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REF : 000183 - Labor Developments

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SUBJECT: Transmittal of Memorandum of Conversation with Cuban Labor Leader

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During a recent conversation with the Embassy's labor reporting officer, Francisco AGUIRRE, secretary-general of the Interamerican Organization of Labor (ORIT) and long prominent in Cuban organized labor, expressed uncertainty regarding the Cuban Confederation of Labor's (CTC) future relationship with the government of General BATISTA. He discussed a variety of labor and political matters in a pessimistic tone. His attitude can best be summed up in his own remark that "we (labor) are living from week to week and have no long range plans".

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A memorandum of this conversation with Aguirre is enclosed.

For the Ambassador:

Irvin S. Lippe
Irvin S. Lippe
Attaché

Enclosure *att*
Memorandum of Conversation.

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June 10, 1952

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Participants: Francisco Aguirre and Irvin S. Lippe

Aguirre was in a pessimistic mood, said that while labor was holding its own still there were many grievances before the Minister of Labor still unsettled, and no new concessions had been made since the Batista coup. He stated "frankly" that labor had no long range plans and that it was "living from week to week". By this he meant that labor was not sure of Batista's plans.

He said that some businessmen and members of his own government wanted Batista to smash the CTC but that Batista had told them that this was impossible if Cuba was to continue to have domestic tranquility and the respect of democratic nations. Aguirre said that Batista was urged by labor to tell these business people to organize their own "rightist" party to "pressure" the government along the same lines as the projected labor party which Aguirre said was still being planned. Aguirre did not say so, but I got the idea that labor still had not received the "go ahead" signal from Batista so far as this party is concerned. Aguirre said that Batista had "serious" opposition from certain members of his government regarding present policies. He also said that there was serious trouble within the armed forces from dissatisfied elements and that these two problems were "worrying" the general.

Aguirre said that labor had impressed upon Batista the importance of having elections next year so that Cuba's "credit" could be maintained, since, Aguirre said, this was vital to this country's continued prosperity. He said that Batista had agreed to this but not wholeheartedly and that he, Aguirre, is not sure it will stick. Again, he said, labor is "waiting and seeing".

He said labor had further urged Batista to pursue a middle road between labor and capital with his own PAU party.

Aguirre said that the autobuses modernos problem was very serious and that labor is watching it closely. He said this company was in a financial "mess" and needed some economies and improved management, but that labor

would certainly oppose management's taking away important gains. In this connection, he said that the issues were another test of labor's relationship with Batista since these gains were made before March 10. He said that Hirigoyen was disliked and distrusted by Batista, and that Batista believes Acción Revolucionaria Guiteras (ARG) 1/ had planned to kill him shortly before the golpe. Hirigoyen has long been an ARG leader. This would seem to lend further significance to the situation there. Aguirre said that the matter was being discussed in the Ministry of Labor but that because of Batista's feeling about the ARG affiliates who control the bus sindicato, it was impossible to predict what would happen.

Aguirre said that no PAU adherents had yet assumed any importance in the CTC or affiliated unions but that he could not tell what the future would bring. He said that many members of Bloque Obrero of PAU were former Communists, citing José PEREZ González, the friend of Batista who at present is a member of the Consultative Council and a delegate to ILO in Geneva.

Aguirre said that Mujal and the other former Auténtico leaders would not reaffiliate with CON of that party. ?

He said that Senator HORNEDO (owner of newspaper El País) had gone to Europe to talk to Alonso PUJOL (Vice President under Prío) and interest him in a "rightist" political party such as that mentioned above.

1/ ARG is named for Antonio GUITERAS, student leader and liberal who was killed by the army in 1935 when Batista was in power. Although ARG was organized on an idealistic basis to preserve the memory of Guiteras and fight for his principles, it has operated as a terrorist organization to serve the purposes of certain irresponsible elements in the labor movement. ARG has maintained that Guiteras was killed on orders of Batista.