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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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INTRODUCTION

This week saw both a reaffirmation of faith in the government by its supporters and a potentially serious exacerbation of its relations with the opposition. All those sympathetic to (or at least tolerant of) Balaguer and his administration joined in celebrating -- in generally subdued manner -- the second anniversary of his inauguration (SD-3008). The infectiousness of this psychologically important occasion did not, however, extend to the President's intransigent opposition, which appeared the more frustrated by what Listin Diario called the President's major achievement: staying in office for two years. The fact that this half-way mark had been reached in a general climate of relative tranquillity and progress, an accomplishment classified by El Caribe as being far beyond the expectations of even the most optimistic two years ago, both bolstered the administration and, coupled with an unexpected development the next day, led to sharply increased revolutionary stridency by the PRD and the communists. This development was the at least temporary closing down of the PRD radio program (Item 1).

The anniversary was marked by a major Partido Reformista (PR) conclave in Santo Domingo -- attended by the entire Reformista hierarchy,

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including Balaguer -- and PR-sponsored "popular feasts" in many interior areas; a highly partisan and highly laudatory review of Balaguer's accomplishments by Vice President Lora; the decoration of Lora by Balaguer for his contribution to these accomplishments (a gesture which, according to private Reformista commentary heard during the week, went a long way toward soothing injured feelings on the part of Lora and his numerous partisans); and, on the night of July 1, an unusual nationally broadcast and televised press conference held by Balaguer at the Palace and attended by some 30 especially invited Puerto Rican, Venezuelan, Mexican, Central American, American and other correspondents.

Contrary to general expectations, the President did not use the anniversary as the occasion for either a major address or widespread personnel changes (none occurred) but, through his attendance at the Reformista conclave and his press conference (at which he enunciated no new departures), he instead sought to mend fences with his party and to reaffirm -- and signal the general continuance -- of previous policies. While this disappointed many, it seemed to have been welcomed by many more, and found particular favor with the PR as a whole. The anniversary was soon marred, however, by the major controversy stimulated by the PRD program shutdown, responsibility for which the President publicly disclaimed but which in fact remained unclear. The PRD reacted immediately and forcefully, taking a further public step toward a full revolutionary posture and scheduling a major gathering to pass formally on the question of whether the administration has lost its constitutionality.

The week was not devoid of countervailing good secondary news, however. In what in effect was an anniversary present to the people of Santo Domingo, Balaguer on July 1 (finally) appointed a commission charged with collection of the Capital's garbage, and streets became perceptibly cleaner during the week. In sports, Dominican Carlos (Teo) Cruz beat Puerto Rican Carlos Ortiz for the world's lightweight boxing championship in the first such contest staged in Santo Domingo, and Dominicans reveled at the fact that their four biggest major league baseball heroes -- Juan Marichal, the Alou brothers and Julian Javier -- were belatedly chosen to participate in the All-Star game. And the nation's sugar quota for sales to the U.S. market rose during the week to 664,000 tons (up from 637,000), thus approaching the 700,000-ton mark that most Dominicans -- led by the President -- consider essential to the country's financial health. These otherwise satisfying events were, however, overshadowed by the PRD's reaction to the closing of its program, and Dominicans (and others) continued wondering what the future had in store. (CONFIDENTIAL)

1. PRD Program Suspension Heightens Tensions

The PRD's radio program, "Tribuna Democrática", was put off the air July 2 by an administrative order of the Director of Posts and Telecommunications, Victor HIDALGO Justo. The resolution banned the program until the station manager and the director of the program give assurances that it would not again commit the violations of law with which it was charged. These included insulting President Balaguer, other high GODR functionaries, and "a foreign chief of State" (i.e., President Lyndon B. Johnson), as well as

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inciting against the public order and "good social customs."

In a predictably quick and strong reaction, the PRD (1) issued a statement terming the program closure "the last link in the chain of violations with which the government has strangled constitutional liberties during its two years in power"; (2) called an emergency meeting of high party organs at which a motion for the possible withdrawal of the PRD legislative bloc was debated -- and apparently defeated; (3) called upon Balaguer to state now his plans for reelection in 1970, and stated that if he intended to run the party would not participate in those elections; (4) decided to convoke an "Amplified National Council" for an undetermined date in the near future at which the PRD's official position as to whether or not the GODR retains its "constitutionality" would be decided, along with appropriate measures to be taken by the party in view of the allegedly grave national situation. Although the PRD program remained off the air for the balance of the week, Secretary General PEÑA GÓMEZ spoke over another program on the same radio station on July 3. He criticized various of the President's press conference remarks, hitting hard at the "hunger" (i.e., rice shortage and high food prices) and "terrorism" issues, and in general displayed no evidence of moderation in his attack; and, in a press statement carrying remarks he apparently lacked air time to deliver, Peña Gómez denied that the PRD's radio program engaged in insults against Presidents Balaguer, Johnson or anyone else (it only told unpalatable truths, he said), and threatened that if reelection in 1970 should not allow the Dominican people freely to elect their leaders, they would put them in power by other (unspecified) means. Meanwhile, party leader Juan BOSCH, reportedly disturbed by the program closure and other developments, urgently called Peña Gómez to Spain, and the latter was due to leave sometime at week's end.

President Balaguer, for his part, remained evasive concerning the program shutdown. In July 3 responses to the press he indicated he would not approve ordering a program off the air if it insulted him personally, but that he would if it incited to violence or disorder. In later remarks, he said (1) that he continued to adhere to a 1966 speech in which he said he did not aspire to reelection; and (2) that he was unable to make a decision on the program closure until he had seen the administrative order, which he had not yet received officially. (SD-3028) (LOU)

Comment:

PRD Press and Propaganda Secretary "Manny" ESPINAL told the Embassy this week that (1) thus far, he had no indication of the GODR's real intentions; (2) the situation is "very grave" and he is "quite pessimistic" concerning future political developments; (3) the PRD would never agree to conditions, should the GODR seek to impose them in allowing the program back on the air; (4) a "definitive" closure of the program would also mark the closure of the last door to a democratic political process, with obvious implications for the party's further radicalization and clandestine organization; (5) that if denied the legal means of struggle, the PRD would seek them outside the law (i.e., an attempt to hold mass outdoor demonstrations

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without a GODR permit, etc.); and (6) that he saw a cause/effect relationship between the program closure and an earlier editorial in rightist El Tiempo attacking the program as inspiring terrorism, and demanding it be put off the air at all cost.

The Embassy also has been concerned by the program shutdown, and, as many others -- including most of the press -- had hoped that the President would quickly reverse the decision, as he had with previous precipitate actions by Hidalgo Justo and/or the Posts and Telecommunications Directorate. As of week's end, however, no definitive public GODR statement of position had been forthcoming and further developments were clouded with uncertainty. (CONFID.)

2. Other Opposition Reaction to Anniversary

Opposition political parties (other than the PRD) and other normally vocal groups had relatively little to say about the second anniversary of Balaguer's inauguration. The right remained generally silent. The PRSC said the fact that the government had been able to stay in office for two years constituted "an advance in the democratic institutionalization of the country." Nevertheless, the PRSC said, the government is not carrying out the social transformation which is required to attain an authentically just and free society. The party criticized the absence of authentic agrarian and educational reform and what it termed the excessive centralization of power in the Balaguer government. Balaguer politely refused to comment on this criticism but once again lauded the PRSC as a party encompassing "select younger elements" at his July 1 press conference.

The PCD, summing up Balaguer's two years in power, concluded that during that time the country had been handed over to foreign interests. The past two years, the party claimed, have been marked by crimes, repression and exploitation. (UNCLASS.)

BRUC (Social Christian University group), FETRUDISNA (PRD-affiliated labor federation) and others concluded that on balance Balaguer's two years in office were "negative". Both groups also criticized "Yanqui" influence in the government. (UNCLASS.)

3. Police Investigate Recent Violent Incidents

The National Police have been kept busy investigating a series of recent violent incidents, including several deaths. This week, notwithstanding the presence of a police station across the street, two home-made bombs exploded in the Hotel Hispaniola compound (no one was injured and there was no property damage). Two persons, including a policeman, were killed by a grenade thrown into a bar in Barahona; the body of a former MPD member was found in a ditch near San Cristóbal, and the body of a lottery-ticket salesman who had been shot (his head was also bashed in) was found in the Capital near the spot where Trujillo was killed. (UNCLASS.)

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Comment:

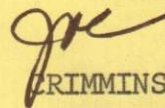
Police have made arrests in connection with the deaths in Barahona and that of the lottery-ticket salesman, neither of which appears to have been politically motivated. The Homicide Division is continuing its investigations of the Hispaniola bombing and of the death of the ex-MPD member, as well as of the killing of two policemen in the Capital the week before. The Embassy's preliminary examination of these and other incidents which took place during June has not revealed any coherent pattern nor signalled attribution to any specific group or groups. (LOU)

In other news this week, Police Chief Braulio ALVAREZ Sánchez (in the latest of a series of police warnings) charged that the MPD is putting finishing touches on plans to continue its alleged campaign of subversion in the countryside, especially among campesinos. Alvarez said that the authorities were aware of all of the MPD's movements and would take whatever steps necessary to maintain the public peace. (UNCLASS.)

4. New Haitian Ambassador Presents Credentials

The new Haitian Ambassador to the Dominican Republic, Clement Vincent, presented his credentials to President Balaguer in a brief palace ceremony on July 4th. Ambassador Vincent is a lawyer and journalist. He has previously held important posts in the Duvalier government, among them, Assistant for Dominican Affairs in the Foreign Office and Director of the Political Section of the Foreign Office.

Ambassador Vincent replaces former Ambassador Fritz Moise, who was reportedly slated for a political post in Haiti. However, ex-Ambassador Moise, who left Santo Domingo on June 16th, (WPR #14) has announced no plans other than a three month stay in Shreveport, Louisiana. (UNCLASS.)


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