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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMEMBASSY, HABANA

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DESP. NO.

March 11 1952

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

MAR 14 1952

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For Dept.

Use Only

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

REF : 000340-Special Labor Report

SUBJECT: First Impact of Revolutionary Regime on Cuban Labor

MAR 13

Full meaning to labor of yesterday's military coup by General Fulgencio BATISTA cannot yet be assessed, but it is already clear that significant changes of Government attitudes and action toward the unions are in the making.

One of the first moves of the new regime was to take over the headquarters building of the Cuban Confederation of Labor. This was accomplished early in the day by the Army and national police. Traffic was diverted for several blocks around the union building, with manned machine guns at many intersections to deal with any mass attempt by the unions to rush control of the headquarters.

No shots were fired and the military occupied the building with no trouble. Only a few office employees showed up for work, and no leaders. They were questioned briefly and instructed to return to their homes.

After issuing an order for the arrest of Senator Eusebio MUJAL (Auténtico), Secretary-General of the CTC, and members of the CTC executive board, Batista announced that the CTC was to be dissolved. It was not made clear whether this would also apply to the affiliated federations, but the Embassy's labor reporting officer believes that is not the case, although when the present confusion ends there will probably be new leaders acceptable to Batista in most of the more important unions.

In this connection, the national workers' committee of the PARTIDO ACCION UNITARIA, Batista's party, announced that there would be a reorganization of the CTC. It emphasized that this did not mean return of the Communists to power, since "the Cuban people repudiate that doctrine as anti-democratic", and that PAU was interested in seeing that leaders were elected by the majority, through democratic means in each union.

In the afternoon mimeographed leaflets were distributed by the CTC, signed by Mujal, calling a general strike by all Cuban workers. Although there were some work stoppages

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MAR 25 1952

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yesterday, today all workers appeared to be at their jobs, with industry and public services functioning normally. The workers' block of PAU in a public statement appealed to labor not to follow this "suicidal path" and to stay on their jobs, and assured the workers that their gains and contracts would be maintained.

There is evidence that police persuasion, however, had at least as much to do with the quick resumption of work where stoppages occurred or the maintenance of operations elsewhere as the PAU pronouncement. For example, at two steamship docks, the WARD Line and NORTH ATLANTIC & GULF STEAMSHIP Co., dockworkers and stevedores showed up in the morning but began to lay off in the afternoon. When the police were informed of this, they prodded the men into returning to their jobs-- and warned them against further stoppages of that kind. The police then told the company managers to call them if they encountered any more trouble. Similar experiences occurred on the bus lines yesterday, but today service appeared to be normal. The airport was closed down yesterday due to a strike, but today it too was back to normal. This appeared to be true about several isolated strikes throughout the Island. There was no interruption of electric power as Army and Police occupied the plants and offices of the Cuban Electric Company.

Angel BRAVO, office manager of the Inter American Organization of Workers (ORIT), called the Embassy's labor reporting officer from his home at 3:30 p.m. This organization has its offices in the CTC building. He said that no one knew where Mujal had gone and that he (Bravo) feared there would be "many, many changes" so far as Cuban labor was concerned.

Bravo reported that he was unable to contact Francisco AGUIRRE, ORIT secretary-general, member of the CTC executive board and president of the Gastronómicos retirement fund. (Aguirre was arrested by police at headquarters of the fund, unable to justify carrying a pistol.) The ORIT office manager was extremely worried about the future of ORIT's office in Habana--and anxious about some monies due him in pay from the ICFTU. He said he thought it would be impossible to pick up his mail at the CTC building for some time to come.

A talk with an official of the railroad workers' retirement fund revealed that while the CTC was closed, the railway brotherhood was open and performing routine office work. The rail union owns its own building in downtown Habana near the Embassy. He informed this officer that Javier BOLAÑAS, rail

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union chief, was missing and that they had no idea where he was or what the new status of the union might be. The rail union aide was of the opinion that while the unions would remain, there would be some changes in personnel and operations.

The new Minister of Labor, Dr. Jesús PORTOCARRERO, is a former professor of labor legislation, former member of the House of Representatives, former Under Secretary and Secretary of Interior, and once presided over the Maritime Fund.

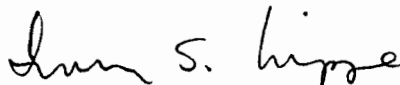
Dr. José SANDOVAL, chief technical adviser to the Ministry of Labor, reported that he was still on the job and likely to stay since he is an old friend of the new Minister whom he admires very much. He predicted that the new Minister would bring stability and justice into the Ministry's work. Sandoval, who has often represented the Cuban Government at International Labor Office meetings, would not venture a prediction as to future policy toward the CTC.

Mujal had not been captured as this despatch was written, and there were no reports as to the whereabouts of the other CTC leaders. A note from Mujal to an Embassy employeeyesterday appealed for asylum which was refused.

When news of the coup was announced, a textile workers' conference in session in Matanzas was suspended until further notice.

The Embassy's labor reporting officer will keep the Department informed as to the new labor policies as they unfold in the days ahead.

For the Ambassador:



Irvin S. Lippe
Attaché

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