

ORIGIN/ACTION

ARA-10

RM/R REP AF

ARA EUR FE

NEA CU INR

E P IO

L FBO AID

AGR COM FRB

INT LAB TAR

TR XMB AIR

ARMY CIA NAVY

OSD USIA NSA

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

A-473

CONFIDENTIAL

NO.

TO : Department of State

INFO : Amconsulate SANTIAGO DE LOS CABALLEROS

FROM : Amembassy SANTO DOMINGO

SUBJECT : A PRD Moderate Comments on Party's National Convention

REF : SD A-423

1. Enclosed is a memorandum of conversation between PRD Deputy Luis Vargas Rojas and an Embassy political officer. The memorandum details Vargas' comments concerning radical domination of the PRD's National Convention (February 24-25) and the possible results of the gathering, including the appearance of a number of "independent" PRD-linked candidacies in the May municipal elections. Also included are Vargas' views concerning Caamaño's whereabouts and what he believes to be the mistaken "international" orientation of the PRD radicals.

CRIMMINS

Enc: Memcon

GROUP 3

Downgraded at 12-year intervals; not automatically declassified.

CONFIDENTIAL

FOR DEPT. USE ONLY

☐ In ☐ Out

Drafted by:

POL:JJYoule:ls

3-6-68

Contents and Classification Approved by:

DCM:FJDevine

Clearances:

POL:JWWilson

CONFIDENTIALSanto Domingo A- 473
Enclosure No. 1
Page 1MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Luis VARGAS Rojas, PRD Deputy (Puerto Plata)
John J. Youle, Political Officer

DATE & PLACE: February 28, 1968 Home of Reporting Officer

SUBJECT : PRD National Convention

On February 28, the reporting officer invited Vargas to his home to discuss the PRD's National Convention of the previous weekend and general party matters. During a leisurely lunch, Vargas made the following observations of possible interest:

1. Atmosphere of PRD Convention. The Convention was dominated from the start by the radical faction, Vargas affirmed. With the galleries packed with hand-clapping, foot-stamping JRD youths and many of the delegates hand-picked during months of painstaking effort by Organization Secretary "Rafa" Gamundi, the odds were clearly stacked against the moderates, even if they had tried to make their voices heard. However, Vargas noted, with the exception of Senator Casimiro Castro, very few really tried. When he, himself, attempted to present the moderate position concerning a possible withdrawal from Congress, as he had previously indicated to Secretary General Peña Gómez he intended to do, Peña instead recognized a JRD delegate who moved to close the debate. Following an immediate seconding of the motion, the debate was shouted to a close. On the first day of the Convention, as at the other major meetings since the radicals seized control of the party in October 1966, the moderates, disgusted, gradually folded their tents and went home. Segundo A. Gonzalez Tamayo, Washington de Peña, Tancredo Duluc, and numerous others stalked out and thus were not present when the vote on electoral participation or abstention finally came at eight o'clock in the evening. According to Vargas, those delegates still present, and other individuals who had moved onto the floor to occupy the seats of those who had departed, then threw up their hands -- there was no roll call -- and abstention was approved. However, he indicated, the final result could have been different only if the Convention had been held behind closed doors, with secret ballot, and at a site other than Santo Domingo. The radicals had already out-organized the divided moderates before the Convention began, and the purposeful gagging of moderate representatives on the floor only created a picture of greater unanimity than really existed.

The principal sore point for the moderates, Vargas commented, was the Convention's blatant departure from the agenda established by the

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

Political Commission. This Commission had selected only two items for discussion: electoral participation and elections of the party leadership. However, in total violation of the statutes, the Convention had discussed "popular dictatorship," withdrawal from Congress, and even contracts of the Santo Domingo municipal government.

2. Effects of Convention. The principal result of the Convention, according to Vargas, was to carry the party another step along the radical road. As Gamundi had predicted to him (SD A-423), moderate figures such as Jacobo Majluta, Fernando Silié Gatón, and others were purged from the Executive Committee. The party's other leadership organs, the Disciplinary and Political Commissions, are now fully dominated by the radicals, with leaders of that sector at the head. The only hope -- and an unlikely one -- in this situation, Vargas noted, is that increased in-fighting within the radicals might cause a further split from which the moderates could profit. The selection of Antonio Guzmán as Vice-Secretary General means nothing, he added, as Guzmán has no intention of moving to the capital and, should Peña Gómez resign, Guzmán would do so as well.

As for the moderates themselves, they are already organizing throughout the country to participate in the elections as "independent" movements. Vargas recounted several conversations he had held that morning with PRD Deputy Víctor Manuel Báez González (La Romana) and Senator Noel Subervi Espinosa (Barahona). Both reportedly told Vargas that they were cranking up to back PRD "independent" candidates in their locality. Virgilio Mainardi left for Santiago in the middle of the Convention to launch his independent mayoral candidacy, Vargas indicated, while adding that he, himself, intended to promote independent movements in Puerto Plata province. The candidate in the city of Puerto Plata will be José Adalberto Dubeau Rossi, an engineer who was also the PRD's candidate in 1966. These "independent" movements may actually have greater success than the PRD would have achieved running under the party label, Vargas asserted. Thus, the party will be able to select the most popular candidates, even if not members of the PRD, and to an extent avoid the "economic strangulation" issue (i.e., that the GODR will automatically bring economic pressures to bear on any PRD-controlled municipal government). However, Vargas pointed out, under the electoral legislation governing this election, such independent movements are required to indicate their intention to participate at least 75 days prior to the election (thus, by March 1). As very few potential PRD-linked "independent" movements could possibly be prepared by that date (those of Santiago and Cotui being exceptions), seemingly Balaguer must intervene to amend this legislation, or else these movements would be unable to gain legal recognition.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

3. Radical Outlook. Vargas then discussed at length what he considers the mistaken basis for the PRD radical's position. The radicals, he asserted, spend more time following events in Southeast Asia than they do in examining the political realities of the DR. They are convinced, Vargas declared, that the US will soon be involved in a major land war with China and/or shaken by a great internal uprising of Negro guerrillas in the cities, thus enabling the PRD radicals here to make a grab for power. The only alternative to such developments, according to the supposed radical thesis, would be the ascension to power in the US of the intellectuals and youth, who totally oppose the present "imperialist-interventionist" policies and who would, therefore, sympathize with the PRD position and assist them to take power.

4. Caamaño. At the close of the conversation, Vargas raised the question of Caamaño's whereabouts. Freely admitting that he had no specific information on the subject, he nevertheless voiced the belief that recent PRD pronouncements had made one thing clear -- wherever Caamaño is (probably Cuba), it is not in the best interests of the PRD. Vargas also talked at length about Caamaño's supposed "persecution complex", which, he stated, worsened considerably following Caamaño's arrival in London, and was allegedly fed by all manner of wild rumors promoted by his "communist" visitors there. According to Vargas, prior to his disappearance, Caamaño reached the point of seriously accusing his own aide, Captain Guerra, of being "a Yankee spy."

5. Comment: During the past year, Vargas has shown increased political maturity and skill, while remaining an outspoken proponent of the moderate cause within the PRD. His once grossly over-optimistic estimates of moderate strength have been somewhat tempered, and he is more realistic concerning their prospects. His reaction to the most recent Convention was more one of sorrow, than of anger, and he immediately set out to accomplish two tasks: (a) to prepare the Puerto Plata PRD for electoral participation as an "independent" movement (now in progress), and (b) to draw up a statement, for the approval of the PRD Congressional bloc, affirming that any decision regarding a permanent withdrawal must be made by the bloc alone (defeated by radical objections).

However, as Vargas now frankly admits, his present and potential allies, in attempting to regain control of the PRD or at least a significant voice in its policies, are weak and divided. Casimiro Castro is the only figure of stature and broad appeal in the moderate sector who is willing to openly challenge the radicals, and he has not received the necessary backing by other prominent moderates. Meanwhile, the radicals, although dominating the Convention, not surprisingly

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

declined to take any steps so unpalatable as to force the moderates to fight or withdraw. Moreover, by seemingly affording them sufficient leeway ("independent" electoral movements, etc.) to rationalize their defeat, the radicals once again appear even to have gained the tacit support of the majority of the moderates for a continuation of the party's increasingly radical course.

copy
POL:JJYule:ls

CONFIDENTIAL