

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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REF : 000183-Labor Developments

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SUBJECT: Batista Refuses To Permit Traditional May Day Parade

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President Fulgencio BATISTA has ruled that labor may not observe May Day in the traditional manner of a big parade and demonstration in the streets of downtown Habana but may hold a meeting in the headquarters building of the Cuban Confederation of Workers (CTC).

Eusebio MUJAL, CTC Secretary-General, informed newspapermen of this after a meeting with Batista at Camp Columbia which was attended also by Angel COFIÑO, Secretary-General of the electric plant workers, and Francisco AGUIRRE, Secretary-General of the Interamerican Organization of Labor (ORIT). Although the labor leaders had hoped for permission to observe May Day as in previous years, they accepted Batista's decision without public comment.

The Communists, however, have taken a different view and in their newspaper Hoy have bitterly criticized Batista for his action. A 1942 May Day speech of Batista was quoted in which the General stated that "if the workers are not able to parade or meet on this day in front of this house of the people (the Palace), it means that the democratic sentiments are shut out, that liberty does not exist and that the President of the Republic is either abusing the popular will or must fear that something he is doing wrong will be discussed."

In another issue of Hoy, the editor, Anibal ESCALANTE, charges that Batista has refused to allow the parade and demonstration because he is trying to please the employers who feel that such activities may thwart their plans for breaking the unions. He also said that to disguise this, the real reason for the ban, rumors were being spread that the Communists were planning fearful disturbances on May 1 and that Mujal spoke of a possible "bogotazo" by the Communists.

A delegation, headed by Communist leader, Lazaro PEÑA, former CTC Secretary-General when it was Communist-controlled, called on Minister of Interior Dr. Ramon O. HERMIDA, to ask permission to hold a parade passing in

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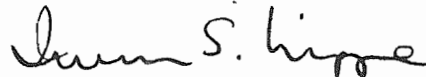
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front of the Presidential Palace. The Minister was reported as saying he would study the matter and reply "in due time."

COMMENT

Aguirre recently told the Embassy's Labor Reporting Officer that the CTC was determined (see Des. 1627, April 2, 1952) to hold a May Day celebration but was prepared to observe it on a more reduced scale than in former years if circumstances called for that course. Final plans for the event have not yet been made but it is understood that a meeting will be held in the auditorium of the Palace of Labor which seats about 2,000 people. Labor's calm submission to the Batista ruling is not unexpected under present conditions in which any other course could wreck the "understanding" which permits the unions to function more or less normally. The Communists, of course, are endeavoring to squeeze as much propaganda value out of the situation as possible, aimed both at the CTC leadership and at Batista. This could be the only reason for Peña's petition to Hermida, since he could not hope for permission to stage a demonstration after the CTC had been refused.

For the Ambassador:



Irvin S. Lippe
Attaché

