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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

INFO : Amembassy SANTO DOMINGO

FROM : Amconsulate SANTIAGO DE LOS CABALLEROS

DATE: DECEMBER 14, 1967

SUBJECT : Observations from the Province, X: Jánico, San José de las Matas and Monción, December 6, 1967

REF :

SUMMARY

1. The political situation in the northern foothills of the Central Cordellera is quiet; no parties have begun preparations for the 1968 municipal elections, except for some minor organizational work by the "Partido Quisqueyano Demócrata". The "Partido Reformista" seems firmly in control of the area as a result of its campesino contacts. An interesting political phenomena is the existence of a "Partido Revolucionario Social Cristiano" enclave in San José de las Matas. Harvests were good during the past year and the current economic situation is accordingly described as "slightly better than normal." The future prosperity of the area is threatened by the Government's recent decision to ban all lumbering operations in the country.

General Description

2. The three towns examined in this report are quite similar in appearance, setting, size and economic bases. All are situated in the northern foothills of the Central Cordellera, an area of adequate rainfall and somewhat inferior soils. The municipality of Jánico has about 35,000 inhabitants, its urban area 1,300 inhabitants. San José de las Matas counts 52,000 inhabitants in the municipality and 4,000 in the urban zone. Monción has a municipal population of 8,000 and a town of 2,000.

3. The towns are spacious by Dominican standards. Their most notable, and pleasing, aspect is the great number of trees that

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line streets and parks. All of them have the full complement of Trujillo era, concrete public buildings. Except for Monción, private housing seems to be slightly above average for the North. Again except for Monción, town streets are adequately paved.

4. The road from Santiago de los Caballeros to Jánico is paved and about 20 feet wide. Like all roads traveled on this visit, little engineering went into its construction; it simply follows ridgetops. From Jánico to San José the traveler must first take a gravel road (formerly paved) that joins the Santiago-San José highway. The latter is paved and about 20 feet wide. From San José to El Rubio the road is a dirt track. Surprisingly, on this stretch of the trip, bridges are concrete, elsewhere they are timber beam. The El Rubio-Monción road has been recently paved and is quite good. From Monción to Los Quemados (on the main Valverde-Santiago Rodríguez highway) there is a wide gravel road. The problem of landslides beginning under the roadbed exists on all of these stretches of road.

Political Activity

5. The population of the northern foothills of the Central Cordellera (the area of the three municipalities examined in this report) is overwhelmingly rural. Since only the "Partido Reformista" (PR) has maintained its contacts with the campesinos, PR leaders are quite confident of winning the 1968 municipal elections. Leaders of other parties generally agree with this assessment, even though they generally add that the PR is steadily losing strength.

6. The PR has maintained the allegiance of the campesinos through simple contact work. Except in Jánico, there is little evidence of public works undertaken by the current administrations. Public works, in their general absence, are actually an obstacle to the maintenance of PR supremacy in the region. Similarly, the local mayors (síndicos) interviewed seem somewhat below par for PR public officials in the North; they are probably not holding the campesinos with the force of their personalities or efficiency. Rather, the campesinos' allegiance is held with the PR by the appointed rural mayors (alcaldes pedáneos). These officials are usually older campesinos. Their authority is that of any elder in a peasant dominated social structure. In many instances the PR reportedly has simply bought their allegiance; in the municipality of Monción, the local PR chief is said to distribute 150 pesos monthly among these sub-chiefs. Such outright payments, however, are probably not the deciding factor in determining their party loyalties. Rather, the PR is the only party that has respected the social facts of life in the "camp". The PR thus benefits from the influence of existing leaders and binds those leaders to its cause; for these local chieftains other political parties, even those of the right, constitute a

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