

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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SUBJECT: Dissatisfaction with Mujal Policies Grows in CTC

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Evidence of mounting dissatisfaction within the Cuban Confederation of Labor (CTC) with the "peace at almost any cost" policy (See Embdespatch 1789, April 25, 1952) of CTC Secretary-General Eusebio MUJAL toward the Batista government may foreshadow an open break with present CTC leadership. Two groups of dissidents are already known, with a possible third yet to appear. Newspaper reports of this unrest are substantiated by a source considered reliable by the Embassy's labor reporting officer. He is Angel BRAVO, office manager of the Interamerican Organization of Workers (ORIT), whose office is located in the CTC headquarters building.

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Three union leaders, Jesús ARTIGAS, of the pharmaceutical workers; Calixto SANCHEZ, airport workers, and Pascasio LINERAS of the textile workers, are reportedly leading an undercover move to unseat Mujal in the next CTC convention. CTC conventions are usually held in June, but thus far no call has been issued and there has been practically no publicity concerning it as there was in former years.

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These leaders have expressed impatience with the Ministry of Labor's "perpetual studying" of their problems without reaching any decision. They favor a more militant attitude by labor. While certain grievances have received dramatic attention, such as the "summer working day" and return of CTC units seized by Batista adherents in the early days of the new government to their elected leaders, there are claimed to be many others taken "under study". A statement recently by Lineras perhaps best expresses this group's point of view. He declared, "It is my personal opinion that in the case of this government, like the others, and as the sole defense weapon of the workers, it is necessary to declare a few strikes, with their inevitable consequences, so that it (the government) may realize that the labor movement cannot remain static and that the fundamental demands of the different groups of workers may be attended to and settled."

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REPORTER(S)

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Open opposition to Mujal is expected to be made known in the near future at a testimonial dinner being planned for Lineras.

Another undercurrent of dissidence centers around Angel COFINO, secretary-general of the electric plant workers, who recently declared that a "state of civil war" exists within the CTC. He spoke out against plans for a labor party which he said would serve only political interests and be used to impose outsiders on the labor movement. This was an obvious thrust at Mujal who came to leadership of the CTC via the political route, never having organized, led or had any prior experience in the union movement. That Mujal recognized Cofiño's remarks as directed against him is seen in a newspaper story in which he writes off Cofiño as "unimportant" and a "known opponent" of unity.

Cofiño also heads an organization called Acción Sindical Independiente (ASI) which is said to be devoted to conventional unionism "divorced from politics" (Cofiño, nevertheless, was an Ortodoxo candidate for Congress before the March 10 revolution). It is recalled that Cofiño once withdrew his union from the CTC to form an opposition Confederación General de Trabajadores (CGT) and was joined in this by Vicente RÚBIERA, secretary-general of the telephone workers. Rubiera is still close to Cofiño and they are joined by Raquel VALLADARES, secretary-general of the retail clerks' union, who has been very active in CTC affairs and is known to be very critical of Mujal.

Cofiño's blast was answered immediately by Javier BOLANOS, head of the railroad brotherhood, who charged Cofiño with being up to his old tactics of a "destroyer" of unity and a "divisionist". Although the electric plant and telephone workers and the clerks do not represent a large segment of labor in terms of numbers, their withdrawal from the CTC might spark a general disintegration of the CTC as it is now known.

Marco A. HIRIGOYEN, head of the transport federation, known to be hotheaded and in the past utterly ruthless in union activities, has also been critical of Mujal and might possibly lead a third opposition group or cast his lot with one of the other two. On the surface, he is still an active supporter of Mujal, although he has publicly stated his doubts about the usefulness of Mujal's (See Embdespatch 1625, April 3, 1952) projected political party.

COMMENT

While the dissident groups may not be bold enough to secede from the CTC at this time, they appear to be making plans for a change in CTC leadership. One factor which undoubtedly induces caution is the possibility that in any open controversy either before or during a convention, a Batista adherent may emerge as a government-sponsored leader. Bravo thinks that José PEREZ González, a member of PAU's Bloque Obrero and said to be a former Communist who has Batista's confidence (See Embdespatch 1962, May 19, 1952) might get the job.

A split in the CTC might also help the Communists. It is in that kind of situation where they thrive. Several rank and file workers have told the Embassy's labor reporting officer that while they themselves are not Communists, they regard Lázaro PENA, former CTC secretary-general and Communist leader, as the best labor leader they have ever had. He is remembered as having organized the unions and has not had graft or corruption charges aimed at him as have most of those presently in power in labor.

For the Ambassador:

Irvin S. Lippe

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