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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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A-273

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NO.

HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

INFO: Amconsulate SANTIAGO DE LOS CABALLEROS OF STATE

RECEIVED

Quarson

Nov 13 8 16 AM 1967

FROM : Amembassy SANTO DOMINGO

DATE: NOVEMBER 9, 1967

SUBJECT : Pro-Wessin Propaganda Criticized

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 BUREAU OF
 INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
 NOV 14 1967

REF : A-245, October 22, 1967

1. The Social Christians (PRSC) charged recently that high military officials were proselytizing in favor of ex-General Elías WESSIN y Wessin. Cards bearing Wessin's photo and a cross and titled "Wessin, the Christ of Liberty" were reportedly used as safe-conduct passes in the provinces of the Cibao (see airgram under reference).

2. Since then, flyers bearing Wessin's photo and the cross have been reported circulating more extensively, with some affixed to utility poles in Santiago de los Caballeros. More recently (October 23), a new flyer has appeared in public places in Santo Domingo. In addition to the image of Wessin and the crucifix, the flyer bears the following headline: "General Wessin is the guaranty of concord. PQD."

Priest Denounces Use of Symbol

3. During a radio broadcast in Santiago on October 19, Father Arnaldo BAZAN, a Roman Catholic priest of Cuban nationality, severely censured the use of the Christian symbol for the Wessin political campaign. His comments were given extensive press coverage also.

4. Father Bazán asserted that he had learned from a reliable person from the rural area of Los Amaceyes that the Wessin-Christ photo was being circulated. The distributors of the photo intimated that if one did not vote for or favor Wessin, then he was a Communist. Bazán commented that combining Christ's symbol with a

GROUP 3

Downgraded at 12-year intervals; not automatically declassified.

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Drafted by: *bcm*
 POL:GCMitchell:cw

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Contents and Classification Approved by:
 The Ambassador *[Signature]*

Clearances:

POL:JWW *[Signature]*

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political figure in order to win votes made a mockery of Christianity. He added that whatever Wessin's qualities or defects were, presenting him together with Christ was an idea "totally lacking in common feeling". He opined that this type of propaganda could boomerang, and he advised that the flyers be taken out of circulation.

5. In its editorial of October 22, the leftist-nationalist El Nacional commented favorably on Father Bazán's critique of the Wessin propaganda campaign which, it said, some "worshippers of force and fraud" were making for the "golpista ex-general and host of the Yankee invasion".

PQD Identified with New Flyer

6. Although it was assumed that the Democratic Quisqueyan Party (PQD) was the author of the pro-Wessin propaganda, it was not until October 23, when the new flyer was affixed to walls in Santo Domingo, that the PQD initials appeared on the Wessin-Christ photo. In an effort to associate the National Civic Union (UCN) with the PQD and the promotion of Wessin, El Nacional (October 24) reported that Ramón GONZALEZ Hardy, former UCN Secretary-General of La Vega, was seen driving about in a jeep bearing PQD initials. Far from denying it, González openly admitted favoring Wessin, whom he called a "cohesive factor and appealing electoral figure" for the Dominican Republic. Furthermore, he considered that Wessin and Balaguer comprised the only two national figures on the Dominican political scene. Admitting that Wessin was a controversial figure, nevertheless González said that Wessin exercised "positive influences" and "great magnetism" over the rural folk.

7. In a second editorial (October 24), El Nacional denounced the "miniscule sectors", represented by "haters of the divine service" and "dealers of superstition and deceit", who had launched a campaign to vilify the Church and its personnel. The editorial added that the "miserable photograph" of an "unpopular and controversial figure" involved in "nefarious actions" was injuring Dominican Christian reverence.

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8. La Informacion (October 24) commented editorially that while Wessin, of Arab origin, was known to be a good Christian, it was improper to mix symbols of Dominican faith with non-religious subjects.

Rightists Accused Additionally

9. On October 25, the far right came under additional criticism. Father Sergio FIGUEREDO, S.J., Director of the Dominican University Center (CUD), accused the "Committee of University Christians" of being integrated with and directed by extreme right politicians, rather than by university students. (Comment: The Committee has alleged that the Church, including former Papal Nuncio Emmanuel Clarizio, and its local hierarchy favored the extreme left in the 1965 revolution.) The priest claimed that the rightist politicians were using Christ's name to deceive the public and to achieve non-religious ends.

"Thus Is Wessin"

10. Provoked by the various anti-Wessin attacks reported above --which had the net effect of stimulating, rather than diminishing, talk of Wessin--the PQD placed a quarter-page announcement in El Caribe on October 26, signed by its President, Guillermo N. JIMENEZ. Titled "Thus Is Wessin", the announcement boldly stated:

"That is how we want him: with Christ as a symbol of redemption. We do not want him to display, like Marx and Lenin, the effigy of the hammer and sickle.

"That is how we want him, because he is a Christian and because he publicly demonstrates his faith. He was born of humble means in Bayaguana, where Holy Christ is the pride of all the sons of that region."

(Bayaguana's religious view of its favorite son is nothing new. He was not yet settled in Miami in September 1965 when signs appeared in his home town reading "With Wessin and Christ.")

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With respect to the much-disputed photo, Jiménez said that it was taken of the general in 1965 and it was "framed by the walls of his austere soldier's office" which were "decorated with the image of Holy Christ". Because the PQD was created to unite rather than to divide the Dominican people, the announcement said, the "cross of redemption" was chosen by the PQD as "a unifying symbol of the country".

11. Comment: The "cross of redemption" is a double-edged sword that was used against the government of Juan Bosch in 1963. The cross, of course, is the symbol with which "Wessinistas" hope to exorcise "communism" from the Dominican Republic in much the same way that the old ultra-rightist Acción Dominicana Independiente (ADI) crowd, many of whose top sponsors (e.g., Rafael Bonnelly, Viriato Fiallo, Horacio Alvarez, etc.) are reportedly involved in the Wessin movement, used it in their "Christian manifestations" against Bosch. "Redemption" in 1963 meant deliverance from "communism" and administrative chaos; with heavy emphasis on the former; in 1967 it means deliverance from "communism" and "Trujillismo", again with emphasis on the former. Wessin, a simple man to whom everything is black or white, is responding now, as he did then, to the blandishments of the far right, whose primary objective is now, as it was in 1963, to regain by whatever means the position of power and influence it enjoyed under the Council of State and the Triumvirate.

As indicated herein and in our earlier reporting, the PQD has obviously been gathering some steam within the past few weeks, and the belligerence of its latest statement may well be a reflection of this fact. Our Consul in Santiago reports evidence of a fair amount of PQD organizational activity in the Cibao and the northwestern provinces. There is evidence that members of the Armed Forces are talking (among themselves and to their friends) more openly about Wessin than in the recent past. And Wessin himself has indicated to intelligence sources that a move for official registration of the PQD as a political party is imminent. Whether or not this proves to be the case, "Wessinismo" is becoming a major political force whose continued growth depends both on circumstances and on the political finesse with which President Balaguer moves to counter it. The President indicated to the Ambassador last week that he is following "Wessinismo" closely. He stated categorically, however, that he does not consider that Wessin poses a significant threat to his administration.

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