

837.06/2-2952

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMEMBASSY, HABANA
TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.
REF : 000183 Labor Developments
SUBJECT: Aguirre Offers Resignation to ORIT

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Attached herewith is a copy of a letter sent yesterday by Francisco AGUIRRE, secretary-general of the Inter-American Organization of Labor (ORIT), in which he offers his resignation. This was given to the labor reporting officer in strictest confidence. The letter has been addressed to the other members of the ORIT executive board and to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in Brussels. Its contents reflect the dissatisfaction of the Latin American affiliates with the financial support they are receiving from the unions of the United States (see Habana despatch 1384 February 21, 1952).

The letter was drafted by Angel BRAVO, ORIT office manager, who feels strongly that the time for a decision on ORIT's future operations or even its continuance is at hand. He believes that the reason for the failure of the AFL and CIO to donate funds is a lack of confidence in Aguirre, which Bravo shares. In addition to Aguirre's deep interests 1/ in the Cuban Confederation of Labor and his own Gastronómicos union, he is about to run for Congress, so it would probably suit his purposes nicely if he were gracefully released from the job. It will be recalled that at the recent ORIT executive board meeting Aguirre asked for a leave of absence.

This officer believes that Aguirre is sincere in offering his resignation, but that unless extreme care is observed by the AFL and CIO in handling the matter, ORIT may break up, fulfilling the fondest predictions

1/ Aguirre is president of the Gastronómicos retirement fund and a member of the executive board of the CTC. These activities take up a great deal of his time. He once confided to this officer that if he stayed away for any length of time he might find his home ties broken and himself an international labor official with no standing in his own labor movement.

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February 28, 1952

Mr. George Meany
Member of the Executive Board of ORIT
A.F. of L. Building
Washington 1, D. C.

Dear brother:

I have been informed of the decision of your organization to give no financial help to the proposed organizational campaign in Chile. In this respect I have the following comments to make:

1).-When our Executive Board met in Washington last December, my report as Regional Secretary of ORIT pointed out the need for an effective campaign in Chile, with the principal purpose of fighting Communism now regaining influence in both the political and trade union fields of that country. Our objective was to rescue the Chilean labor movement from one of its worst crisis resulting from political and trade union confusion. As requested by one of our Executive Committee members, the meeting was postponed to be resumed in January in Miami, Fla. My report was in your possession long enough for you to give adequate consideration to the recommendations on Chile and to bring to the Miami session a decisive opinion on this matter.

2).-When we subsequently discussed the Chilean problem in Miami, the entire group apparently realized the hazardous situation of trade unionism in Chile and it seemed that we would reach a satisfactory plan of action. That was the impression of Brother Bernardo Ibañez. Despite that, none of the members of the Executive Board adopted on that occasion a clear and definitive position toward this question. It appeared, however, that there were possibilities of financial help. Finally, when all arrangements to visit Chile are being made and when plans for an immediate campaign being outlined, I hear about your decision of no financial assistance for the Chilean project. You are surely aware that only with financial means can an effective program be undertaken and that the only organizations capable of providing funds are those of the United States, Cuba and the I.C.F.T.U.

3).-That our Budget is very limited was made clear at the Miami meeting. The Assistant Secretaries' activities, the organizers' salaries, publications and publicity, the trade

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union school of Puerto Rico, headquarters expenses, etc. are indispensable and cannot be reduced. They are all needed for even a minimum of activity of ORIT. No part can be diverted to any campaign the size that is needed for Chile.

4).-If we cease assisting the labor movement of Latin America, the workers of these countries will no longer have faith in the democratic organizations. They cannot believe in the principles we proclaim in our By-Laws if we forsake them when they need us most. With such conduct, we would give the totalitarian forces an excellent opportunity to divide and confuse the workers of the Americas even more than they now are... and also give our enemies irrefutable arguments against us. This is especially serious at this time when the Peronistas are very active in all kinds of maneuvers backed by the great financial power of Peron who, through the C.G.T. of Argentina is spending great sums to capture the free Latin American trade union movement.

5).-The financial assistance now being given to Europe but denied to Latin America is giving impetus to a feeling among Latin American workers of being abandoned by the great democratic organizations of this hemisphere. In addition, we should never forget the important role of the Latin American countries in the development of the economy of the United States. It must be remembered also that Latin American countries produce many raw materials vital to the defense of the democracies, and that they are at the same time important consumers of American products. If the Marshall Plan and the rearmament of Europe are actually consuming a great deal of U.S. production and keeping a relative stability among the workers, it is also true that all this is transitory and its end will come at any moment. The Latin American countries, however, have a permanent position as consumers of American production. If their economic power decreases and they are unable to buy what the U.S. makes, then American workers will suffer also. Thus the temporary market in Europe will disappear when that continent regains its productive capacity and Latin America will assume vital importance as an outlet for American products....if the workers have pay and conditions enabling them to buy these products.

During the Hoover period, the U.S. suffered a terrible economic crisis. Unemployment reached fearful proportions. The principal reasons for this crisis were to be found outside the U.S. where impoverished countries, among them those of Latin America, were unable to purchase American made goods. The circumstances prevailing now could invite a similar crisis.

As the Government of the United States raises prices of raw materials it purchases, the capitalists and

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millionaires of Latin America get richer and richer, but very little of the increases filter down to the workers. Their wages or conditions do not benefit. It almost seems to us that the U.S. Government does not give any importance to the role of labor in the economic, social and cultural activities in those countries no matter whether they are underdeveloped or powerful.

These economic contradictions should be well known by the workers, and I believe that all labor leaders should explain to their groups the genuine meaning and implications of the above. It's a matter of sound prosperity for all instead of shaky prosperity for some while others suffer and become prey to Communist propaganda.

6).-ORIT as a regional body of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions cannot be converted into a mere cultural and technical advisory mechanism. That is all right for Asia or Africa, but Latin America needs an organization with a full program of activities, with financial backing enough to create a powerful and dignified labor movement. ORIT cannot continue under present conditions. If it is necessary for its existence to mislead and deceive those workers who trust us and need us so desperately, it would be preferable for ORIT to disappear.

7).-If those persons in whose hands now rest the responsibility of directing ORIT do not merit your confidence, then this is a time for frankness and the question should be submitted to the governing body for consideration and action. This would enable you to choose those men whom you deem capable and worthy of your trust and confidence for the guidance of ORIT. All of us are sincere in our aspiration for an international labor movement which will be useful to the workers of America and the whole world. We are all men of good will who want only the best for ORIT and for this Continent's labor.

I hope you carefully consider these comments and come to decisions which will help all our organizations and particularly Latin American workers who believe in us and need our aid in solving their problems.

Very fraternally yours,

Francisco Aguirre,
Regional Secretary.

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