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HANDLING INDICATOR

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BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
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TO : Department of State

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General

In the wake of President Balaguer's timely address to the nation on October 18 (Item 1) the political atmosphere in Santo Domingo this week appeared to have improved somewhat over last week's mood of uneasiness. To be sure the country's basic political and economic problems still persist, and the opposition, especially the PRD, shows no signs of moderating its attacks on the Balaguer administration (Item 2), but the President's speech undoubtedly had a calming effect, particularly on the recent spate of coup rumors. The departure of Carlos EVERTSZ Fournier from the country and the consequent death of that sensationalized story in the public forum (SD-4059 and previous) also helped improve the atmosphere.

In other news this week 1) the Governor General of Curacao, Nicolás Debrot, was feted by the government and other official and private Dominican institutions during his 5-day visit; 2) the persistent problem of back wages for ex-workers of the Santo Domingo Ayuntamiento

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continued to simmer (Item 3); 3) renewed speculation concerning Ambassador Hector GARCIA-GODOY's possible plans for the 1970 elections again found its way into print (Item 4); 4) a court of appeals upheld a lower court ruling which sentenced José MARTE Polanco to 20 years in prison on charges of "international espionage"; 5) National Police arrested two men in connection with last week's Barahona slaying of Carlos Julio GONZALEZ, a prominent Reformista who was Labor Secretary Polibio DIAZ' brother-in-law; the two in turn accused Angel Augusto SUERO, Sub-Secretary of Agriculture of planning the murder; 6) PRSC President Caonabo JAVIER Castillo, in a petition to the Junta Central Electoral, suggested that the 1970 Congressional elections be held at least three months before that year's scheduled Presidential elections (PRSC sources admitted to an Embassy officer that the request stood little chance of being approved); 7) the PQD published a list of 28 points which the party said had to be satisfied by the government in order to receive the party's support (Item 5); and 8) Congressman Armistead Selden of Alabama made a two-day visit to Santo Domingo. (CONFIDENTIAL)

* * * * *

1. Reaction to President's Speech

Press reaction to President Balaguer's October 18 televised address to the nation, which dealt primarily with economic matters but which also included a section in which the President with evident emotion declared that the political situation of the country "is of absolute stability" (SD-4016 and SD-4033), was generally quite favorable. Editorial comment centered on the economic aspects of the speech, with Listin Diario praising it as "an evident effort to rectify an earlier pessimistic economic prognosis" in which the President "had stirred unexpected public concern". Left-wing El Nacional similarly called it "important and timely" because of the "recent economic prognosis that had obscured the industrial and agricultural future of the country". El Caribe editorialized that the most serious problem of recent weeks was the balance of payments situation and voiced its support for Balaguer's statement that the best way to remedy the situation is a massive increase in production and exports, rather than more restrictions on imports. Caribe summed up the speech as "an expression of very necessary opinions about matters of vital interest for the country, presented in a conciliatory manner which conformed to current public temperament". Listin noted in its editorial, entitled "Encouraging Effect", that the tone of the speech had served to dispel the rumors and inventions that "sought to make one sector of the citizenry believe that the rhythm of institutionality would be broken", thus "restoring tranquility to the whole Dominican family".

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The reaction of the opposition political parties was predictably more critical. PRSC President Caonabo JAVIER Castillo criticized the President for not having made some distinction among the opposition groups and defended his party's criticism of the government, particularly the "spending of millions of dollars on constructing buildings and avenues (which) can be interpreted only as a government attitude of electoral demagoguery". The PRD reaction was even more critical (see Item 2).

Comment: As noted earlier, despite the bitter response of the opposition, especially the PRD, to the President's references to the "hydrophobic and insane" opposition, the general political atmosphere appears to have improved following the President's timely speech. (See SD-4016). (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

2. PRD Notes

This week was a very active one for the PRD and its Secretary General Jose Francisco PEÑA GÓMEZ. The President's speech on Friday, while devoted primarily to economic matters, included a biting attack on the opposition which provoked a bitter response from Peña Gómez. (SD-4040). The Secretary General threw the blame for what the President referred to as the "political turbulence of recent days" right back at President Balaguer, accusing him of exciting the police and military to a new "wave of terror" against the revolutionary opposition and their supporters -- the "poor" of the country. His current "evidence" was the police reaction to a grenade-throwing incident in Guachupita, a ghetto area in the northern part of the city, in which two policemen were seriously injured (SD-4040). Peña Gómez went to great lengths describing the "Draconian repression" of the poor by police who, he claimed, were incited by Balaguer. The PRD leader maintained that the President was acting from fear of the PQD, whose support he will need when he runs for re-election. Peña Gómez went to great efforts to attempt to drive a wedge between military supporters of Balaguer and the Wessinistas, pointing out what he called the shabby treatment of police and military since the President took office.

Peña Gómez described the Alliance for Progress, which Balaguer praised, as an "Alliance for Regression" and accused the Balaguer administration of a "give away" policy (entreguismo) and of favoring foreign monopolies over Dominican-owned enterprises.

The Secretary General seemed to be particularly upset by the arrest and detention of 16 PRD party members in La Vega on October 16, among whom was PRD National Secretary for Organization,

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Rafael ("Rafa") GAMUNDI Cordero. They were held for 18 hours on a reported charge of "participating in a subversive demonstration". Peña Gómez referred to the incident as another "insolent" act of government repression of the opposition.

Peña Gómez also found himself defending his role in the Evertsz case (see SD-4037). He denied that the PRD had offered to obtain for Evertsz a false passport to travel to Cuba, but said the party did offer to help him get out of the country for "humanitarian reasons". Apparently "help" from the PRD consisted of advice to Evertsz to seek political asylum in a Latin American embassy, advice which Evertsz took. As for Peña Gómez' interest in Evertsz' information on activities of the CIA in the Dominican Republic, Peña Gómez said: "it is no crime, but an act of defense of national sovereignty to obtain information on the activities in our country of a foreign espionage agency". (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

3. Ex-City Workers Remain Unpaid

Santo Domingo Mayor Guarionex LLUBERES has been unable to obtain the \$1.2 million needed to pay some 5,000 ex-city workers the three months' back pay owed to them by the Ayuntamiento. After it was turned down by commercial banks, efforts by the Ayuntamiento to secure a loan from an official bank failed because the Balaguer Administration refused to guarantee the loan.

President Balaguer this week told his press conference that the city, as an autonomous organization already receiving RD\$200,000 monthly from the national government, "could solve its own problems". The Mayor later told the press that the President was right and repeated his previous statement that the Ayuntamiento would have sufficient funds to pay the back salaries in monthly installments of \$60,000, which would mean it would take 20 months to amortize the total amount. The Ayuntamiento's public relations director has stated that the payments would be resumed in November.

Several minor incidents involving about 100 persons who stoned a private automobile and two businessmen took place on October 21, the date which the ex-workers and the PRD claim the Mayor set to complete the payments. Although one of the persons arrested in connection with the wounding of two policemen that night in barrio Guachupita was identified as a member of the Municipal Workers' Union, there still is no information available on whether the incident was related to the Ayuntamiento problem.

Predictably, the PRD stepped up its attack this week on the Ayuntamiento, accusing Lluberes of "continued mocking" of the ex-workers, but stopping short of calling the ex-workers into the streets. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

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More speculation concerning the possible candidacy of Ambassador Hector GARCIA-GODOY in 1970 appeared in the Santo Domingo press this week. On October 22, El Caribe ran a story, datelined Washington, announcing that the Partido Demócrata Popular (PDP), a "new Dominican political institution", plans to nominate the Ambassador for President. Nemén Yassa NADER, listed as Secretary General of the PDP, said García-Godoy had not accepted the nomination "for now" but had agreed to serve as a "political and disciplinary" advisor to the party. Nader indicated that the immediate purpose of the party was to "unite the progressive right and the democratic left" in a national movement designed to vigorize democracy in the D.R.

The following day Ramón CASTILLO, Dominican Consul General in New York and President of the Partido Progresista Demócrata Cristiano (PPDC), told the press here that García-Godoy is considered a possible candidate in 1970 by Dominicans living in New York. Castillo said he was inclined to believe that the Ambassador would be a candidate in 1970.

Speaking about the possibility that President Balaguer again would be a candidate, Castillo said that it was not Balaguer, either as a public figure or as the principal leader of the Reformista Party, who would make that decision but the "people" who have the last word.

In another political party note this week, a full-page ad in El Caribe on October 24 announced the formation of yet another political party, the Partido Union Nacional Dominicano (PUND), which, according to the ad, was founded in New York by Dominican "workers, students, campesinos and businessmen".

Comment: As yet the Embassy has no information on the PUND. An official of the MODACAPI National Party told an Embassy officer that the announcement by Nemén Yassa Nader looks like another of Nader's ploys, i.e., attempting to take advantage of García-Godoy's possible candidacy by linking the PDP with him. The official pointed out that the PDP exists in name only and that Nader's political activities in connection with the PDP have heretofore taken place largely among Dominican groups living outside the Dominican Republic. Several middle-level Social Christian (PRSC) leaders told another Embassy officer that they were "very skeptical" about Nader's purposes and questioned whether Garcia-Godoy had in fact agreed to serve as an advisor to the PDP. This seems to be the first time the PDP has been mentioned in the press here since it was started in Miami in December 1967. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

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Page 65. PQD Freely Offers Balaguer Government Its Conditional Support

At the end of his radio and television address to the nation on October 18, President Balaguer asked Dominicans to unite and to support his government with "cooperation without reservation" in order to put the country back onto the road to full social and economic recovery.

On October 23 the Santo Domingo press reported that the PQD Central Executive Committee had addressed a proposal to the Government offering "without reservation" its support of the Balaguer Administration provided some 28 conditions were fulfilled to the party's satisfaction. Among these demands were: 1) lifting re-entry restrictions for all expatriated Dominicans including General WESSIN y Wessin; 2) capture and punishment of those who robbed the National Lottery, banks and other businesses; 3) elimination of the "corps of thugs" commanded by Col. Ney TEJEDA Alvarez; 4) end the alleged phony plan of austerity; 5) increase salaries of police and military; and 6) suspend the government's plans for the construction of multi-family dwellings.

When queried on this offer of PQD cooperation later in the week, President Balaguer expressed only "vague familiarity" with the letter and said only that the cooperation he sought was "from Dominicans as citizens and not as political partisans" and that the cooperation must not be "interested". (UNCLASSIFIED)

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