A-539)(LOU)

5. Haitian Exiles Released to House Arrest

Following last week's threatened demonstrations on behalf of the Haitian exile hunger strikers (SD A-592, Item 3), ten imprisoned exiles (one had already received a Chilean visa), were transferred this week to house arrest pending efforts to obtain third country visas for the group. (UNCLASSIFIED).

Comment: Arrangement for the exiles' release were made by PRD-confidant Sacha Volman who, armed with an International Rescue Committee guarantee of the Haitians' support, was able to secure agreement from President Balaguer and the Director General of Immigration. Meanwhile, the Embassy has agreed, while encouraging Volman to negotiate with other third countries as well and without implying any commitment by the USG, to consider visa applications from a number of the Haitians (SD-2167). (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

6. President Johnson's Announcement

The President's statements concerning his non-candidacy and announcing the North Viet-Nam bombing reduction were given wide and prominent coverage in all papers this week, with straight news coverage reporting world reaction--both positive and negative--to the President's surprise moves. Editorially leftist-nationalist Nacional expressed approval of the decision not to seek reelection but considerable skepticism regarding the President's "supposed desires for peace". Listin Diario was much more sympathetic to the President, whose decisions it viewed as a praiseworthy effort to "reconstruct the lost unity of his great country" (SD-2159).

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Partisan comment has been forthcoming from the PRD, which viewed the Johnson speech with cautious jubilation as the precursor of a changed US/DR relationship under a "liberal" US president (it had in mind a Kennedy/McCarthy administration); from the PRSC, which hailed the decision not to run as a blessing for the US and a possible change from the alleged US "aggressive line;" and from the PQD, which saw the decision not to seek reelection as "highly democratic" (DS-2165). The communists predictably adopted a negative attitude, with the June 14th stating that the bombing reduction was not based on good faith, but was only a tactic dictated by the US military failure in Viet-Nam, the precarious position of the dollar, and the worsened situation within the US. The PCD expressed much the same reaction to the President's peace overtures, terming them a "deceiving tactic of imperialism", resorted to in order to buy time vis-a-vis the "victorious offensive" of the communist forces; the President's non-candidacy was viewed by the PCD as either an electoral maneuver or a decision by "imperialist forces" that Johnson's low prestige ruled him out as a candidate. As for the PRD and PRSC's optimism concerning a liberal in the White House, the PCD said it would make no difference, for even in the unlikely event that the liberals were allowed to win, they would be converted into instruments of what Juan Bosch terms "Pentagonism". (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

Comment: Despite the communist parties' critical comments, Dominican reaction has generally been very favorable to both aspects of the President's announcement. Bosch's "Pentagonism" thesis notwithstanding, the PRD has been particularly optimistic concerning its prospects during a new era of good will brought about by a supposedly changed US foreign policy. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

INFO : Amconsul SANTIAGO DE LOS CABALLEROS

FROM : Amembassy SANTO DOMINGO

SUBJECT: Weekly Political Summary No. 2 (March 22-28, 1968)

REF :

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Introduction

Public attention this week was considerably distracted from the unfolding electoral campaign by the continued worsening of the water shortage which, in Santo Domingo, was reaching near-crisis proportions and prompted the naming of a special inter-agency technical commission to deal with the emergency. Violence, accidental and deliberate, also played a prominent role in the week's news, with a soldier on leave running amok in Mao, leaving 7 dead and 8 wounded, and a Santiago tragedy in which Vice President Francisco LORA's son reportedly accidentally shot and killed a fellow marksman (the Vice President's prompt action in handing his son over to the authorities was warmly praised by the press). In Santo Domingo, 47 persons were arrested -- and later released -- charged with holding a subversive meeting, and unknown persons exploded a grenade near the home of PRSC mayoral candidate Felo FLORES. Meanwhile, the political pot was kept boiling by the PRD's internal squabbles and rumors of new maneuvers (Item 2); a heightened outcry for the release of the Haitian hunger strikers (Item 3); and the GODR's moves to guarantee the freedom of the forthcoming elections, in which some 52 independent groups have applied for participation.(Item 1).

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GROUP 3

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1. Electoral News.

This week, the GODR undertook a series of actions, backed by public declarations, seemingly aimed at reassuring participants and the general populace of the fairness of the forthcoming municipal elections (SD-2090). President Balaguer named a five-member, non-partisan Electoral Guarantees Commission to investigate denunciations or complaints of legally recognized parties and independent movements participating in the elections. Simultaneously, Armed Forces Secretary PEREZ y Perez and Police Chief ALVAREZ affirmed that, in accordance with the President's instructions, any member of the security forces interfering with the electoral process would be "severely punished." Later in the week, Interior Secretary GOICO imparted instructions on electoral conduct to an assembled group of the DR's police commanders and inspectors. (He was also busy "personally" conducting an investigation of alleged maltreatment of a Moca doctor by a mixed security forces patrol, at the request of the President -- SD-2099.)

The week's remaining electoral news was made largely by the so-called "independent" movements (almost all, in fact, linked to established parties -- SD A520), of which 22 have now received legal recognition from the Central Electoral Board (JCE), and 30 more are pending approval. Although no additional movements may apply for recognition, those in existence were permitted until April 5 to name their candidates and were exempted from several other JCE requirements. The "abstentionist" PRD appeared to be gearing up for its "non-campaign", denying a rumored plan to postpone elections (SD-2103) and another rumor of a new convention, while a prominent "participationist", Sen. CASIMIRO, called for an anti-electoral front (Item 2). Carping from the sidelines were the communist PCD and PSP, the former calling for an "active" anti-electoral campaign, while the latter, surprisingly, urged "progressive forces" to participate and make the elections a "platform of the revolution". (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

Comment: To date, the municipal elections seemingly have awakened little interest among the population at large, not least because of the lack of a significant contest in many localities. Few of the independent movements appear capable of seriously challenging the Reformista machines in their municipalities, while the Social Christians, although optimistic (as always), appear to lack the funds, organization, and candidates to win more than a handful of mayoral posts. The already slim chances for PQD participation virtually expired this week, leaving four of the six recognized parties, passively or actively, on the electoral sidelines. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

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2. PRD Notes

Statements and rumors, rather than actions, appeared to dominate the PRD's week, with: (a) Secretary General PEÑA Gómez denying press stories that the PR had proposed PR/PRD legislative cooperation in amending the Constitution to allow postponement of the May elections (SD-2103); (b) Peña also denying reports that a Santiago trip was related to the possibility of a new convention, reportedly under study by "high party organs"; (c) Sen. CASIMIRO Castro introducing a motion (which was not adopted) suggesting that the Senate call for civil and military authorities to cooperate in creating an electoral climate; and (d) Casimiro the following day (March 22) performing an apparent about-face by calling for the creation by all opposition parties of an anti-electoral front, designed to operate strictly within the law but to leave the PR as the only party contesting the May elections. Casimiro characterized unadorned abstentionism as "simplistic" and a deviation from the PRD's revolutionary path, and saw his proposed anti-electoral front as the logical extension of the abstentionist thesis (and which would include withdrawal of all independent PRD candidacies) designed to create the revolutionary conditions necessary for the PRD to continue as the responsible revolutionary party of the Dominican people.

Intra-party dissension reared its head again this week when the PRD's perennial embarrassment, Santo Domingo Mayor BAEZ Acosta, took 1 1/2 pages of paid advertising space in Listin, Caribe, and Nacional to answer criticisms made against him by the National District Committee March 12, on the PRD radio program; Baez' apologia, which dealt at great length with his administration's financial problems, reasons for dismissal of workers, and pro-PRD hiring policies, was more significant in revealing Baez' "ethics" than in substantive content. Meanwhile, the National District Committee's evening radio program, which has been off the air ever since District Secretary General Washington de PEÑA's virulent attack February 15 against Police Chief Braulio ALVAREZ, remained gagged; and this (as the PRD has been saying daily on its noon broadcast) "in the midst of an electoral campaign -- some democracy!" (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

Comment: Despite Peña's denial of PR/PRD meetings to explore the possibilities of electoral postponement, the Embassy has received reports from both government and PRD sources that such contact has in fact taken place and that it involves Peña and Secretary without Portfolio Polibio DIAZ (among others). Each side attributes the initiative to the other. (CONFIDENTIAL).

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3. Government Prohibits Demonstration for Haitian Exiles

In the wake of an earlier refusal by the Secretary of State for Interior and Police to grant permission for a planned march to the National Palace on March 26 to protest the imprisonment of seven Haitian exiles who have been on a hunger strike over 40 days (see Weekly Political Summary No. 1), a renewed attempt was made to schedule a similar manifestation for March 29. The three trade unions submitting the request for permission (FETRUDISNA, ASOCHOIN, and the autonomous Municipal Workers' Union) had organized the formation of a Committee for the Liberation of the Haitian Exiles, representing some 25 organizations. In addition to its public demonstration, the Committee supported a 10-minute symbolic strike of organizations, stores, schools, industries, etc. called by the Dominican Association for Human Rights (SD-2118). The GODR quite predictably refused permission for the demonstrations, however, and no attempt was made to foregather at the appointed time and place. At week's end, Immigration and Foreign Ministry officials were still striving to obtain visas for the Haitians, with the press reporting that Chile would accept one Haitian and that France also was hopefully expected to come through with some sort of favorable offer. (UNCLASSIFIED)

4. Catholic University Names New Rector

On March 28, the Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra (UCMM), in Santiago, announced that Bishop ROQUE Adames had been named as Rector. Replacing Bishop Juan Félix PEPEN, who had assumed the post in September 1967, Bishop Roque reportedly will serve a two-year term. With the recent election of José Andrés AYBAR Nicolás as Rector of the Autonomous University (UASD) and the March 7 designation of Juan Tomás MEJIA Feliuto to succeed resigning Rector José Antonio CARO Alvarez at the Pedro Henríquez Ureña University (UNPHU), the DR's three universities are now headed by new men. (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: Reportedly, Bishop Pepen, who has suffered from health difficulties for some time, originally had not wished to accept the post of UCMM Rector. In stepping up, former Vice Rector Roque will face a number of difficulties (See SD A-17), including reported differences of views within the faculty and administration. His reputation as one of the DR's most progressive churchmen may also cause a step up in extreme-right attacks on himself, and the UCMM. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

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5. Assistant Secretary's Latin American Political Roundup

An Associated Press Dispatch detailing Assistant Secretary of State Covey T. Oliver's March 25 remarks on the present state of affairs in individual Latin American Nations received front page treatment in Listin and El Caribe, the latter's title reading "Believe Possible that Balaguer Will Complete Term." The stories reported Assistant Secretary Oliver's comment that President Balaguer's administration is the first freely elected government in forty years that has a reasonable possibility of completing its constitutional mandate. To date, no editorial reaction to the comments has appeared. (UNCLASSIFIED)

6. Diplomatic Notes

Venezuela's Minister of Education José Manuel SISO Martinez made a four-day official visit for the chief purpose of presiding over, with President Balaguer and Dominican Secretary of State for Education, Fine Arts and Public Worship Luis A. DUVERGE Mejia, the opening of the National Adult Literacy Campaign on March 26. The press described the Venezuelan contribution to this project as the largest from its various supporters, which include AID, UNESCO, and OAS. (UNCLASSIFIED)

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