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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

INFO : Amconsulate SAGO DE LOS CABALLEROS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRSRECEIVED
DEC 2 3 44 PM 1968

DEC 3 - 1968

NAN
RER-File
SD
12/4/68

FROM : Amembassy SANTO DOMINGO

DATE: December 1, 1968

SUBJECT : Weekly Political Review No. 37 (November 22-29, 1968)

REF :

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GENERAL

Most political news this week consisted of continued reactions to several events of the last few weeks and carried important implications for future political developments in the country. A high-level PRD delegation headed by Secretary General PEÑA GÓMEZ and Sub-Secretary General Antonio GUZMAN and including representatives of the major party organs departed for Spain and conversations with party mentor Juan BOSCH (Item 1). PQD President, exiled ex-General Elias WESSIN Y WESSIN, stepped up the pressure on President Balaguer to lift the "impediment" to his return to the D.R., citing the murder of his brother-in-law by a PR Deputy as the immediate justification (Item 2).

GROUP 3

Downgraded at 12-year intervals
not automatically declassified

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4-62 DS-323

Drafted by:

See last page: 11-30-68 sch

Contents and Classification Approved by:

DCM:FJDevine (in draft) JS.

Clearances:

POL:JCHaahr JS.

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In other news this week (1) the Secretary of Commerce and Industry, José A. BREA Peña, tendered his resignation effective November 30 to devote himself to his business interests (he is owner of Radio Comercial); (2) new evidence of dissension in the ranks of the PRSC came to light (Item 5); (3) the Chamber of Deputies approved an executive proposal to increase the penalties for convictions of tire burning and throwing nails and steel staples into the streets; (4) the Central Electoral Board rejected a PRSC proposal to hold separate presidential and congressional elections in 1970 (Item 3); (5) in a letter to President Balaguer, POASI asked for compensation of RD\$100,000 for "moral and material damages" suffered during the recent raid on its headquarters; (6) Victor HIDALGO Justo, President of the Reformista Youth organization FAJURE, criticized the formation of a new youth group headed by Victor GOMEZ Bergés (Item 4); (7) the election of a new MODACAPI slate of officers was challenged by the group's former Vice President Alejandro PADILLA and others; (8) Interior and Police Secretary Federico Maximo SMESTER announced new steps to "disarm" the civilian population after the first of the year; and finally, (9) Vice-President LORA's thus far unexplained (other than for reasons of health) extended stay in the Cibao has produced further speculation in the press and new rumors about personal difficulties between him and President Balaguer. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

1. PRDers Depart for Spain and Bosch

The PRD made relatively little news this week, as much of its leadership left or prepared to leave for Benidorm, Spain, and talks with party advisor Juan Bosch aimed at dissuading him from his announced decision to quit the party (WPR #36). Early in the week the first contingent departed, consisting of Secretary General Peña Gómez and Sub-Secretary General Antonio Guzman. They were accompanied by Bosch's sister, Angelita Bosch de ORTIZ, who reportedly was going to Spain on "personal business." The "high-level, amplified" PRD commission requested by Bosch departed at week's end. Representing nearly all high party organs and reflecting the major opinion sectors within the party, the commission reportedly included: José Augusto VEGA Imbert (Political Committee); José Mariano PEÑA (Agricultural Bureau); Pedro Julio EVANGELISTA and Marcos de VARGAS (National District Labor Bureau) who proved to be a last-minute drop-out; Miguel SOTO (National Labor Bureau); Winston ARNAUD and José OVALLES (JRD); Lenor Sanchez BARET (Women's Branch); Deputy Luis VARGAS and Deputy Ambiorix DIAZ (Parliamentary Bloc); also included were Dra. Frida de ESPINAL (also of the Women's Branch) and Ing. Frank CAMACHO (whose affiliation is unknown to the Embassy).

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Peña Gómez set the stage for his departure by a lengthy "orientation" radio address early in the week during which he said that at the moment the only two "certainties" were that Bosch would not return to the D.R. before mid-1969 and that he would not be a candidate in 1970. For the rest, Peña Gómez stated that he and the commission would attempt to persuade Bosch to remain at least as an ordinary party member, for Bosch's total resignation from the PRD would mean its complete split, in which case he (Peña) would "almost certainly" resign as Secretary General. (SD-4297). The party radio program during the rest of the week was largely pro forma, and it appeared that the party had adopted a "low silhouette" pending the return of its delegates; even the PRD's loyalest Bosch supporters were relatively restrained, although the JRD (again), and the Labor and Agriculture Bureaus went on record as supporting the Bosch position and calling on him to reconsider. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

Comment: A. PRD confidant Sacha VOLMAN told the Embassy he was very pleased that Angelita Bosch de Ortíz was going to Spain, as she was "the most level-headed one in the family" (including Bosch himself), and with her Peña Gómez and the commission would have a much greater chance of making her brother "see reason" and convincing him to remain a PRD member. (CONFIDENTIAL)

B. Sen. CASIMIRO Castro told Embassy officers that Bosch had written him especially to ask that he accompany the commission to Benidorm, but that he (Casimiro) was in principle against the idea of the commission going to pay court to Bosch and -- he added -- he did not have the thousand pesos or so he considered necessary to make the trip. It is no secret that Casimiro strongly opposes Bosch and is one of the leading electionists in the PRD. He has indicated privately to Embassy officers that the PRD can get along quite nicely without Bosch and that Bosch's and Balaguer's withdrawal from active politics (after 1970, in the latter case) would be in the country's best interests. (CONFIDENTIAL)

C. The real negotiating with Bosch will, of course, be done by Peña Gómez and to a lesser extent by Antonio Guzman, and the important decisions were probably made before the remainder of the commission arrived. It may have been this consideration, plus pique at not being included in the first contingent that led Sen. Maximo LOVATON Pittaluga (of the Political Committee, and one of the most important "moderate" leaders) not to include himself amongst those going to Spain. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

2. Wessin y Wessin Pressures Balaguer to Return

President Balaguer refused this week to grant the cabled request of exiled ex-General Elias Wessin y Wessin to return to the Dominican Republic at this time. Wessin's latest appeal to

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the President came at the end of last week after the murder of Manuel CHAVEZ, PQD activist and the ex-General's brother-in-law, by Reformista Deputy Miguel RUIZ Lama. Balaguer at first refused comment, claiming he had not received Wessin's request "officially." After the Chavez funeral had taken place, the President claimed the reason for Wessin's appeal no longer existed and reiterated his statement that Wessin would be able to return to the country in time to participate in the 1970 elections. He added that he considered the manner in which Wessin made his request a form of pressure against the government. At his mid-week press conference, Balaguer again repeated that at the "opportune moment", Wessin could return "through the wide door." Meanwhile, Deputy Ruiz Lama is in jail in Santiago awaiting indictment for voluntary manslaughter. At the recommendation of a special committee of the Chamber of Deputies appointed to look into the case, the Chamber decided on November 27 not to interfere in any way in the matter. (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: Both Wessin and PQD leaders here will almost certainly keep up the pressure for Wessin's return. Up to the present time, Wessin, however unhappy about his status as an exile, has indicated a willingness to play by the rules and not to return until he is legally permitted to do so. However, it is possible that his frustration over the failure of his efforts to return will lead him to consider rash acts such as that reported on November 26 when he booked a seat on a flight to Jamaica with an onward connection to Puerto Rico via Santo Domingo only to cancel it at the last minute. (CONFIDENTIAL)

3. Electoral Board Rejects PRSC Proposal on Separate Elections

The Junta Central Electoral (JCE) this week rejected a proposal of the Revolutionary Social Christian Party (PRSC) to hold separate elections in 1970 in which elections for President and Vice-President would follow congressional and municipal elections by three months, but answered with a counterproposal of its own. Instead, the JCE proposed the utilization of separate ballots, one for the presidential elections and one for all others including senators and deputies.

The Junta's reply indicated that the Social Christian proposal had been rejected because it would require an amendment of Articles 89 and 90 of the Constitution, and such amendments were in turn regulated by Article 116 of the Substantive Law which requires that the necessity for such change be declared in a law originating exclusively in the legislature and the Executive Branch.

Four other political parties (PR, PRD, PQD and UCN) for all practical purposes earlier had rejected the PRSC suggestion (see WPR #34).

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By week's end the Junta's counterproposal had not been considered by decision-making councils of the PRD or the PRSC, but PRD Deputy "Manny" Espinal was quoted as saying that a two-ballot setup might confuse illiterate voters and suggested instead a single ballot with national and regional offices separated by a perforated line. (UNCLASSIFIED)

4. FAJURE President Rejects Formation of New Reformista Youth Group

Victor Hidalgo Justo, President of the Reformista youth organization, FAJURE, this week criticized the formation of a new youth group (see A-850) designed to weld together youth groups throughout the country in support of the Balaguer Government. Hidalgo Justo charged that the "Provisional Committee of the National Movement of Reformista Youth", headed by Victor Gómez Bergés, and including five PR Deputies and other government officials, was creating a situation of "pure anarchy" in the PR ranks. FAJURE, he said, was the only movement that had labored intensively in the uniting of youth around the Reformista Party and conjectured that the new movement announced in the press would actually only serve to divide the official party youth organizations. Hidalgo Justo warned Reformista youth to study the situation carefully before deciding to enroll in the new movement.

Gómez Bergés dismissed Hidalgo Justo's criticism and claimed over 10,000 members for the new group already. He said that these numbers proved that the new movement had "moved the conscience of the youth from one end of the country to the other." (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: It is still not clear how the new youth movement will fit into the Reformista Party organization or how its functions will differ from those of FAJURE, which has not been a very active organization. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

5. PRSC Faced with New Outbreak of Problems

Additional evidence that the Partido Revolucionario Social Cristiano (PRSC) is having problems with its two affiliated youth organizations, the Bloque Revolucionario Universitario Social Cristiano (BRUC) and the Juventud Revolucionario Social Cristiano (JRSC) came to light this week. According to a Social Christian source of Listín Diario, seven "young leaders" who "represent the youth of the party who radically oppose the political line" of the party were expelled by the PRSC as "radicals." Party sources reportedly later confirmed that two members of the JRSC were expelled from the youth group for a year by the JRSC disciplinary committee rather than by the PRSC executive committee. These same sources denied that the five named BRUC activists had been expelled from the party pointing out that they were not PRSC members and therefore could not have been expelled. They were apparently disciplined by the BRUC leadership, however.

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Probably as a result of these problems involving some young activists, four barrio committees of the party petitioned the national executive committee to remand PRSC President Caonabo JAVIER Castillo to the party's disciplinary committee for violation of the party's statutes. Among other things, the committees accused Javier of physically ejecting JRSC leaders from party headquarters, a charge which has been denied by the party leadership. In a mid-week press release, the PRSC appealed to its followers to utilize established "channels of communication" to air ideological disagreements before taking them to the public. (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: This is further evidence that potentially serious problems persist within the PRSC and, like the PRD, the PRSC is concerned with efforts to retain its aggressive youth wing and prevent it from running further to the left. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

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