

DEPT. DISTRIBUTION

ORIGINAL ACTION

ARA-10

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

POL 12 DOM REP

Original to be Filed in _____ Decentralized Files.

FILE DESIGNATION

A-498

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

MAR 22 8 25 AM 1968

INFO : Amconsul SANTIAGO DE LOS CABALLEROS

FROM : Amembassy SANTO DOMINGO

DATE: 21 MAR 68

SUBJECT : Criticism Exchange between PCD and Peña Gomez

REF :

MAR 25 1968

1. El Nacional on March 11, 1968 ran an article which detailed "constructive" criticism by the Dominican Communist Party (PCD) of PRD Secretary General Peña Gomez' conduct during his party's Fifth National Convention. The next day Peña Gomez on the PRD radio program replied to the charges. Then on March 13, the PCD purchased space in El Nacional to publish both their entire original press release followed by refutation of Peña Gomez' broadcast reaction to the article.

2. El Nacional emphasized the PCD accusation that Peña Gomez "vacillated." By taking a middle of the road stance on the election abstention issue, he left an opening for participating in the municipal elections, as the El Nacional piece put this PCD allegation. He did not assume a front line position in the fight against rightists, it was stated.

3. Peña Gomez' last speech zigzagged, the article continued, and he grounded electoral abstention on the supposed certainty that the PRD would be defeated. He was against expulsion of rightists who, opposing majority resolutions, launched an electoral campaign, the PCD continued. Peña Gomez erred in PCD eyes by arguing that Wessin y Wessin's exile provides forceful proof of the lack of an electoral climate, and by praising Casimiro Castro, who has taken "reactionary positions with the economic and political support of Jose Brea Peña and Antonio Martinez Francisco." El Nacional added that the PCD

POST ROUTING

TO: Action Info. Initials

AMB/
PO

DCM

POL

ECON

CONS

ADM

AID

USIS

FILE

Action Taken:

Date:

Initials:

FORM
10-64 DS-323

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

For Department Use Only

☒ In ☐ Out

Drafted by: POL:TWNeeley:FAlderti:csw

Drafting Date: 3/15/68

Phone No.:

Contents and Classification Approved by: DCM:FJDevine 7.9.8.

Clearances:

POL:JWWilson

1968 MAR 22 AM 1052

COPYFILE-PBR

rs/n - file
NAN.
3/28/68

Santo Domingo A-498

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

Page 2

included the United States Embassy among Casimiro Castro's "supposed" backers. Peña Gomez' reference to Balaguer as "President of all Dominicans" was "improper" to the PCD, who termed the country's problem today "a group of Trujillistas shielded by the President's prestige."

4. El Nacional cited the PCD assertion that the PRD Secretary General has placed personal interests ahead of those of the Dominican revolution and his own position as party head, this charge referring to Peña Gomez' accepting re-election on the condition that he be permitted to study law in Europe at a date of his choosing. The article concluded with the PCD's defining the criticism as in "a great constructive spirit" and by saying that "the organization is conscious of the Dominican people's democratic and anti-imperialistic conscience." Exactly which organization's consciousness the phraseology did not make clear, and the press release later indicated that this was a misleading paraphrase of a statement that the PCD was aware of Peña Gomez' contribution to "the development of the people's democratic and anti-imperialistic consciousness."

5. On the PRD radio program March 12, Peña Gomez devoted himself at length to answering the PCD charges. Although stating at the outset that the PCD had no right either to lecture to or to demand explanations from him, and that the only accounting he was obliged to give was to the PRD membership, Peña then proceeded to answer the PCD's criticisms seriatim for the following 25 minutes.

6. The Secretary General began by pointing out that, although the PCD claimed its criticism was intended to be constructive, in reality it was ill intentioned and extremely destructive, coming as it did at a time when external and internal enemies of the party were attempting to weaken the PRD, when Yankee imperialism was financing a movement to divide the party, and when its leaders most needed to maintain solidarity. The PRD is an independent organization without commitments to anyone, Peña said, and any acceptance of the PCD charge would be a cowardly surrender of an independence which no other Dominican political party possesses. The Secretary General wondered what past successes permitted the PCD to lecture to him, and stated that the most famous PCD action was its participation in the revolution of April 24, which latter was organized and initiated by PRD leaders who followed a strategy and tactics quite distinct from those of the PCD. If the PCD claims to have played a prominent role in the revolution, then it must also admit that it accepted the policies of another political party, Peña charged.

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

Santo Domingo A- 498LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

Page 3

7. Peña paid tribute to the memories of the "brave expeditionaries" of the Partido Socialista Popular and to the memory of the martyrdom of Manolo Tavares and the other brave leaders of the MR-1J4, who "died in the hills with rifles in hand defending an unknown constitutionality." Peña acknowledged that the MPD is unique among the several communist parties in that it alone possesses a membership and leaders of proletarian origin. On the other hand, he noted, the PCD has no lesson to give the PRD; it cannot be the party's teacher much less its critic.

8. Concerning elections, Peña said no one could accuse him of vacillation during the Fifth National Convention or of being an electoral opportunist; he had never benefitted in any way from either of the two national elections held in the post-Trujillo era, he said, and could never support PRD participation in the forthcoming elections under such disadvantageous conditions. The PRD cannot contest the elections, for it would find arrayed against it the strong forces of the GODR, the US, sectors of the Armed Forces and the National Police. This would mean a certain defeat, which would seriously affect the prestige of the party; but this would be a fraudulent defeat, and the PRD's political effectiveness would have been seriously damaged in an election in which only a small portion of Dominican political power was at stake.

9. Peña then defended Virgilio Mainardi as a great fighter against Trujilloism and a moderate man who is neither a traitor nor an agent of imperialism. Casimiro Castro he characterized as a meritorious man, even if he had committed errors. Any man such as Casimiro who has risen above his humble origin to become an important political leader is a valuable person even if saying so constitutes vacillation in the PCD's eyes, Peña added. As an example of Casimiro's courage, Peña pointed out his bravery and stoicism at the time he was seriously burned by a phosphorous bomb, and noted that Jottin Cury on that occasion praised Casimiro's fortitude.

10. Answering the PCD charge that he had assumed an incorrect position concerning General Wessin y Wessin (he had supported Wessin's return to the D.R. on the March 8 PRD radio program), Peña said he supported Wessin's return to the Dominican Republic for two reasons: (1) the PRD has always opposed deportations, and the Partido Reformista should remember when the PRD argued for Balaguer's return at the time his mother was dying; (2) the return of Wessin will at this time exacerbate the division of the right between Trujillistas and anti-Trujillistas,

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

Santo Domingo A- 498

Page 4

and this return will benefit the revolution, for the PQD is a cannibal party which feeds on the Reformista membership. Should Wessin remain out of the country, many pro-Wessin Reformistas would return to the PR, and this would strengthen the Trujillista sector which is the enemy of all democratic and revolutionary forces.

11. Peña Gomez defended his treatment of President Balaguer by stating that, although he tells the President every truth he deems necessary, he does it respectfully, as he is not a professional slanderer. Courtesy does not detract from courage, Peña said. No one can deny that President Balaguer is very popular with a certain sector of the Dominican people. Protected by this popularity and by US influence many of the worst Trujillistas returned to the Dominican Republic; and Balaguer, with a limitless lack of respect for public opinion, had appointed many of them to diplomatic posts abroad or to other government positions. However, Peña claimed, he had never said that Trujillismo is the only problem of the Dominican Republic; it was revived by the US invaders who were determined to continue Trujillismo in power. Lastly, Peña answered the charge that, in his conditional acceptance of the Secretary General position, he was placing personal interest ahead of party. He argued that young Dominican political leaders who want to contribute to the country must be educated as men of thought, not only men of action. He pointed out that he had to struggle to overcome gigantic obstacles to achieve his education, and was not so fortunate as the PCD leaders whose "good papas paid for their studies." Peña said that PRD leaders are not paid salaries by the party, for the PRD receives funds neither from Moscow, China, Cuba, Rome, Bonn nor Washington. Rather, they have to work for their living, for they do not want to be social parasites.

12. The original press release as the PCD later published it had stressed at the end that the PRD should convert its anti-electoral line into active mobilization against the government and imperialist domination. Here the reproduced note stopped and new PCD criticism of Peña Gomez' "false interpretation of our critique" began (in an almost hurt tone).

13. The PCD described its declaration as no diatribe but rather an interpretation from a "determined point of view," normal debate instead of meddling in internal PRD affairs or divulging PRD secrets. Whether the pronouncements are thought wise or unwise, it was unfair to assign bad intentions to the PCD, much less compare the PCD with reactionary and imperialist attacks, which have an opposite purpose. And calling a person's policies "vacillating" does not mean he is considered outside oppositionist and revolutionary ranks, continued the PCD; indeed the PCD would neither call the likes of Balaguer, Wessin or Martinez Francisco "vacillating" nor ask them to rectify their positions.

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

14. Mentioning as precedents for criticism the occasions when Peña Gomez "publicly recognized" an error in interpreting a Caamaño Deño remark and when still earlier the PRD stood up for "democratic possibilities" within the Armed Forces, in addition to criticizing stubborn leftist resistance to this attitude (which PRD point the PCD was forced to "recognize self-critically"), the PCD claimed it can take criticism as well as give it out, even to accepting it publicly when the PCD believes it fair.

15. Not finishing their reply, the PCD promised to answer "each and every one" of Peña Gomez' accusations, for which purpose they took more space in El Nacional on March 15 and 16. Peña Gomez they assailed in general for changing their history for his partisan purposes. The PCD supplied lengthy treatments of their "great role" in the April, 1965 revolution and of activities by its members spanning many years. (This portion being reported in some detail separately.)

16. These members come from all types of backgrounds, the PCD said; and entrance to the party is not easy. Although never will PCD rolls approach the size (or looseness) of liberal parties, the PCD went on, since reorganizing in 1962, it has attained national standing with cells in "almost all cities" and many rural areas - this while the MPD "disintegrates," the MRLJ4 shrinks and breaks up into factions, and the present PSP cannot go beyond "twenty or thirty dilettantes."

17. The PCD concluded by expressing that despite differences between them and Peña Gomez they have no desire to stop possibilities of dialogue or to renounce their policy of unity and working together with PRD militants and leaders against "the common enemy: imperialism and the Balaguer government." El Nacional then reported on March 17 that by means of a Peña Gomez broadcast and a PCD press release both sides had called off their public polemic since it was diverting revolutionary forces toward "secondary objectives."

18. Comment: Peña Gomez and the PCD wound up their debate in a virtual love feast, glossing over if not minimizing their differences and referring to each other in terms of warm esteem. The PRD Secretary General referred to the "high merits" of the PCD's "brilliant young men", while the PCD spoke of Peña Gomez' calling it quits as "a noble gesture."

CRIMMINS

J. H. C.
by T. J. D.LIMITED OFFICIAL USE