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GENERAL

This week saw a continuation of the reports speculating on a cooling of relations between President Balaguer and Vice President Lora (Item 1). The PRD delegation headed by Secretary General PEÑA Gómez is still in Spain holding discussions with party advisor Juan BOSCH (Item 2). PRSC President Caonabo JAVIER Castillo denied a Caribe story which reported a definitive agreement between the PRSC and Ambassador Hector GARCIA GODOY to support the latter's presidential candidacy in 1970 (Item 3). Student strikes protesting diversified high schools took place in Santo Domingo and San Juan de la Maguana (Item 4).

President Balaguer participated in the inauguration of the new 54,005 kilowatt hydro-electric plant at Haina and later in the week gave a speech at the opening session of a seminar on development, population and the family sponsored by the Santo Domingo Archdiocese

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in which he said that although the DR had a high demographic growth, population density was not yet a problem. (separate airgram under preparation). According to Listin, the President is planning two other "important" speeches in the near future.

In other news this week (1) the Chavez family sent a telegram to President Balaguer requesting that ex-General Elias WESSIN Y WESSIN be permitted to return for memorial services for his brother-in-law scheduled for December 7; (2) Secretary of Industry and Commerce José BREA Peña, whose resignation (WPR # 37) was turned down by the President, said he had not decided when he would use the leave of absence Balaguer granted him; (3) the annual controversy over the regalia pascual began as Santo Domingo prepared for the Christmas holidays (Item 5); (4) the Secretary of the Interior and Police and the Attorney General engaged in a verbal battle over the merits of the former's campaign to "disarm" the civilian population (Item 6); and finally (5) the ex-workers of the Ayuntamiento began to evidence renewed concern about their situation following press reports that the Mayor would discount their pay at the rate of 18% rather than the agreed 15%. Payment of back wages is still scheduled to begin on December 20. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

1. Rumored Differences between Balaguer and Lora

The Santo Domingo press this week, and political circles in general, devoted considerable attention to reports and rumors alleging "differences" between President Balaguer and Vice President Lora. One of the factors contributing to the speculation was a recent luncheon for Lora given by Gilberto HERRERA Baez, Secretary of State without Portfolio, and attended by a group of high Reformista leaders. Shortly after the luncheon a Palace lawyer, Antonio MORALES Castillo, reportedly was dismissed from his job and the press immediately began to spread reports that the action was the result of Balaguer's displeasure over "complaints" expressed at the luncheon. Herrera appeared to confirm these reports in oblique fashion and at the same time publicly expressed the view that the President owed more to his early supporters than they owed to him. Another factor contributing to the rumors was the visit to Santiago by a group of Reformista deputies. The press alleged that the purpose of the visit - prompted by Balaguer - was to ask Lora to return to the capital. The deputies, however, claimed that they had gone to Santiago to visit Deputy RUIZ Lama, detained in that city for the killing of WESSIN's brother-in-law, and that their visit with Lora was for purely "protocolary" reasons. The flurry of rumors, prompted in part by Lora's prolonged absence from the capital, receded to some extent when Lora returned to Santo Domingo on December 2.

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Although considerable digging remains to be done by the Embassy with respect to the stories concerning Balaguer and Lora, most persons in Santo Domingo with whom Embassy officers have talked are convinced that the problem is real and each has his own version of Lora's activities in the Cibao; many of these reports coincide in substance with the sources insisting that Lora was most active while away from the capital talking to a wide range of political figures, including PQD leaders. Most sources agree in their comments that the supposed cooling of relations between Balaguer and Lora is related directly to the election/reelection issue. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE).

2. Speculation and Uneasiness Increases in PRD Circles

Developments concerning the PRD this week were played out against a background of continued uncertainty surrounding Juan BOSCH's real intentions and the awaited results of the Benidorm talks (see WPR #37 and previous). At last week's end El Nacional published a letter from Bosch in which the Professor refuted earlier statements by PRDer FERNANDEZ Mármol by reaffirming that he, Bosch, was not coming back, had renounced his belief in representative democracy, and was quitting the PRD. From Spain came a wire service story that one of the PRD commission's members, José VEGA Imbert, had denied rumors that the PRDers had gone to Spain to request Bosch's resignation; on the contrary, said Vega, Bosch would return to the Dominican Republic as soon as his present academic efforts were finished, and would devote himself to politics "looking toward the 1970 elections". Also from Spain came a telegram addressed to Acting Secretary General Jottin CURY and announcing that an "important" (but unspecified) agreement had been reached which would "strengthen the party with its present leadership". The cable was signed by Bosch, PEÑA Gómez and Antonio GUZMAN. Jottin Cury came near to provoking a "moderate" revolt, when he publicly endorsed Bosch's rejection of the electoral process. Leading pro-electionist Sen. CASIMIRO Castro called for Peña Gómez' return posthaste to resume control of the party; and Cury was on the air the next day to reassure the militancia that Peña Gómez would indeed return directly from Spain and that there was no need for anyone to ask him to do so. Notwithstanding the above, at week's end Listín Diario carried the text of a letter addressed to Peña Gómez and signed by 14 PRD pro-election leaders. The letter requested Peña Gómez to return "promptly", as the "mere fact" of his non-return with the rest of the commission would be enough to provoke "another extremely grave crisis" in a PRD already severely disturbed by Bosch's attitude. The Bosch-lining JRD echoed Jottin Cury's earlier comments by terming the appeal "too quick" (Cury had called it "premature").

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Meanwhile, comments from outside the PRD were not lacking. The communist PCD, formalizing its early and energetic support for the Bosch position (WPR #36), issued a communiqué calling upon all revolutionaries to unite in waging the struggle for an "Anti-Imperialist Popular Dictatorship" (being reported by separate airgram). The PCD also addressed a handbill "to the Perredeistas" in which the Communists called for a mass struggle "similar to April, 1965", and denied that in supporting Bosch it was seeking the disintegration of the PRD. What it wanted, the PCD affirmed, was to "contribute to the PRD's total definition as an organization of the left". Asked about the Bosch-generated PRD crisis, President Balaguer commented that he believed that "one wing" of the PRD was situated on the "extreme left", but that the other wing was not. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE).

Comment

The PRD pro-electionists' call to Peña Gómez, according to PRD confidant Sacha VOLMAN, was prompted by an approach to Volman by Casimiro Castro and the other "moderates" for advice (alarmed by Cury's presumed attempt to undercut them). Volman said he advised against undue panic, reassuring them that Peña Gómez agreed they should be allowed to contest the 1970 elections if they wanted to; but he also told them to put Cury in his place by calling Peña Gómez home promptly. (Note: it is perhaps revealing that Jottin Cury is widely believed by many in and out of the PRD to be a PCD infiltrator; both he and the PCD have sought so obviously to exploit the crisis precipitated by Bosch.) As for the results of the Benidorm talks, no firm news has emerged aside from the above-reported cable. Most PRDers appear confident that Bosch will remain in the party, and the Embassy has seen or heard nothing to belie its own similar expectations. (CONFIDENTIAL).

3. PRSC Notes

PRSC President Caonabo JAVIER Castillo this week termed "totally false" a Caribe article attributed to a "high PRSC source" which claimed that the party had arrived at a definitive agreement with Ambassador Hector GARCIA GODOY to support his presidential candidacy in 1970. The Caribe informant said that the ex-provisional president "will be the presidential candidate of a front of parties and independent movements". The source said that the PRSC had conditioned its support on being the "head" of the organizations listed on the ballot as supporting Garcia Godoy, but admitted that the plans could be changed if President Balaguer again were a candidate. Javier said that any Social Christian could have talked "on a personal level" with Garcia Godoy during the latter's various trips to the DR but denied that the party had any "agreement" with him. (UNCLASSIFIED).

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Comment

From all reports the Embassy has, Javier's denial to the contrary, there is little doubt that the PRSC leadership is anxious to give Garcia Godoy its official support, preferably as the party candidate, but also as the leader of a loose coalition of center and moderate left elements. (CONFIDENTIAL).

4. Student Strikes Continue

At week's end student strikes protesting the introduction of diversified education continued in Santo Domingo and San Juan de la Maguana. About 3,000 intermediate and secondary school students from the liceo Pedro Henriquez Ureña in San Juan began a strike on November 27. They reportedly are demanding that "diversified education", which they termed "incompatible" with the D.R.'s status as an under-developed country, be discontinued.

Some students at Santo Domingo's liceo Union Panamericana walked out on December 4 in support of the striking students in San Juan. Spokesmen for both the Union de Estudiantes Revolucionarios (UER) and the Juventud Revolucionaria Cristiana (JRC) claim that a majority of the 1,250 students at the Santo Domingo school support the strike, a claim denied by the director and some teachers. According to newspaper reports, the strike has effectively closed the school with 85 percent of the students not attending classes.

At the end of the week eight UER leaders, accused by a teachers assembly of organizing acts of violence, were expelled from the Santo Domingo school for a year. The UER says it opposes the "diversified" system of education because it is a "plan sponsored by the CIA, AID and the so-called Peace Corps". Although the UER and the JRC both support the strikes, the two student organizations continue to hurl epithets at each other, the UER charging that the JRC is "paid by the Yankees" and the JRC in turn terming the UER leaders "psuedo revolutionaries" and "opportunists".

Secretary of Education Luis DUVERGE Mejia charged that leftist political groups were utilizing all methods to discredit the system of diversified education but said they would not succeed. The Secretary also announced that "in the next few days" the National Council of Education would be asked to approve a plan of diversified secondary education for the country. (UNCLASSIFIED).

5. Christmas Bonus Issue Heats Up

The holiday season was off to a good start this week as merchants trimmed windows (and customers), householders set up Christmas trees and political parties and trade unions girded their loins for

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battle with the GODR over the annual regalia pascual (the traditional extra month's pay upon which Dominican employees and workers count to see them through the holidays). This year's controversy took shape last week when Finance Secretary Antonio MARTINEZ Francisco announced that there would be no bonus this year for civil servants, since the GODR lacked the necessary funds. In response to a suggestion that some semi-autonomous state institution might guarantee a loan to the GODR to allow payment of the bonus (to be amortized over the coming year), President Balaguer said he personally thought it would not be in the employees' best interests but that he (nonetheless) would "be very glad" to accept the idea "if there were some autonomous institution willing to assume that obligation"; he also added that the GODR would pay the bonus if its December receipts were sufficient. At week's end the Dominican Corporation of State Enterprises (CORDE) denied a press report that it is considering the guarantee of such a loan.

Meanwhile, the usual outcries were heard. The PRD on its radio program and through its labor federation FETRUDISNA was vociferous in plumping for the extra month's pay for public servants and the "poorly paid military and police", and the PRD's Senator CASIMIRO Castro said the GODR would be violating the law if it failed to pay the bonus. The communist controlled FOUPSA-CESITRADO trade union federation, independent MODACAPI and the equally small Partido Domócrata Cristiano (PDC) added their respective voices to the clamor. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE).

Comment

While it is true that Dominican law requires payment of the regalia pascual to most employees and workers, it does not apply to GODR civil servants who have been dealt with from year-to-year under separate authority. Last year's controversy began earlier and reached a strident pitch before it was resolved by a partial payment (Martínez Francisco had also opposed payment of that year's bonus). It is likely that some compromise solution will be arranged again this year; in any case, the issue thus far lacks last year's steam and the short time remaining before Christmas augurs against it assuming major proportions. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

6. Plans to Disarm Civilian Population Still Being Considered

Attorney General Carlos Rafael GOICO Morales this week responded skeptically to Secretary of Interior and Police Smester's proposed plan to disarm the civilian population beginning January 1, 1969. (WPR #37). The attorney General expressed his sympathy with the general idea, specifically suggesting that those people with "veritable arsenals" in their homes be the first disarmed but said it would be very difficult to accomplish. He also noted that a considerable loss of revenue would result from a complete disarmament of the civilian population as licensing and renovation fees alone had amounted to more than \$700,000

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last year. Secretary Smester dismissed Goico's criticism, stating that the planned disarmament of the civilian population would be carried out as planned, and quoted President Balaguer's statement that he "would gladly sacrifice the revenues from gun licenses to benefit the tranquility and peace of the Dominican family". Smester emphasized however, that the new measures would not affect the possession of arms, but only the carrying of same, and that no action would be taken capriciously. The PCD and the "red line" faction of the MR-1J4 joined the public debate this week, issuing statements opposing Smester's plan. (UNCLASSIFIED).

J.H.C.
CRIMMINS ^{by} J.J.D.

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