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SUMMARY

Local developments this week were completely overshadowed by the tragic shooting of Senator Robert F. Kennedy. From the moment the news broke in Santo Domingo, all political and public attention focused on developments in the United States. The press gave over its front pages, many inside pages and its editorial space almost exclusively to news of the shooting and subsequent developments. Radio and television carried extensive coverage of the news and local reactions thereto. Less than 48 hours after the shooting, Dominican TV viewers saw Senator Kennedy's last appearance in Los Angeles and heard the shots and subsequent pandemonium in the Ambassador Hotel. Expressions of condolence, led by those from President Balaguer and Vice President Lora, flowed to the Embassy and to the Kennedy family. President Balaguer and the PRD-controlled Santo Domingo city government decreed days of mourning. There was much concern over what the assassination might ultimately imply for the United States and the world, the latter with specific reference to Latin America and, of course, the Dominican Republic.

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There was also much much talk by the PRSC and many others about the alleged decomposition of American society. The PRD, which, as most Dominicans, sincerely regretted the Senator's death, immediately used it to strive to prove its contention that "Pentagonist" interests in the United States will not permit a peaceful revolution either in their own country or others, and spoke openly of the need for violent revolution as the only remaining alternative to "exploited peoples", including the people of the U.S. (Reaction to Sen. Kennedy's death has been reported by SD-2739; SD-2764; SD-2766; SD-2767; SD-2778).

Other political news was restricted to continued dissension in the Wessinista PQD, (Item 3) maneuvering and threatening by the PRD for the release of radical Executive Committee member "Rafa" GAMUNDI and four others (Item 1), labor rumblings that might entail the beginnings of some labor unrest (Item 4), growing public unhappiness over the scarcity of and rampant speculation in rice and other food-stuffs, two unsolved murders -- one reportedly of an ex-Constitutionalist and the other of an apparent Reformista -- and a new round of rumors of impending dire events. Meanwhile, a Rumanian trade mission was in town, a local chess champion left -- with the government's permission -- for an international chess tournament in Cuba, 181 policemen were promoted, a new U.S. sugar allocation, bringing the country's total allocation for 1968 up to 586,000 tons, was announced, and the Partido Reformista reincorporated most of the remainder of its dissident movements. Notwithstanding some good news, however, the mood was somber and, while not uneasy, somewhat expectant. (LOU)

1. PRD Arrestees' Release Overshadowed by Sen. Kennedy's Death

Early this week the PRD announced plans for a giant outdoor protest rally June 8 to demand the release of Organization Secretary "Rafa" Gamundi and four others arrested with him in La Vega and charged with illegal possession of arms of war (WPR #11, Item 2). The PRD's request for the necessary rally permit was denied by the GODR, with President Balaguer suggesting the party might plan an indoor meeting instead. In quick response Secretary General PEÑA Gómez took to the air with an excoriating blast against the Balaguer Government (and against US-owned Central Romana Corporation --- SD A-633), and announced that they would do just that; if the five were not released by June 9, he said, the party would hold an indoor meeting at the party headquarters, but would also rig loudspeakers outside so that the public multitudes might come and listen. (SD-2704). Meanwhile, bail had been fixed at the seemingly exorbitant amount of RD\$60,000 each and, after a frantic effort, the chronically-im-poverished PRD was able to raise the funds necessary to finance the bond. The quintet was released June 5 amid plans for a triumphant reception to be held that afternoon at party headquarters (SD-2736).

PRD rejoicing over Gamundi's (and the others') freedom was short lived, however. News of Sen. Kennedy's shooting quickly dominated the news media and the hearts and minds of the Dominican

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public, not least the PRD (see Summary, above). The party reacted in a violent and highly emotional manner, with Peña Gómez and other leaders referring to the "dissolution" of US society, eulogizing the Senator and ominously predicting that Robert Kennedy took the last hopes of a peaceful revolution in the US and Latin America with him to the tomb. Now, they warned, the electoral path would give way to violent revolution and the force of arms as means of achieving power (SD-2778). The PRD, seeking to maximize its identification with Robert Kennedy, scheduled a requiem mass to be held June 8 and immediately announced its delegation to the funeral: a high-powered team comprised of Secretary General Peña Gómez, Press and Propaganda Secretary "Manny" ESPINAL, PRD Senate Bloc leader Secundino GIL Morales and -- as a last minute entry -- Sen. CASIMIRO Castro (SD-2762; SD-2772). In their absence the party would be subject to the tender ministrations of radicals Jottin CURY (acting Secretary General, by-passing moderate Deputy Secretary General Antonio GUZMAN); Napoleon NÚÑEZ (acting Secretary of Press and Propaganda); and -- back from jail and on the job again -- Organization Secretary Gamundi.

In a somewhat lighter vein reminiscent of the happier days before Sen. Kennedy's death, Sra. Carmen de BOSCH, here since May 22 on a visit billed as "family and social" (but obviously containing a high partisan content), on June 3 officially presented the Autonomous University (UASD) with editions from five countries of her husband's opus Pentagonismo (English and French translations are upcoming). (CONFIDENTIAL)

Comment: It is too early to tell whether the PRD's increased emphasis on violent revolution in its propaganda marks a real -- and dangerous -- policy shift or is more the reflection of frustrations and emotions aroused by the death of Senator Kennedy -- a man around whom the party had obviously been building its hopes for future trouble-free (for the PRD) relations with the US. In any case, the party has for the moment (during Peña Gómez' absence) been left in the most radical hands to date, and the ensuing days should prove instructive from a propaganda standpoint at least (SD-2778). (CONFIDENTIAL)

2. Electoral Follow-up

Certificates of election were presented to the newly-elected mayor and councilmen of Santo Domingo this week by the Central Electoral Board (JCE). The President of the board exhorted them not to carry to their new positions "the differences and rancors which have brought so many tears and so much grief" to the Dominican people.

On June 7 the Central Electoral Board upheld the decision of the local board in Castillo which rejected the challenge of the Union Independiente against the Reformista winners. Appeals from

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three losing independent groups in Barahona, San Francisco de Macoris and Villa Bisono and from the Reformistas in El Seibo are pending with the Central Board. The only challenge so far accepted by a local board was in El Seibo where the Movimiento Independiente Seibano lost to the Reformistas. Unless the decision of the local board is over-ruled by the Central Board, new elections will be held in those precincts where there were irregularities. (UNCLASSIFIED)

3. PQD Problems

A week after Elias WESSIN y Wessin delivered his latest blast against the President, the PQD received a body blow when 23 of the party's founding fathers in Santiago, led by Santiago Provincial Committee president Juan A. GIRALA, resigned en masse amid considerable public fanfare on June 1. The group issued a communiqué stating the reasons for its action. When it helped form the PQD it "never thought of organizing a subversive party which would become a threat to the public peace", it said, adding that when Girala visited Wessin in Miami recently "he found not a political leader but a man filled with arrogance, anxious for revenge...in the full magnitude of his passions", and who, according to his pronouncements, is leading the PQD "to the most complete national disaster". Therefore, the group said, it was resigning to "adhere to the Partido Reformista and the ideals of Dr. Balaguer". The communiqué ended with an exhortation to the military -- "from generals to privates" -- not to listen to those whom "we know" are trying to lead them to new irresponsible adventures.

High PQD officials rushed to Santiago to look into the situation. They later issued a statement attacking Balaguer on other (familiar) counts and attributing the Girala group's defection to the government. They "courteously" invited Balaguer to continue cleansing the PQD of its "garbage" (A-634). (LOU)

Comment: The group's defection was the third -- but the most serious -- blow to the PQD's self-proclaimed electoral and "constitutional" image to have been dealt it by former adherents in recent months. It is our understanding that some high GODR military and perhaps other officials were in fact instrumental in weaning the group away from Wessin, whose indictment by former adherents was the most significant "inside" appraisal of him yet to have been made public. Wessin can be expected to address himself to this "treason" in a future broadcast. (CONFIDENTIAL)

4. Police Remove Workers on Sit-Down strike

Using tear gas, the police removed CASC-led sit-in strikers at the M. González textile plant in Santo Domingo without bloodshed on June 5. The action was taken upon termination of a 48-hour

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period set by a court order to end the illegal strike which began on May 28 when workers occupied the plant. Similar police action planned for the same day at a San Cristóbal factory (Ropas y Tejidas, under the same ownership) apparently was not carried out when the Governor refused entrance to the police and the police chief would not permit the use of force against her. The strikers were, however, removed peacefully the following day. The company's lawyer told the Labor Attaché that he understands that President Balaguer personally approved the move to oust the workers as a preventive measure to avoid future abuses. Balaguer told the press that the actions of the workers were the direct result of CLASC demagoguery during the recent international meeting here.

On the same day the police removed the workers from the factory, four employers' associations requested labor leaders to stop "the labor chaos" which some workers were trying to revive. The four organizations (including the Chamber of Commerce and the Association of Industries) deplored the most recent strikes in the capital and requested the labor leaders not to impede "the development and progress attained during a brief but sustained period of mutual understanding and respect" between management and labor. (UNCLASS)

Comment: According to labor sources the new CASC militancy does reflect decisions taken at a CLASC executive committee meeting here the last week in May. During the week the Communist PCD and FMD along with the POASI port workers (independent) and the PRD's FETRUDISNA supported the CASC stance, attacked the government's labor policies (as usual, blaming the U.S.), and alerted their followers for further action.

CASC's new militancy could mark the beginning of significant labor trouble for the Balaguer administration. However the militancy could be dampened by Social Christian party pressure. Labor sources have indicated to the Labor Attaché that CASC now represents an embarrassment to the PRSC (which has been cultivating Dominican industrialists for financial contributions), and is acting without the party's support and against its advice. (CONF) (SD-2725,2765).

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