

FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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SECURITY : UNCLASSIFIED

PRIORITY: AIR POUCH

TO : Department of State

837.001/5-1850

FROM : HABANA 1138 May 18, 1950

XR 837.062

837.323

REF :

SUBJECT : COMMUNIST SPONSORED LABOR MEETING BROKEN UP BY POLICE

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A public meeting of tobacco workers, allegedly sponsored by the Communist faction of the National Federation of Tobacco Workers, was broken up by the National Police on May 15 at the request of the officially recognized National Federation of Tobacco Workers. The meeting had been called by the Communist elements in the tobacco industry to launch a protest against a recent decree which authorizes the mechanization of the export cigar industry. 1/ Tobacco workers and Communist sympathizers from various parts of Cuba had planned to attend the demonstration. Bus and automobile caravans were formed to carry workers from various inland cities to Habana. However, highway patrolmen were instructed to intercept the caravans and direct them to return to their points of origin. The police attempted to justify their actions by stating that they had been informed that the meeting was primarily a Communist political rally and that the name of the National Federation of Tobacco Workers was being used as a "cover" without the authorization of the organization.

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Rafel RAMOS, Organizing Secretary of the National Federation of Tobacco Workers, issued the following statement to the press. "The Communist Party, represented by certain tobacco workers, has, as part of its planned program of misinforming the public and the tobacco workers, organized a so-called concentration of tobacco workers to protest against the mechanization of the cigar industry. The National Federation of Tobacco Workers has ample evidence that the concentration is nothing more than a political meeting and that it will be attended only by militant Communists and not the true tobacco workers. The Federation maintains its stand that only through the mechanization of the export

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1/ See Embassy despatch No. 898 of April 20, 1950

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cigar industry can the national tobacco industry be stabilized."

Comment:

Reportedly, a government official later informed the organizers of the meeting that the Administration had no objections to their meeting when and where they pleased, but it did object to the use of the names of organizations not actually participating in the gatherings. The spokesman also said that in the case under reference the Communists had used the name of an organization which had no intention of supporting the protest. It is interesting to note that the attitude assumed by the Administration is in almost complete contradiction to the attitude assumed in the past when the Communists have held labor meetings unmolested at the same time non-Communist meetings were being broken up by the police. (See Embassy despatches 523 of March 13, 1950, and 548 of March 8, 1950.) This may be an indication that the Administration intends to comply with recent demands of the CTC that Communists must be removed from the labor movement and Communism eradicated from Cuba.

For the Ambassador:

Ray H. Crane
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Assistant Attaché.

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