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SUBJECT: LABOR DEVELOPMENTS - CUBA
August - December 1955

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Summary. The unity of the CTC seemed threatened in August and September when Prío and Grau labor leaders, in a militantly anti-Mujal spirit, appeared close to achieving Auténtico labor unity. They did not succeed, however, but the Prío labor group was strengthened by the transfer to it of several important Grau followers. With Cofiño, Rubiera, and the few top Priista leaders opposing the long delay, the CTC Executive voted to hold its IX National Congress next April. Official intervention of the Habana Bank Workers Union during the September bank strike at the instigation of the CTC aroused misgivings among some labor leaders and was bitterly criticized by Cofiño, Rubiera, and others. Rubiera recommended to his Telephone Workers' national congress that they break relations with the CTC; opposition from within the organization resulted in a modification of his resolution to a suspension of relations, which was carried. Prío and Mujal had an exchange of recriminations in the press in late September, principally regarding their conduct immediately after the March 1952 Batista coup.

Mujal is actively about the work of insuring his position at the IX CTC Congress and in the elections for CTC officers that will then take place. Most of the successive Federation congresses are adopting resolutions and electing officers favorable to Mujal. His organizational position seems secure, but there is much ill feeling towards him among union officers and conscientious rank-and-file. The insistent attacks on Mujal of the political opposition to the present Cuban government tends to create an impression that Mujal is a collaborator of the government's. The fact is that while Mujal publicly acknowledges that the Batista regime has dealt fairly with labor, he is not personally enthusiastic over the government or close to its leaders. The Worker's Bloc of the Batista Progresista Party has abandoned its opposition to Mujal and frequently cooperates with him.

The collection of the compulsory checkoff of union dues is not going well. Its constitutionality has been challenged in the courts. The CTC is having a hard time financially and has taken no advantage of the creation of the compulsory checkoff to increase its membership. Part of the trouble is that the CTC is too much a one-man concern and that Mujal seems incapable of constructing an organization or unwilling to do it.

At the turn of the year the ICFTU sugar (plantation) offices were opening, with a CTC official heading them at Brussels and CTC men in charge at New York and Habana. An activist was to go to Central America.

The Movimiento Sindicalista Radical has been brought along by Senator Masferrer to the point where it is now a factor, if not yet a force, to be reckoned with in Cuban labor affairs. The CTC has instituted a campaign to increase the tenure of union offices to two years. A visit was made to Mujal's dairy farm, his share in which, he explained, he financed with his savings as a politician.

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An account is given of the bank strike of early September. The Labor Ministry has approved the dismissal proceedings in the cases of more than sixty of the strikers. The work of reconciliation within the union is not yet concluded and the elections of its officers has been postponed for sixty days.

Repairs at the sugar mills began without the usual spate of disputes. There was an incident at Central Washington, when the police broke up a union meeting and two labor leaders were wounded. Despite attempts in the Congress to make political hay out of the incident, it was generally recognized that there had been a misunderstanding which the government regretted. J. L. Martinez's La Campaña Cubana is a poor and unimproved paper.

There was a threat of a strike over the application in Habana of last January's law-decree on port mechanization. A compromise solution was worked out. A Ministry of Labor resolution provides the law-decree will apply only to new dock installations. A Communist pamphlet indicates that efforts at "unity" with the CTC leadership have been abandoned. The Minister of Labor has proposed a National Council of Labor in which all sectors of industry and labor will be represented. The object is to get labor to face up to its responsibilities through having to take decisions with all the affected interests present. The CTC expressed approval of the proposal.

There have been rumors that the Minister of Labor would resign. Reportedly, he has not proved up to the job, Mujal does much of his work, and corruption is rife at a demoralized ministry.

The 1953 census, splendidly printed, has been issued. It has aroused little comment despite its low figure on unemployment. A quarterly survey of unemployment will be undertaken by the Census Office under expert Point IV advice. A report is made on the Catholic Labor Youth and its spiritual advisor, Father Oslé. After a brief visit, an ILO expert made a report on the Retirement Fund system that has not yet been published. The Habana-Hilton Hotel is progressing; economies have had to be made on the plans for decorating it. A Communist was elected to the Gastronomical Workers' Federation Executive. Cuban ATLAS lingered on after Peron's fall; in its insignificance virtually unaffected by that event.

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I. The CTC.

A. The Internal Situation and National Politics.

August and September saw a serious worsening of the internal situation of the CTC, to the point where it appeared that crisis might threaten the unity of the Cuban labor movement. During October and November, however, things improved considerably.

Autentico Labor's Efforts to Unify.

The first threat to CTC solidarity and to the Mujalista leadership loomed when it seemed for a few weeks in August as if the Grau and Prío labor leaders were going to come together in a single Comisión Obrera Nacional, (CON), which would in effect clear the way for cooperation between the two ex-presidents and the presentation to the country of a single, united, massive and revived Auténtico Party. (In that Party, according to the expectations that were entertained by some of the labor leaders involved, Grau would be pleased to serve as a patriarchal and revered figurehead, while Prío actually mapped the strategy and directed the campaign.)

Much of the movement toward Auténtico labor unity was undoubtedly inspired by the activities of Marco Antonio HIRIGOYEN since his return from Miami exile. In Miami, Hirigoyen had been at Prío's side. Upon returning to Cuba, he had immediately called at Grau's house, and in the few months before Prío's return appeared to assume a leading role among Grau's labor supporters, many of whom, it may be added, had been close to Hirigoyen in the past.

Prominently identified with Hirigoyen in this rapprochement of Auténtico labor were Cesar LANCIS of the Federation of Medical Travelling Salesmen, who had also been in exile in Miami until last spring's amnesty, Pascasio LINERAS, of the Textile Workers and also an exile, and Rodrigo LOMINCHAR of the Sugar Workers, who, although he remained in Cuba, had been under considerable surveillance and had been kept away by the authorities from Manzanillo, a town where, as a former mayor and member of the House of Representatives, he has considerable political and labor following.

Before Prío's return on August 11, it became taken for granted that there was complete understanding and virtual unity between the CON's of the two, Grau and Prío, Auténtico groupings, and statements signifying as much from members of the respective CON's appeared in the press. At one point it was even announced that the two CON's would call a joint Auténtico labor assembly and that that Assembly would doubtless be the forerunner of an assembly representing the entire, united Auténtico party.

In the end, however, the joint labor assembly was not held, chiefly, according to a source close to Hirigoyen, because Grau was chary of being pushed into unity with Prío on other than his own terms. Grau's attitude toward Prío and his followers since the

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latter's return to Cuba has been congruent with the attitude he supposedly took towards the proposed joint assembly of their labor followers.

The second week in August the newspapers carried the news that the Prío Auténtico CON had chosen Pablo BALBUENA to be its candidate for Secretary-General of the CTC. This announcement created some surprise, because it had been thought that Hirigoyen, as the best known, or at least most active, of Prío's labor leaders, and the one closest to him, would be his choice for CTC Secretary-General. Since the announcement of Balbuena's candidacy, there has been little to indicate that he is being pushed seriously as a rival to Mujal, and the announcement may be taken as a premature gesture. In truth Balbuena, who was once CTC Secretary of Organization, appears to have little real following, not even in his own field, the printing trade.

These developments within the Auténtico CON's were understood by all to involve a threat to Mujal and the CTC leadership. While Hirigoyen and possibly others or all of the Auténtico labor leaders appreciate that Mujal has acted or served to keep the Cuban labor movement together and to preserve its gains despite the coming to power of a government that might well have been hostile to it, if on no other than important political grounds, it necessarily suits their convenience, both as Auténtico politicians and as labor leaders, to create an impression of Mujal as a traitor to the labor movement who has handed it over to Batista and as a traitor to his old Auténtico Party.

As if writing "finis" to Auténtico efforts to unite, the papers carried the news towards the end of November of the resignation of a half-dozen labor leaders from the Grau CON. It was stated that the resignations looked towards preparing the way for Auténtico labor unity. In fact, however, the men quietly joined the Prío CON, and Hirigoyen has told the Embassy that they were all followers of his who in view of the failure of last August unity efforts had transferred to the Prío CON. Hirigoyen says also that so long as there was a prospect of Auténtico labor unity he had refrained from actually taking an official position on the Prío CON. He has now, however, joined its executive. Hirigoyen does not despair of Auténtico labor unity, but he cannot descry it in the immediate future. He adds that if the Auténticos put anyone up against Mujal for Secretary-General at next April's congress, it will be himself.

The XXIX National Council and the Date for the IX Congress.

The XXIX National Council of the CTC met on August 16, principally to set a date for the holding of the IX National Congress. Thirty-two federations sent 244 delegates to the Council. While Mujal won handily on his proposal not to hold the Congress until April of next year (the latest possible date on which it could be

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called under the CTC constitution), the vote being 187 to 56, the opposition of the wealthy and efficient Electrical, Water, and Gas Plants Federation and Telephone Workers Federation, under Angel COFINO and Vicente RUBIERA respectively, together with the opposition of Lancis' Medical Travellers and of Hirigoyen as a member of the Bureau of Direction, attracted considerable attention and were attributed an importance that they well deserved.

No other federation in the country is so well organized as are Cofino's and Rubiera's (owing, be it noted by way of a sociological aside, first, to the monopolistic position achieved in an "imperialist" era by their respective employers; and, secondly, to the labor policies of Presidents Grau and Prfo) and the strong opposition of these two leaders as well as of the magnetic Hirigoyen to Mujal and the CTC leadership was an unhappy development for the labor movement.

In recommending the April date for the holding of the national congress Mujal submitted that it was best before the CTC met that the separate federations should have met, elected officers, and clarified policy. The Embassy had anticipated that the National Congress would be postponed until next year (despatch No. 106 of August 3, 1955), and mentioned as two reasons for the postponement lack of funds and the Minister of Labor's opinion that something more should be done to purge Communists before the congress is held.

On the first point the Embassy is informed that the cost of the national congress and of the various federation congresses that precede it, will be about \$200,000, and that Mujal has not been able to get government assurance of any contribution towards that amount.

On the second point the Embassy must report that it is not aware that anything has been done towards further clearing the Communists out of the CTC unions. As will be noted below, at one recent point rumors circulated of sweeping intervention of unions with Communist leaderships, but in the event, what was involved proved to be only an intra-CTC political maneuver by Mujal.

Effects of the Bank Strike on TUC Unity.

Mujal's intervention of the Habana Bank Workers' Union during the bank strike of early September (the circumstances of the strike are reported upon in a separate section of this despatch) resulted in criticism and bitter feeling within the labor movement, in open criticism of Mujal by labor leaders such as Cofino, Hirigoyen, and Rubiera, and finally in the suspension of relations with the CTC by Rubiera's Telephone Workers Federation. While the Embassy believes that the bank strike was precipitated out of motives of self interest by a labor leader (Aguilera) who knew that his demands were already virtually won, and believes, in consequence, that Mujal's action was necessary in the public and in the bank workers'

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interests, to many people, in an out of the labor movement, Mujal appeared to be stabbing a union in the back and to be in effect scabbing for the government.

There were many outstanding labor leaders who spoke up in defense of what Mujal had done, but in addition to those of few of some standing who publicly criticized Mujal's action, there were many lesser leaders who, on the grounds just mentioned, felt deep misgivings. It was even commented by observers that Mujal had done himself grave and lasting harm in the labor movement but this view was undoubtedly an exaggeration; for not only is it to a large extent true that "in Cuba everything is forgotten", with time the facts of the bank strike have had a chance to speak for themselves, there has been a fairly satisfactory settlement on the bank workers' claim, and Mujal, in preparation for next April's IX National Congress of the CTC with the attendant elections, is busily building his fences.

Mujal's Clash with Cofiño and Rubiera; the Telephone Workers Suspend Relations with the CTC.

For a better appreciation of the significance of the differences between Mujal on the one side and Cofiño and Rubiera on the other, a note on these two men may be helpful. Both are very able and, as already explained, have behind them strong, well-organized, and wealthy federations. Both have always been regarded as rivals of Mujal's and in fact they headed the split of a number of federations from the CTC which took place in 1949 after Mujal had forced Cofiño out of the CTC Secretary-Generalship.

Both Cofiño and Rubiera wield direct influence in the CTC that extends outside their own federations. This influence they deliberately built up by lending financial and organizational assistance to leaders and unions outside their federations, and as one result certain important leaders within the CTC were or are known as Cofiñistas or gente de Rubiera (CTC Secretary of Organization BARBEITO, Raquel VALLADARES, Secretary General of the Ten Cent Store Workers, and Abelardo IGLESIAS, head of the Habana Construction Workers, are Cofiñistas, Ignacio GONZALEZ Tellechea, CTC Secretary for International Affairs and a Port Worker is one of Rubiera's men.) Cofiño at one point formed an organized group to work within the CTC which is still known as Acción Sindical Independiente, although today it is hardly operative. The power and influence of Cofiño and Rubiera are acknowledged within the CTC organization by the positions that have been given in the hierarchy to Barbeito and Gonzalez Tellechea.

In the last two years Cofiño, however, has become less active outside his own federation, and knowledgeable sources say that he has become contented with his present position and with his frequent trips to Europe as the CTC's ILO man, and has relinquished earlier

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ambitions once again to be CTC Secretary-General.

Where Cofiño has become complacent, Rubiera has recently shown a quite distinct evolution. He has been badly bitten by the bug of political ambition. In last year's national elections he ran for the House of Representatives as a Grau partisan. During that campaign he engaged in some bitter public exchanges with Mujal. This year he has become one of the top leaders of that now long nascent party, the Movimiento de la Nacion. In his MN activities he has demonstrated an all-absorbing zeal of such intensity as apparently to have driven entirely from his mind his constant preachments of the past against the insinuation of political interests into union affairs.

Immediately upon the intervention of the Habana Bank Workers' Union on September 1, Cofiño and Rubiera let newspapermen know that they felt strongly that Mujal had acted wrongly. That weekend Mujal convened the CTC executive which overwhelmingly approved his action. On September 12 Cofiño and the six provincial secretaries-general of his Federation sent a letter to Mujal which, while restrained in tone, challenged his action in the bank strike, saying that the CTC had humiliated the bank employees and had acted as a strikebreaker. The letter intimated that the CTC had been dictatorial and alleged that in a similar situation (i.e., one of indiscipline, referring to the Samalea episode of the summer of 1954) the Electric Gas and Water Plants Workers had resolved the matter with elections. This, of course, overlooks that before those elections took place, Cofiño, had had his provincial federation intervened by Mujal, and under circumstances of a much less critical nature than those of the bank strike. The letter was given publicity by its senders.

Mujal replied with a written statement. Besides explaining once again that the Habana Bank Workers' leaders had been guilty of a breach of discipline and had called the strike when their demands had already been met, he said (referring in his turn to the Samalea incident) that when there had been insubordination from member unions in the Telephone Workers, the same tactics had been used by its leadership, either with or without intervention. The last point was well taken, and resulted in newspaper columnists recalling the Samalea episode to their readers.

As the opening of the Telephone Workers congress, scheduled for October 8, approached, it became known that Rubiera intended to have the congress take the Federation out of the CTC and that he was urgently striving to persuade Cofiño to have his Federation follow suit. In a joint meeting of the executives of the two Federations Cofiño refused, later telling one Embassy contact that with (as he sees it) an unfriendly government in office and the employers on the offensive, it was madness to choose this time to split the labor movement. In an interview of October 5 with the

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labor correspondent of Pueblo Cofiño made his stand public, saying that he was not "against the CTC" but for the unity of the labor movement.

The Telephone Workers' Congress was a lively and hard-fought affair, which lasted three or four days instead of the scheduled two and included one 17-hour session. It clearly showed that the Secretary-General did not have his members with him in his attitude towards Mujal and the CTC. Rubiera's report to the Congress contained attacks on Mujal, including one charging him with acting in labor matters out of political considerations. It was unfortunate for him that he had invited to his congress no representative of the CTC but had given the boxes of honor in the theater where the Congress opened to PARDO Llada and other purely politician leaders of the Movimiento and that the only labor leader of national standing whom he had invited (Cofiño had left for Europe), ^{was his given} who besides being known as a critic of the CTC leadership is so prominently identified with Prío.

Rubiera had prepared a resolution which would have taken the Telephone Workers out of the CTC. But not even the resolutions committee would pass it for him in order that the congress might consider it. It was changed to one that called for a suspension of relations with the CTC and appointed the Secretary-General together with the six provincial secretaries-general to consider whether the Federation should not break entirely with the CTC. The resolution was approved by the congress as was also another calling for parallel action with the Electrical, Gas and Water Plants Federation.

As already commented, a feature of the Congress was the opposition to the Rubiera point of view. Osvaldo RAMIREZ, Secretary-General of the Habana provincial federation presided over the Congress and he and other speakers defended Mujal's policies and particularly his conduct in the bank strike with passion and at great length.

As soon as the Congress was over Mujal and his lieutenants began to interview Ramirez and the other provincial secretaries-general, who with Rubiera make up the commission to consider relations with the CTC. Mujal and the others were quickly assured that a majority would not entertain any proposal to leave the CTC.

There is an interesting aspect of the Rubiera-Mujal fight elucidated for the Embassy by Jesus ARTIGAS, CTC Financial Secretary and one of Mujal's principal lieutenants. The telephone company, a national monopoly, is the object of considerable public displeasure because of deficiencies in its service including its inability to supply new phones to applicants. The company, whose standard charge in Habana is \$6.00 a month regardless of the number of calls made, alleges it needs more capital and revenue in order

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to improve its services and is believed by the public to be preparing an effort to raise its rates.

The union, of course, has a stake in the Company's case, and Rubiera as its leader will have to support that case. Rubiera the politician will thereby suffer. Mujal suspects that Rubiera would be rather pleased if Mujal could be got to force him out of the CTC, thus making him a really first class martyr in the ranks of the political opposition. But Mujal plans to enjoy watching Rubiera the union leader support the unpopular telephone company case to the prejudice of Rubiera the politician.

One consequence of the Telephone Workers' congress was a verbal spat a few days later between Francisco AGUIRRE and Rubiera at a meeting of the CTC Bureau of Direction, which attracted considerable and blown-up publicity. The theme being discussed was unity, Rubiera made an acid remark on unity and the bank strike. Aguirre jumped up infuriated and said that Rubiera was a traitor to the CTC's true leader, Mujal. Rubiera jumped up. At some point in the exchange Aguirre made a motion towards his pocket. Hirigoyen leaned between the men, across the table, and asked for calm. Rubiera and Aguirre left. In the papers Aguirre had pulled out his gun, and Hirigoyen had dived under a table or behind a column, depending on which paper one read.

Note: Valladares (page 6), once a Cofiñista, is now his enemy. Prio and Mujal Recriminate in Public.

In preparing for the political rally that he held, together with all the non-Communist opposition elements that would join him, in Habana on October 1, Prio made a particular effort to attract all the labor support that he could rally. At times he and his lieutenants almost made it appear as if the meeting was to be primarily a "labor unity" meeting.

On the ground that he wanted to discuss the October 1 meeting, Prio, about a week before, invited the labor correspondents of the Havana press and radio to come to his country home for a chat. Prio said that he expected the workers would support his meeting because they had good memories. His comments on Mujal were of particular interest, however, and attracted the newspaper headings. He attacked the intervention of the Bank Workers' Habana union. He said he had tried unsuccessfully to get in touch with Mujal on March 10, 1952. He maintained that Mujal did not go to Batista on March 10, 1952 seeking his respect of labor's gains (as Mujal continually affirms) but rather to seek Batista's support for himself and his retinue personally. It was contrary to the historical reason of all the labor movements of the world to say that gains can only be made if the workers support the government. Labor unity was a fine thing, but not unity in order that all might be betrayed together.

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Mujal replied to Prío in a press release. He said Prío had made no effort to get in touch with him on March 10, for no call had been received from him on Mujal's telephones. He explained that the general strike he had called for on March 10 was not a political strike but a proletarian protest. The Executive Committee of the Auténtico Party, he alleged, had met with him on March 15 and approved of what he had done. He had then informed it that in his new situation he had to leave either the Party or the CTC. Mujal went on to recount that while he had personally advocated the candidacy for the Auténticos, in the scheduled 1952 elections, of Hevia for president, when Prío and the Auténtico executive asked Mujal to have the CTC proclaim Hevia as its choice for that office (Hevia and one other dissenting), Mujal roundly refused to have the CTC thus meddle in politics. Mujal had pointed out, he said, that it was a fundamental error of the Communists, when they controlled the CTC, to have it come out for Saladrigas in 1944, and further, that CTC decisions of 1951 forbade it to enter politics in this way.

After rebutting Prío's point of view regarding the intervention of the Habana Bank Workers and explaining that he had had no contact at all with Batista before March 10, 1952, Mujal ends with kindly advice to Prío to stick to his political efforts, to remember that a smile and friendly words get you farther in Cuba than threats and tough talk and he adds: "We are all responsible for the 10th of March, on one way or another," and, finally: "These will be my first and last words in reply to Carlos Prío Socarrás. Let us not permit political sectarianism to divide the working class."

This reply of Mujal to Prío seemed cogent enough, and the Embassy has noticed no denial in the press of any of the facts it represented. But the truth is that the Cuban public lends little credence to allegations by politicians or labor leaders as to what happened or did not happen on any given occasion in the past; and it is doubtful if this exchange between Prío and Mujal changed anyone's opinion on the matters they covered.

Mujal Moves to Strengthen His Position.

To meet the strained and critical situation within the CTC whose progress has just been described Mujal has moved energetically, with evident shrewdness, and without fanfare. At this point he seems, also, to be moving successfully.

It should first be clarified that for the time being and for the immediate future Mujal appears to have laid aside his political aspirations. In a speech to the Habana Lion's Club in September he categorically stated that he would not enter active politics, either this year, next year, or in 1958, the year of the next general elections. (As can readily be appreciated, the fact that this announcement was made when it was, put Mujal in a strong

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position vis-a-vis Rubiera, when several weeks later, at the Telephone Workers' Congress and with the theater boxes holding his own MN collaborators, Rubiera attacked Mujal for engaging in politics.) Mujal's statement to the Lions has been confirmed by his subsequent conduct; for he has stopped completely his talk about going back into politics, and all speculation has ceased as to who his successor in the CTC would be.

The most important task that Mujal has been about in the work of assuring his position is lining up the federation congresses in support of his policies and of himself. Just as he and his lieutenants proceeded immediately after the Telephone Workers' Congress to speak to the provincial secretaries-general, and insure their support in the fight with Rubiera, so Mujal and his lieutenants have been lining up the leaders and congress delegates of the different federations prior to the holding of their respective congresses. As they successively meet these congresses are currently determining the policies and the candidates that the federations will advocate and support at the IX CTC Congress.

As of the end of November the fourteen Federations, apart from the Telephone Workers, that had already held their national congresses had all voted their approval of CTC policy, and some of them to support Mujal for reelection as CTC Secretary-General. The fourteen federations that have so declared themselves are: Aviation, Insurance and Bonds, Transport, Gastronomical, Petroleum, Salesmen's, Industrial Chemicals, Show Business, Foodworkers, Cattle and Slaughterhouse Workers, Movie, Shoe, Medical Workers, Railway workers.

Mujal's secretary informs the Embassy that a further sixteen federations can also be counted upon to support Mujal. All of these except the Sugar Workers will hold congresses before the CTC April Congress, but the Sugar Workers will hold elections in February, which are expected to show a pro-Mujal orientation of that Federation in CTC affairs.

From the three remaining federations-Lancis', Rubiera's and Cofiño's - Mujal's secretary expects no threat to Mujal's position. He asserts that four of the six local unions in Lancis' Medical Travellers actually support Mujal but for "sentimental reasons" would not publicly oppose their own Secretary-General. He cites that the majority of Telephone Workers' provincial secretaries are opposed to Rubiera's policy and are with Mujal. Regarding the Electrical, Gas, and Water Plants Workers he says, somewhat unconvincingly, that that Federation has its own internal problems; but, as already noted, Cofiño himself has demonstrated that he will take a temperate view of the CTC's problems.

Also indicative of Mujal's strength are the facts that La Campesina Cubana, the newspaper of José Luis MARTINEZ, Secretary-

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General of the important Sugar Workers Federation and a labor leader who has had recent divergencies in views with Mujal, is currently the latter's unqualified and vocal admirer; that Conrado RODRIGUEZ, demagogic congressman and Sugar Workers' leader has refrained in the last month or six weeks from all attacks on Mujal and the CTC leadership; and that Marco Antonio Hirigoyen, in making the remark quoted above regarding running against Mujal, said that he might very well run entirely on his own just to present an alternate candidacy to Mujal's, because it very much looked as if no other candidacy would be presented against him.

From the above it is plain that Mujal currently enjoys an unshakable organizational and electoral position. But it should not for that reason be lost sight of that the bank strike and its aftermath have left a measure of bitterness and bad feeling towards Mujal among many labor leaders and aware rank and file union members.

CTC Attitude Towards the Government.

With Mujal and his fellow-leaders of the CTC under such constant attack from virtually every faction of the opposition, the question presents itself of whether they will not sooner or later be driven to identify themselves with the government in politics and related matters. The Embassy's labor officer put just this question to Jesus Artigas a few weeks ago. Artigas answered no, explaining with some familiar and expected things about the CTC's having to remain apolitical; then, significantly, he added that Batista had in any case comported himself fairly and correctly where labor was concerned and it had no reason to oppose him.

In the speech to the Lion's Club in which he declared he would not enter active politics, Mujal gave as one of his reasons the fact that Batista had kept faith with the workers and therefore he, Mujal, could not join the political opposition to him. This is something Mujal has been saying for more than a year, however, and appears of even less importance if one recalls that as long ago as the summer of 1954 Mujal took electoral leave of the CTC to declare himself publicly as supporter of Batista's election to the presidency. Nor can any great importance be attached to the fact that Mujal had the FNTA plenary of early October, to which he announced the beginning of the repair season, thank Batista for insuring (as it interpreted the Ministry of Labor's resolution on starting the season) that the repairs labor force would be as great as last year's. This was merely a routine gesture designed to enlist government support against possible efforts by the mills to reduce the force.

In the Embassy's opinion, if Mujal and the CTC leadership appear any closer to the government today than they did a year ago,

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it is only because their critics in the labor movement, caught up in the élan of opposition politics, are being more vocal and political in attacking them. On the evidence of overt acts Mujal seems no more intimate with the government today than he did a year ago and less so than during the election campaign of 1954. In private conversation with the Embassy's labor officer, Mujal if anything seems somewhat sourer on the Batista government than he did before. He obviously does not think highly of, or does not like, many of its most prominent members. It is perfectly possible that just as Batista was responsible for Mujal's abandoning his plans for the formation of a Labor Party, he has also had a great deal to do with Mujal's abandoning his more recent plans to reenter politics. It was even possible, though perhaps not strictly justified, to read into Mujal's remarks such a disgust with prospects as to induce him to consider retiring from the CTC and public life in the next couple of years.

One aspect of the relationship between Mujal and the government has already been touched upon in this despatch and might be brought out here. The Worker's Bloc of the President's Progresista Party no longer seems particularly interested in undermining Mujal's position. Perhaps because thereby the Bloc has lost a considerable part of its raison d'être it does not in fact seem very lively at all these days. Perez Gonzalez evidently has given up all ambitions of replacing Mujal as the CTC Secretary-General at the IX National Congress. And from some private remarks of Mujal's, as well as from various maneuverings reported to it during the local union elections that have been taking place during the month of November (most notably in the elections in the Habana Provincial Construction Workers Union), the Embassy gathers that Mujal has even been helping the Bloc to get its candidates elected. However, there is every reason to believe that this rapprochement between Mujal and the Bloc was effected more by the Bloc's changing its attitude towards him than by Mujal making overtures to the Bloc. As the Embassy reported, it was about a year ago that the Batista government evidently decided that Mujal, not Perez Gonzalez, was the man to run the CTC.

b. Checkoff of union compulsory dues and CTC financial and organizational situation.

The collection of compulsory union dues is not going well. The Embassy's impression is that the situation in respect of what employers are or are not paying has scarcely changed since after the first few months following the publication of the law-decrees creating the checkoff: that is to say, since the initial fights last February, March, and April of certain unions to see that employers paid and the initial decisions of employers on whether or not they would. (Many employers are discounting the dues but holding them pending the adjudication of the constitutionality of the law-decrees.)

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It will be recalled that the Embassy assumed that the constitutionality of the compulsory checkoff could hardly be questioned, since the Supreme Court had ruled such a checkoff constitutional in the sugar industry. But while this assumption may remain unimpeachable in substance, it appears that the lawyers have found other grounds for questioning the constitutionality of the five law-decrees that last January extended the compulsory checkoff so widely. According to the Minister of Labor the law-decrees have been challenged in the courts on the ground that under the Constitutional Statute in effect when they were enacted, the law-decrees, since they created taxes, should have been submitted to the Consultative Council, which they were not. (Actually, the Statute provided only for the Council to be "heard" on certain specified matters.) If the compulsory checkoff can be shown not to be a tax, the challenge to their constitutionality should be denied, although other grounds may well be found to the same purpose.

One result of failure of the compulsory checkoff to produce as much revenue for the CTC and the unions as it was expected to is that the CTC still finds itself hard up. At the end of August it wanted to send Modesto BARBEITO, its Secretary of Organization, back to Chile to do some more anti-Communist organizational work that Barbeito, at least, considered of great importance (actually he was so eager to go as to make one wonder whether he had some ulterior personal reason for wanting to get back to Chile at just that time.) The CTC did not have the money to send him, and the government did not make good a promise to furnish it, so Barbeito did not make the trip.

In August, also, the CTC Executive Committee voted a \$5,000 contribution for the relief of storm victims in New England, perhaps in part with a thought to public relations and the United States sugar quota. In consequence, its employees did not receive their pay for that month till some weeks after it was due.

It is striking that the enactment of compulsory checkoff has resulted in no organization drive by the CTC to incorporate the thousands of workers who under the terms of the law-decrees creating it are obliged to lose 1% of their earnings to unions, federations, and the confederation that they do not belong to and therefore have no voice in governing. Not only is that the fact, but in addition there is no evidence that the CTC has done all that it might to make even the organized employers pay up. Certainly, there has been no campaign, no particular effort, to that end; only, and that merely in the few weeks immediately after the enactment of the law-decrees, a few desultory declarations from Mujal little more than piously setting out that employers should pay.

This entire situation illustrates the principal weakness of the CTC: namely, that today it is virtually one-man, Eusebio Mujal.

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While there are individual labor leaders -- such as Cofiño in the Electric Power field, Rubiera in the monopolistic telephone company, Artigas in the Medical Workers, Abelardo IGLESIAS among the Construction Workers of Habana--who are perfectly capable of managing, and do manage, the affairs of sectors of the Cuban workers efficiently and successfully, Mujal appears the only man who can sit at the center and treat of a strike in a brewery in Habana, of Communist penetration in a port in Oriente, of difficulty with the army in a rural town, of an intra-mural spat in the executive of a small union anywhere in Cuba, of the attempt of a textile mill to lay off workers, and, most importantly, to carry on all the intercourse that, in the Cuban scene, these things entail with employers, generals, mayors, ministers, union officers, and the President of the Republic himself.

But all these things are obviously too much for one man to attend personally, especially when his mind is half on plans for a renewed political career or on a two and a half million dollar dairy proposition; and Mujal seems unable to set up an efficient organization and let it run by itself. The various secretariats of the CTC, except possibly for GONZALEZ Tellechea as International Secretary, seem less to administer departments than to carry out special missions for Mujal.

c. International Activities.

On September 29 the CTC announced that the long-planned sugar offices of the ICFTU, which of course are to be mainly financed and operated by the CTC, would finally be opened. The CTC's statement was forwarded with Despatch 257 of September 30, 1955. In early December Raul VALDIVIA left Cuba for Brussels to take over the direction of the sugar offices from the headquarters of the ICFTU. On January 1, offices will be opened in Habana at the CTC under Rafael GONZALEZ Villegas (actually generally known as "Villegas" rather than "Gonzalez") of the National Federation of Sugar Workers (FNTA.) At about the same time Honorio HERRERO, also of FNTA, will open the office in New York. Though this office will be in the ICFTU quarters in that city, it is to operate under the direction of the Habana sugar office. Early 1956 Rafael OTERO Berlauff, who while a railwayman has done much work abroad for the CTC, will go to Central America as a kind of roving "activist" of the sugar offices. Something may be attempted, also in the British West Indies and the Guianas, possibly by Otero.

A question may be raised as to just what the CTC hopes to do for the sugar industry in the Caribbean, since the prosperity of the industry in that area, outside the home island, actually

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presents a threat of competition for Cuba and especially in the treasured United States market. It might be asked also how an office run primarily by the Cuban labor movement is particularly qualified to do much about plantation labor, for example, in South East Asia. Though significantly referred to by the CTC as "Sugar Offices", the original ICFTU and ILO project or plans contemplated work among plantation and not just sugar workers.

The Embassy understands that at the beginning of the sugar offices operation, about \$68,000 are available for the work.

* * * * *

For most of the period covered in this despatch Otero Borlaff has been in Guatemala working for the CTC and ORIT. He returned to Cuba just before Christmas but has gone to Camaguey and the reporting officer has not had an opportunity to speak with him. From the CTC the Embassy learns, however, that Otero's reports from Guatemala have not been encouraging. Besides having misgivings about both the will and the ability of the government to do much for the mass of the people and for the labor movement, Otero apparently also fears that what labor leaders there are in Guatemala have already "gone bourgeois" since the Castillo Armas government took power. He reports that the Railwaymen's union, apparently the best of the Guatemalan unions, cannot show anything, or perhaps even account, for some \$12,000 they have received from ORIT sources for organization. As just noted, Otero will be going to Central America in the new year as a sugar "activist."

* * * * *

In early October Serafino ROMUALDI, the AFofL's Latin American representative and Assistant Secretary of ORIT, visited Cuba for two days. More will be said about his visit in Section III of this despatch, but it should be mentioned here that Romualdi gave an excellent speech to the congress of the Gastronomical Workers and made a very good impression in a television interview. Romualdi knows how to make a speech which is excellent as propaganda for foreign investment but at the same time is full of militant trade union fire. Instead of militant down-to-earth trade union organizing fire, Cuban labor is apt to get mere plain demagoguery or political denunciation in the speeches it hears, and Romualdi's idiom falls refreshingly on its ears.

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d. The Movimiento Sindicalista Radical.

The MSR, which Senator Rolando MASFERRER has been building up in an effort to extend his influence throughout the labor movement and thus build up his political power in the country--Masferrer was a Communist and is a declared sympathizer of Peron's--presumably, therefore, he appreciates the political potential of control of the masses--is now a factor to be counted with, although still short of being a real force, in the labor movement.

In the different union elections that as usual are taking place in December and January, one frequently finds this year that certain slates are identified as having the support of, or even carrying, "Masferrer people." This is true in Habana and Oriente (from which Masferrer is senator) and seems to be true of most of the island. However, the Embassy is not aware that any completely Masferrer slates have been presented in the union elections as yet, though it is possible that they have. Nor has Masferrer support appeared to decide any important union election, while in the federation congresses it has been of negligible importance. However, there are reports that Masferrer is strongest among the sugar workers and will play a more important role in their elections.

On September 18 the first large meeting of the MSR in Habana province was held at Habana. Present besides Masferrer was an interesting group which included PUR President Senator Santiago ALVAREZ, Argentine Labor Attaché Alejandro MINONES, and Manuel SAN MARTIN, Secretary-General of Cuban ATLAS. Angel RODRIGUEZ Gonzalez, Secretary-General of the MSR, was of course also on the platform.

A few days after this conference the MSR published as an advertisement of a half page or more in El Mundo and other important newspapers an open letter to President Batista that makes ironic reading. The letter comes out for "suspension" of the compulsory checkoff, for "internal democracy" in the labor movement (meaning for Masferrer's "union democracy" bill), and for intervention of the CTC. (See despatch 106 of August 3, 1955) For the most part it is an attack against Mujal, but it also scolds the Workers' Bloc of the PAP for being inactive and invites it to awake to its responsibilities. This adjuration to the PAP is perhaps by way of showing Batista how much more worthy an object of his support the MSR is than the BOP. The irony of the letter comes out principally in its emphasis on the MSR's ideal of rising above "political secularism."

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e. Move for Longer Terms for Union Officers.

In a vast majority of Cuban unions and national federations elections for office are held every year. Since there is not in Cuba the kind of permanent tenure or virtually automatic re-election of union officers that is common in industrialized Western countries but, rather, frequent fights, for the most part motivated by political or personal considerations, to replace incumbent officers, the results of this system are disruptive of union solidarity and team work.

This year an as yet undeterminable number of unions and federations are voting in meetings and congresses to extend the terms of their officers to two, and in some cases even, three years. Just where the initiative for this move comes from is not entirely clear; but of course the wisdom of this reform is evident, and both Mujal and the Ministry of Labor are doing considerable to see that it is implanted in as many unions and federations as possible. There has been the expected criticism from Communists and dissident groups that the corrupt bosses are seeking to perpetuate themselves; and it is typical of the way things are done on the Cuban labor scene that Mujal felt called upon at one point to state sharply to the press that the CTC did not intend to have reforms imposed upon/by the Ministry or anyone else outside the movement but would tend to them itself.

f. Mujal's Farm.

The reporting officer was recently taken by Mujal to his dairy farm with another Embassy officer to look over some files Mujal has acquired on Cuban Communists. (See Despatch 419 of December 8, 1955 --what there was about Communists in these files turned out to be notations from the press, especially HOY, on activities of Communists between 1946 and 1950; BRAC is going to get the files.) He explained that he and four others had put a quarter of a million pesos each into the farm, after which he had added a further quarter of a million. BANFAIC, after the usual inspections is going to match with \$1,250,000, and the farm will then have had \$2,500,000 put into it. It will then have more than 2,000 cows (there are about 100 now), and produce 20,000 liters a day, which the company will market at retail itself.

The farm has many wells, silos, concrete buildings and concrete-floored sheds for the cattle, laboratories, etc. It produces its own feed, and Mujal has elaborate ideas on just how he is going to raise it. In Oriente a large acreage has been obtained to grow corn for the farm. All in all, the project seemed a regular agricultural factory; and Mujal made the point that there will have to be a union there. At one point he

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remarked: "You mustn't think all this is money I've stolen from the workers or anything like that: after all, I was in politics for eight years and while a senator I got \$7,000 a month." (The salary is only \$600 a month, expenses are lavish and go with each committee assignment, etc. The right to fill jobs, to buy lottery tickets for resale, etc. are perquisites.)

g. A Further Note on Marco Antonio HIRIGOYEN.

Things are going badly with Hirigoyen. Mujal has finally become riled with his criticisms of the CTC and of himself and his support of its enemies. His anger is of course deepened by the fact that he had had the CTC support Hirigoyen in exile to the tune of \$400 a month. As a result of Mujal's displeasure Hirigoyen was not reelected President of the Transportworkers' Federation at their recent convention and was not even permitted to be present there, since his union, Autobuses Modernos, has no legal existence. Further Mujal is firing from their CTC jobs all of Hirigoyen's henchmen and seeing that those on Retirement Fund boards are not reelected. Hirigoyen is hardly likely to be reelected next April to the CTC Board of Direction and may not even be able to get into the convention hall. Of course, if the opposition ever gets back to power, things should go differently with Hirigoyen.

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II THE BANK STRIKE

It has been brought out earlier in this despatch that the bank strike of September and the attendant intervention of the Habana Bank Workers' Union resulted in the creation of considerable ill will within the CTC. The strike was also the cause of considerable inconvenience to the banks, the business community, and the public. The background of the strike has been reported as it developed by the Embassy (see Despatch No. 106 of August 3, 1955), which had already called attention, also to the possibilities of trouble that were involved in the election to the post of Secretary-General of the Habana Bank Workers' Union last December of José María DE LA AGUILERA.

Following a one-day strike of July 22, which was terminated when the Minister of Labor reinstated the expired collective contract for a six-month period, negotiations were conducted between the representatives of the CTC, the National Bank Workers' Federation and the Bank Workers' Habana Union, the bank employers, and the Minister of Labor. As the urgency of arriving at a settlement increased, Mujal appealed to President Batista, and Prime Minister GARCIA Montes joined the Minister of Labor in lending personal attention to the negotiations.

On the evening of August 30 the two Ministers informed Mujal, Aguilera and other labor representatives that the government would work out a settlement giving the bank employees a 10 or 11 percent pay raise. That is the story that during and since the strike Mujal has repeated; and the Embassy lends it credence because: 1) the Minister of Labor confirmed it privately to its labor officer, 2) Aguilera did not for some time deny it, and when he did so it was to say that Ministers had only promised to study such a settlement.

Mujal and the National Federation called meetings of the provincial unions for September 1 so that reports might be made to them on the offer of the Ministers. But on August 31 Aguilera and his associates were agitating throughout the Habana banks, and that day there was a slow-down in the Habana banks, followed on September 1 by a sit-down strike of a large proportion of their employees. In the forenoon of September 1 it was announced that the Ministry of Labor had intervened the Habana union, naming a committee to run it that was headed by the Undersecretary of Labor and included representatives of the CTC and the Bank Workers' Federation. He ordered the striking workers to do their jobs.

The weekend that followed was one of intense campaigning by Aguilera and his followers to get every Habana bankworker out on the street that Monday, or at least to have him idle at his desk or counter. They were able to count with enthusiastic and efficient collaborators in their task; for the intervention of Aguilera's union by Mujal was a magic spur to Mujal's enemies. Rubiera and

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Cofiño lent their influence and forces and issued statements supporting the strikers; and Hirigoyen, in a situation especially tailored to his particular talents, took or sent his shock troops on special missions to "persuade" bank employees that they must join the strike. The JOC (Juventud Obrera Católica-Catholic Labor Youth) lent all its resources, marshalling its substantial membership among the bank employees, supplying canvassers, and lending its headquarters to serve as the headquarters of the strike leaders, who were now deprived of the use of the union offices by the intervention.

The various opposition political parties also lent their aid to Aguilera and the strike leaders. Hirigoyen, of course, represented the Priista influence. More decided, however, seems to have been the help of the Ortodoxos, of which party Aguilera is a member. The Communists were well represented by Odon ALVAREZ de la Campa, an employee of the Chase-Manhattan bank with a long record of Communist associations, whom Artigas flatly declares to be a Party member.

It should be remarked that despite the weight and influence of JOC in the ranks of the striking bankworkers, its morally elevated nature did not prevent a considerable amount of rough stuff from taking place. During the weekend and through the duration of the strike Aguilera's lieutenants apparently engaged in coercion and intimidation through the use or threat of force.

The week of September 5 was a very exciting one for all those connected with the bank strike, which, except in the Bank of Boston, prevailed in Habana practically 100% for most of the week and spread to Las Villas province for a day or two. (The Bank of Boston, being the bank of Carlos BRITO, president of National Federation of Bank Workers, operated without interruption or inconvenience all week.) The police arrested well over 100 strikers during the week; the employers started dismissal proceedings against 176 employees; groups were sent out by both the Aguilera forces and the CTC interventors to persuade employees respectively to stay out of work or to return to work.

The most active of the interventors of the union in this task of persuasion was Jesus ARTIGAS, CTC Financial Secretary, who did a great deal of calling on individual bankworkers and at cafes close by the banks, where the strikers congregated. Artigas described to the Embassy a labor composed of mere logical persuasion, with strikers frequently asking him to appear to be intimidating them (e.g., one asked to be shoved out of a car in front of a bank; another arranged for Artigas to come to a cafe and appear to shout him and some friends back to their jobs.) After weighing what the bank employers, CTC leaders, the Minister of Labor, and the papers, including columnists hostile to Mujal, have said on the subject, the Embassy concludes that more coercion and intimidation was used by the Aguilera than by

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the Mujal forces. It is perhaps unfortunate for this conclusion that Artigas' principal assistant in his labor of persuasion was one Rafael SOLER Puig, who, but for an amnesty, would at the time have been serving a murder sentence and who, shortly after the strike, was revealed to have committed another murder only shortly before it.

Amid the arrests, the "persuading", and the firings of the week, the most interesting development of the strike was the bringing of the Cardinal-Archbishop of Habana into the picture by Mujal. As already suggested, the Aguilera leadership of the Habana Bankworkers Union after its deposition through the intervention, more or less moved over to the headquarters of the JOC. At one point the police even raided the JOC headquarters, although in a manner demonstrating all due respect for its religious associations, and arrested several strike leaders who were holding a meeting there. In other ways, also, it became very plain during the week that the inspiration of the strike was to be found if not in the JOC as such, then in bank workers' leaders closely identified with the JOC and in a few helpers of theirs from the JOC not employed in any bank.

On the afternoon of September 8 Mujal called on the Cardinal. From what Mujal told the Embassy that he said to the Cardinal and what the papers have carried in second hand reports, the Embassy understands that Mujal represented to His Eminence that the bank strike was seriously affecting the country, that it had been irresponsibly called, was politically inspired, and was being conducted demagogically and illegally, and that it was being kept alive, if indeed it had not been projected, by Father Enrique OSLE, spiritual adviser of the JOC and actually its moving spirit.

The Cardinal, according to Mujal, was taken aback by this version of events and arranged for a meeting in his presence that evening of Mujal and Father Oslé. The former came accompanied by Minister without Portfolio and member of the CTC Bureau of Direction José Perez Gonzalez, Carlos Brito, the President of the Federation of Bank Workers, and three other labor leaders. Father Oslé came accompanied by his boyhood friend, government Senator José GONZALEZ, Puente, whom, he later explained, he wanted to act as a reputable witness of what took place.

It does not seem that very much was actually settled at this meeting. Father Oslé took the view, which he expressed publicly later, that there were bank workers who were members of the JOC and that when they had been turned out of their own union meeting place, he could not close the door to them and leave them in the street. (In rebutting this view after it had been publicly expressed, Mujal made the point that Father Oslé spoke as if there was nowhere else in Habana that the strike leaders could meet except at the JOC.) Mujal seems to have said some nice things about what JOC and Father Oslé might do that was beneficial for the workers and the labor

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movement but admonished them also about their role in the current strike. Later, but still during the strike, Father Oslé spoke of the words of praise that Mujal had had for the JOC "and my person." Mujal denied that he had spoken any such words and added that Father Oslé was being hypocritical and making evil use of the principles of the Church. Father Oslé answered in kind and said that it was because of the possibility of such conduct from Mujal that he felt called upon to take Senator Gonzalez Puente to the interview. So far as the Embassy is aware, Gonzalez Puente has borne no public witness on either side.

As a result of the interviews at the archiepiscopal palace, and in all probability also of a call made on him the following day by a large number of bank workers, the Cardinal, according to what Father Oslé told the Embassy and gossip in the papers seems to confirm, called up a number of bankers (Juan GELATS for one) who are close friends of his, benefactors of the church, and active in its employer group (which is mentioned below in the discussion of the JOC.) The Cardinal asked these men to take a humane and Christian view, not only in the matter of the wage demand but also in the matter of the dismissal proceedings which had been begun by the banks.

According to Father Oslé and the papers, however, all the employers to whom the Cardinal spoke regretted that on this occasion they could not oblige him. It is to be presumed that the issues involved were all too clear for these bankers: the strike had caused plenty of headaches and probably some financial loss; Aguilera and some of others were vipers who had precipitated the strike in pure self-seeking. The Cardinal was acting too late and from mistaken premises.

On Friday night, September 9, La Madrid, Brito, Mujal and a few others spoke on the bank strike over a national radio network. All were effective, especially Mujal, who while always sounding reasonable and temperate, nevertheless clearly brought out the perfidy of Aguilera in calling the strike when he knew the demands had virtually been won and convincingly imputed religious and political motivation to the leaders of the strike. No doubt, the strike was already about over, but if it had not been so, these speeches and their arguments would have gone a long way towards changing the minds of any strikers outside the Aguilera circle still intent on staying out. It should be mentioned that earlier in the week Mujal had twice reviewed the background of the strike and presented the arguments against the conduct of the Aguilera leadership in large, close-packed advertisements carried in the newspapers. Such ads could not of course be so eloquent or convincing as the radio speeches.

On Monday the 12th of September only two Habana Banks were still out (not counting, that is, a small branch office, whose staff

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were all in jail), and these went back the next day. The strike was over but a number of ticklish problems remained in its aftermath. The criminal charges for illegal striking still pending against some employees could hardly be considered among these, for as is usual after strikes, these were summarily dismissed by the courts for one reason or another. The matter of the union's demands definitely was; for the employers were even less disposed than before to give any considerable pay increase, not to mention the other demands. Even more delicate, however, was the problem of the 176 dismissal charges that the employers had brought against various strike leaders and strikers and on what could not but be considered pretty substantial grounds. And there was also the problem of the internal situation of the Habana Bank Workers' Union and its members' attitude towards the CTC leadership.

In the matter of the settlement of the union's demands Mujal's assurances that a wage increase had been promised by the two Ministers was the unintended cause of some concern as weeks passed without a settlement's being announced. From time to time during this period a newspaper would report that agreement had been arrived at and that the settlement would shortly be announced. In fact, the Embassy learned, the bank employers were none too happy, because the Minister of Labor wished to force upon them wage increases that they thought excessive. The Embassy believes that some of the bank employers had been so exhilarated by having the forces of the government and of the CTC solidly on their side during the strike that they had got a bit out of touch with reality. Mujal and the CTC, on the other hand, resisted the Minister of Labor's attempted settlement because they thought too many employees were being added by it to Annex A of the current agreement which gave the list of so-called "confidential employees" ineligible for organization by the union.

The settlement finally became public in the form of Decree No. 3357, which, though dated October 13, did not appear in the Official Gazette till November 2, 1955. This decree extended till May 31, 1957 the collective labor contract that had expired last May 31 (and was subsequently put into force for six months by Ministry of Labor resolution.) It then provided for wage increases: all those getting less than \$80.00 a month to get an increase of 66 2/3% but not to more than \$100 a month (in effect establishing a floor for bank wages of \$100 a month; this raise would affect almost exclusively the provincial banks and offices of national banks--the Minister of Labor's belief that a substantial raise was required in the provinces will be recalled); workers earning between \$80.01 and \$100.00 a month to be raised by 25% but not by more than \$20.00 a month; workers earning between \$100.01 and \$140.00 a month to be raised by 15% but not more than by \$15.00 a month (in effect between 10.7% and 15%); those earning more than \$140.00 a month to receive a \$10.00 a month increase. Anyone who might end up after the raises with a lower salary than someone who had been

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receiving a salary lower than his, will be raised up to the level of the latter person's new salary. The increases are retroactive to September 1 of this year. The Banco Agrícola e Industrial is exempted from these increases; in its case increases will be worked out between it and the intervening commission of the Habana Bank Workers Union.

Another provision of the decree provided that the "person in charge of one of the departments of the central offices (of the banks)", one of the telephone operators of the central offices, and the men in charge of certain of the accounting records of the banks should be put on Annex A. The Ministry of Labor's Resolution 169 of November 21, published three days later in the Official Gazette, spelled out just who these employees were to be in the case of each bank. They totalled 96 and included 15 telephone operators. It was the placing of the telephone operators on the annex that particularly displeased the CTC and union members, and even after the issuance of Resolution 169 Mujal tried to persuade the banks to leave some of the ladies involved off the annex. In fact, he thinks he may still be able to prevail on the point, though the Embassy would be more surprised if he turns out to be right than if he is proved wrong in his optimism.

In the matter of the reinstatement of the employees against whom dismissal charges have been brought, things have been going badly from labor's point of view. Understandably, the employers are adamant (all the ring leaders of the strike, including Aguilera, are involved.) And in early December, the Minister of Labor approved the dismissal proceedings in the case of 68 of the employees. In their cases appeal now lies to the Supreme Court.

The Embassy communicated to the Department its expectation that in the months between the intervention of the Habana Bank Workers Union and the elections in that union regularly scheduled for the month of December Mujal and his forces would have a chance to convince the members of the union that the strike had been wrongly and selfishly called by Aguilera. It expected, also, that the terms of the settlement of the National Federation's demands would serve to reconcile the union's members to the intervention action.

At this time the Embassy must report that it is not at all convinced things within the union are really marching well for the CTC. Artigas reports that they are, that Aguilera would not dare present himself as a candidate again for Secretary-General of the Union, that a CTC-sponsored slate would easily win elections at this time. But the Embassy attaches significance to the fact that Mujal will say only that things in the union are going so-so. It is perhaps even more significant that the union elections have been postponed by the intervening committee for 60 days. Mujal says that when they are held neither Aguilera nor LaMadrid will present himself as a candidate, just so that things will not become too roiled again.

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As already suggested, the outcome of the dismissal proceedings against the strikers deeply affects the attitude of the Habana union members. If Mujal could have resolved these in favor of the affected workers, he would have gone far towards reconciling disgruntled union members. However, the fact that the Ministry of Labor has so recently decided against 68 of the employees involved would indicate that a resolution favorable to these men is not likely, and it is of course certainly not imminent.

A few retrospective comments on the bank strike in addition to those already made here and in other reports are in order. On the JOC more information and comment is volunteered below. As to whether Father Oslé and the JOC were the principal instigators of the strike, the Embassy must express its doubts, especially since it foresaw possible trouble from the election of Aguilera almost as soon as that election was consummated, and since Aguilera's activities seem amply explained by his recognized political ambitions and his partisan bias against the government and the CTC leadership. However, Mujal has told the Embassy rather sardonically that personally he is absolutely convinced that the Father Oslé was behind the strike in an effort to count a coup for the JOC that from the organizational point of view would be invaluable to it at this stage in its development; the Minister of Labor, assuming a more judicious attitude than Mujal, has told the Embassy that from all the evidence he is inclined to think that Father Oslé was the principal mover of the strike.

One strike leader on whom a note may be valuable for future reference is Reynold GONZALEZ Gonzalez, a Jecista still in his twenties, and an employee of the Banco Continental, who attracted considerable attention when, arrested at the meeting of strike leaders raided by the police at JOC headquarters, he appeared to be its chairman and guiding spirit. Indeed, the Minister of Labor made the statement to the Embassy's labor officer that he thought Aguilera was actuated by Reynold Gonzalez and was not really the caudillo of the strike that everyone thought him to be. The Minister went on to say that Gonzalez had been completely molded by Father Oslé, who had taken him out of an orphanage and seen to his education. The Minister's view of Reynold Gonzalez's role in the strike ties in with his opinion on Father Oslé's parentage of the strike. Gonzalez is one of the strikers or strike leaders (108 out of 176) whom the banks sought to dismiss but the proceedings against whom the Ministry of Labor has dismissed. (The proceedings against Aguilera and Alvarez de la Campa were among the 68 approved.)

It will be recalled that in July a government spokesman declared that the demands of the bank workers would not be settled by the government, since such a settlement would be against the policy of the present government and hurt Cuba's standing in the eyes of prospective foreign investors. In the end, of course, the claim was virtually settled by the government and was indeed adjudicated--it

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might fairly be said--by government decree. When Decree No. 3357 was published the attention of labor correspondents was called at the Ministry of Labor to the fact that new contracts, wages increases, and other points at issue between the banks and the employees' union were regularly settled through decrees. Decree No. 3357 itself in its "whereases" took pains to cite other decrees which had regulated conditions and collective contracts in the banking field.

In a separate section of this despatch information and comments will be proffered regarding the JOC and Father Oslé.

III SUGAR WORKERS

There were no disputes of much significance this year over the beginning of repairs at the sugar mills. As the Embassy has already reported, the Ministry of Labor resolution ordering the repairs to begin during the first half of October stated that the number of workers to be employed should be as agreed between unions and the mills or in accordance with the "usual practice." Mujal had an FNTA plenary congratulate President Batista on his policy. Of course, the resolution might have simply set the stage for the mills to allege that the "usual practice" was to hire only what workers were actually needed and for the unions to maintain that the number of workers to be used must not be lower than the year before. But whatever differences of opinion on this point may have arisen they did not result in such difficulties as to attract public attention.

On October 18, or just after the repairs had begun, a Ministry of Labor decree (No. 3164 of October 13, 1955, Official Gazette of October 19, 1955) cancelled all dismissal procedures brought by the sugar mills on grounds of unprofitability or redundancy of labor. This was as the FNTA wanted; but the decree also contained a provision (Article 4) authorizing the mills and growers not to hire replacements when workers resigned, died, or were retired if such replacements were not really needed. Protests from the FNTA and its member unions were immediately filed at the Ministry of Labor, and Mujal and FNTA leaders declared they would fight the obnoxious article. They saw it as a threat to jobs, promotion, and seniority and as worsening the unemployment situation.

The fact seems to be that not a few mills are in a bad financial situation and need some relief from labor and other charges. Apparently fresh capital and rationalization of operations can put many of these mills back on their feet, but the process tends to increase monopolistic ownership in the industry and its effects on the number of jobs involved incurs the opposition of the unions. It is probable that regardless of Decree 3164 the problem of the

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number of workers to be employed or laid off at any mill will continue, as in the past, to be worked out between mills, unions, and government officials in accordance with the possibilities in each case.

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An incident of some proportions was created at the Central Washington on September 4 when troops broke up a union meeting and in the process used their firearms, wounding two union officers. The meeting had been called to protest against the mill's attempts to lay off 518 workers on economy grounds, and was being attended by the two Conrados, Becquer and Rodriguez of the CADI (~~union~~) who are also Sugar Workers' officials and who consequently witnessed the trouble. It appears that the union thought it had the requisite permit from the Minister of Government to hold the meeting but that the local military commander had received no instructions from his superiors to permit it.

Considerable publicity was given to developments a few days later revolving around the arrest of a Workers' Palace messenger for allegedly going to a local telegraph office and sending the wire purporting to come from the Minister of Government and to authorize the meeting. Of course, questions arose immediately as to how a messenger could get away with such an imposture, but since he has not yet been brought to trial the circumstances remain unclarified.

The government was quickly able to make it generally appreciated that the events at Central Washington were not in harmony with its policy and had been the result of a mix up. The two Conrados brought the Central Washington case up in the House of Representatives on September 21 and were effectively rebutted by government speakers. When they chose to bring the case up again on September 26, using the strongest language about the police, newspaper reaction was strongly against them, even among columnists usually eager to see everything from the viewpoint of the workers. It was reported that at a meeting of the FNTA Executive other FNTA leaders had told the two men that they were engaging in harmful demagoguery.

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On September 24 the local papers carried a UP despatch reporting that AFofL Latin American representative Serafino Romualdi had said that the AFL would be unable to continue to support Cuba in the matter of the sugar quota as it had earlier in the year. Allegedly, the AFL had to look out for its members in the sugar

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beet industry and for the other sister republics. This report created a considerable stir, and it had the effect of making the Cuban movement look much less effective than it likes to look as an advocate of Cuba's cause in the United States.

Mujal was able to announce a few days later that he had talked to Romualdi on the telephone and the former had denied "totally" the AP report. On October 5, Romualdi was in Habana on a two-day visit and in a speech to the Gastronomical Workers' Congress assured them that complete understanding and cooperation between the CTC and AFL would continue to exist on the sugar issue. He said much the same in a filmed TV interview the next day. All in all, Romualdi successfully reassured the majority of Cubans who had followed this matter that the AFL stood faithfully by the CTC and Cuba.

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La Campaña Cubana, the newspaper owned and edited by FNTA Secretary-General José Luis MARTÍNEZ, continues daily circulation, but it is hard to see any improvement in the paper, which even from a labor point of view is a poor rag. Its coverage of both international and national events is skimpy. While it gives labor events prominent front page treatment and its third page is entirely devoted to happenings in the labor field, the most important of these it treats no more amply than it treats other news. The result is that a reader can find more detail about important labor events in almost any other/Habana's dozen or dozen and a half papers and an even greater quantity of labor happenings reported in the six or so of those with labor columnists.

IV PORT MECHANIZATION

Law-decree 2134 of January 27, 1955 sought to guarantee the mechanized loading of Cuban minerals and mechanized unloading of raw materials at ports in the overall interest of the national economy (Despatch 955 of March 31, 1955). In view of the hold of labor on port operations and the practices that over the years it has managed to impose, it was natural to wonder how much the law-decree would be able to accomplish short of precipitating some very nasty trouble.

In the event no difficulty developed for months. The Minister of Labor tells the Embassy that at about ten different places problems arose but were quickly settled through negotiation and compromise. However, a real problem presented itself in October

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over efforts of the Cia. Superfosfatos S.A., which makes fertilizer, to unload raw material by newly mechanized methods. The Habana port unions screamed loudly; and the papers prominently displayed their strike threat. The Minister of Labor informs the Embassy that he worked out a compromise whereby the Company cut down the number of men working on the operation from about 30 to 19, instead of 30 to 10 as it wished, and the 19 men left on the job received only regular time instead of a 50% increase in wages.

However, the Minister also issued a resolution, which while saying that in the future Law-Decree 2134 must be applied in the unloading of raw material for fertilizers, also said that the law-decree was not to apply on docks in which such mechanical procedures and installations were not in operation at the time of the law-decree's publication. In other words, one would have to build a new dock in order to enjoy the benefits of law-decree 2134; since actually in new establishments, and certainly in new lines, in Cuba there is not generally much difficulty in introducing the latest techniques and machinery, the law decree is in effect practically nullified by the resolution. This the Embassy had already intimated in Despatch 955 of March 31, 1955 (page 21) would probably be the case.

Not even the Minister's resolution has satisfied the port unions, however, and they have protested against it. They apparently had already challenged the constitutionality of law-decree 2134 in a case that has not yet been heard or decided.

V. COMMUNISTS AND LABOR

The latest developments in the campaign against Communists in the unions have recently been reported by the Embassy (Despatch 419 of December 8, 1955).

Since then the Embassy has received a copy of a pamphlet recently printed by Blas ROCA, Cuba's top Communist leader, entitled El Reformismo en el Movimiento Sindical (Reformism in the Labor Movement), which sheds more light on the Communist line for labor in addition to that gleaned from the PSP pamphlet The Situation of the Labor Movement reported upon in Despatch 106 of August 3, 1955.

Blas Roca makes the old point that reformism (which he links, quite logically, to economism) is not entirely bad and can be made good use of by the Communists. In attacking the present CTC leaders he calls attention to what he says in incrustated bureaucracy in the CTC and then curiously traces the

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origin of this cancer in the CTC back to the days of 1945 and 1946, when the organization was under Communist control. Perhaps Roca is here in familiar fashion paralleling some current wave of self-criticism in the USSR.

Roca puts emphasis on the National Democratic Front, which the world over, though in places in modified form according to local circumstances, seems the concomitant in politics to "unity" in labor.

When it deals exclusively with labor, the pamphlet seems principally concerned with an all-out attack on Mujal and the CTC leadership. It will be recalled that a year ago in the case of the Havana Post strike the Communists urged the CTC to take the lead in united labor action in support of the strikers. The Situation of the Labor Movement pamphlet attacked the CTC leadership but left the door slightly open to cooperation with it. But in Roca's pamphlet the CTC leadership is damned totally and not even American pressure on it seems to be regarded as in any way extenuating. Unity apparently can now come only from below and must no longer be attempted at the top.

VI PROPOSED NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LABOR

Taking up a proposal for the creation of a National Council of Labor, formerly made by Carlos SALADRIGAS when he was Minister of Labor, the present Minister has sounded out the National Employers Confederation and the CTC on the idea. Both have approved in principle, Mujal underlining the assistance that such a body might give with the country's investment needs. He thought government entities such as the National Bank should also be represented on it.

The Minister of Labor has informed the Embassy that his wish to establish the Council stems mainly from the need he frequently experiences to get the different sectors of labor together to face up to the responsibilities of situations in which separately they will frequently avoid them. The labor leaders are capable of fine mouthings about making conditions inviting for investment, he illustrated, but when it comes down to concessions by individual unions, ^{which} sometimes may be only indirectly involved, the situation is different. For example, pineapple growers (and their workers) have a hard time of it because of pilferage and damage at the docks. If he could get the dock leaders around a table where representatives of business, of other unions, and of the CTC itself were present, he would have them in a spot where they would have to do something about the situation or funk badly. Thus in dealing with sugar, also, he would have FNTA, railway labor, and dock workers'

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representatives in one spot where they would have to face up to each other's rights and obligations. The percentage would be gone from fine talk and no performance.

The National Council, which would be a purely advisory body that might in some situations obviously take on unofficial conciliatory or arbitration functions, would have a large membership, only a fraction of which might meet on any one occasion, as the subjects to be taken up might require.

VII PROGRESS IN THE STATISTICAL FIELD

The 1953 census has been published. It contains 325 pages of data and 48 of definitions and other introductory material. Well printed and presented and handsomely bound, it offers a great value in Cuba for only \$2.50. The make up of the Cuban population is thoroughly analyzed geographically, by age, race, ubiety, civil status, education, economic activity, etc. There is also a thorough statistical report and analysis of Cuban dwellings and of their lighting, bathing, and toilet facilities; the number of radios and television sets, etc. Pertinent data for electoral purposes is given by provinces and municipal electoral districts.

It is a striking fact that the figure given by the census for unemployment--173,811, but at the height of the zafra, much below any figure ever mentioned generally prior to the taking of the census--has scarcely been commented upon, even though it has been used by President Batista publicly and by Gustavo GUTIERREZ, head of the National Economic Council. The Embassy, it will be recalled, anticipated that this finding would be subject to much criticism. It is possible that so far no one feels he is really in a position to challenge the census. However, it will probably be some time before people can get out of the habit of using and thinking in terms of the wild figures which the census ought to render obsolete.

The Embassy will comment on the Census Report as a follow-up to its Manpower Report of last June (Despatch 1255 of 6/15/55).

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Under its ICA advisor, Mr. Ben GURA, the Cuban Census Office is now well along with plans for quarterly surveys of unemployment which should supply reliable checks on this problem for public and business enlightenment and use and, incidentally, serve in some degree as a check on the Census findings. The National Economic Council--furnishing a practically unique ex-

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ample of cooperation between Cuban government agencies--has given \$28,000 to the Census Office for the project. The surveys can conveniently and competently be carried out by the local offices of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (of which the Census Office is a part) which are scattered thickly throughout the Island and which are underworked outside electoral periods. Mr. William Hurwitz, Chief Statistician of the U. S. Bureau of the Census, visited Cuba to help in organizing the samples. Mr. Gura hopes to be able to carry out his first survey in February, although an unforeseen hitch raises the possibility that a delay may occur.

VIII THE MINISTER OF LABOR

It has been rumored and reported in the papers for some months that the Minister of Labor, José SUAREZ Rivas, is due to leave the cabinet when Batista carries out an impending reorganization of it. One CTC source asked about these reports said that Batista had not liked the way Suarez Rivas had handled a number of problems and that the Minister has been too prone to run to Batista or to bring in Mujal for the solution of problems that he should have settled himself. He says that Batista has not dropped Suarez Rivas and other ministers who have been rumored ready for dismissal, because he is the kind of person who, when people begin talking about what he intends to do, likes to do something different. The contact adds that, knowing that his tenure is drawing to an end, Suarez Rivas has been accepting payoffs from employers at a great rate, especially for approving dismissal charges, and that his underlings seeing how things are going at the top of the Ministry and uncertain as to their own futures, have been following his example with avidity. A consequent demoralization has gripped the Ministry, the contact alleges, and as a result employers are frequently by-passing it and taking their problems to Mujal for settlement instead of to labor inspectors.

An attaché who is a close friend of the Minister's and who has probed him regarding the newspaper reports finds that he does not deny them.

IX THE CATHOLIC LABOR YOUTH AND FATHER OSLE.

The Juventud Obrera Católica (JOC-Catholic Labor Youth) was started in Cuba during the visit of the National Adviser of the Costa Rican JOC in 1946. Early the following year it was recognized as "a Specialized Movement of Catholic Action" by the Cardinal-Archbishop of Habana. The headquarters of the JOC are at Calle 19 No. 406 in the Vedado section of Habana.

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The President of JOC is José PLANAS and its Spiritual Adviser Father Enrique Oslé, a Jesuit.

There are two other JOC quarters in Habana and others throughout the island. The Vedado premises consist of three stories of an old but adequate and ample house, which is undergoing improvement to provide a small air-conditioned library, conference and study rooms, etc. At this headquarters the JOC, from time to time and as money permits, gives two-week seminars to groups of about 20 from all over the island. These seminars are apparently as much or more concerned with religion and the spiritual life as they are with labor and social problems.

In 1950 a JOC Feminina was formed and its headquarters are close by those of the JOC in Vedado. In fact, JOC is but one of four Catholic Action groups in Cuba--and how closely these are coordinated by higher authority is perhaps demonstrated by the fact that the Catholic Employers, one of the other groups, has its headquarters in the semi-basement of the JOC headquarters. It may be in order to interpolate here that the Catholic Employers are under the guidance of two priests and while their quarters are smaller, they are much more completely and expensively furnished than those of the JOC. The employers' group includes some outstanding Cuban business men. It was established only about two years ago but appears to be growing rapidly. In fact, one columnist recently said that it bid fair soon to outstrip the National Employers' Confederation (CNP) in importance; but it is probable that he was writing more with an eye to annoying that group than to accurate reporting.

The JOC calls itself "essentially an apostolic and missionary movement intended to reChristianize the means of work and to lift up young workers through the knowledge of their human and divine dignity as sons of God." (Juventud Obrera--September, 1955) That Father Oslé and the JOC do not feel that this object precludes their taking a really active part in the struggles of the labor movement the recent bank strike would appear to demonstrate.

The JOC has a monthly newspaper called Juventud Obrera, which is well presented and edited. The paper reflects the extent to which JOC concerns itself with purely religious and spiritual activities, but also JOC's very real interest in the problems of labor as a movement. It carries a high percentage of articles on poverty in the countryside, conditions of labor, Communism abroad, and while it appears to refrain from attacking Mujal and other CTC leaders too directly, it makes it plain that JOC is not friendly towards them.

Father Oslé is probably in his middle forties. He appears consecrated to his work in the JOC with all the absorption that

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a priest would be expected to bring to such a mission. But he seems also as temperate, controlled, and kindly as a priest should perhaps always be. By his manner and attitude he appears to show that his view of the young people he works with is inspired mainly by love of his fellows, and, in fact, in discussing those whom he apparently most reprobates--namely, corrupt labor leaders and exploiting employers--he seems always and naturally to be aware that they are part of the human flock for which his church exists. In discussing labor problems he seemed to reflect a Church view that the appeal direct to employers, the awakening of their consciences to their Christian obligations, was what was needed. (He spoke of low salaries in terms of the business in which they were paid--i.e. the people who paid them; and contrasted salaries paid by Cuban retail establishments with those allegedly paid by Sears Roebuck here in Habana.)

(To correct a mistake in Despatch 106 of August 3, 1955: Father Oslé was not chaplain at the prison in which Marco A. Hirigoyen was detained after the March 1952 coup. He already knew Hirigoyen and went frequently to visit him there. It is correct, however, that he married Hirigoyen and his wife by the Church in the prison.)

It seems clear that the JOC is but a part of the wide program of the Catholic Church during the last dozen or so years to revitalize its religion in Cuba. This program is being strikingly successful and the observer who returns to Cuba after fifteen years' absence is struck by the fact that in residential Miramar and Country Club, where there were no churches (except for a convent church) that long ago, there are now five, all less than 10 years old, that where he had never heard of the Virgen del Cobre, he could not miss learning now that she is the venerated patron of the island, that where churches were attended lightly, and almost only by women, who were as likely as not to chat socially through the service, today they are crowded at their several Sunday services, that attendance at mass is quite common today among men, and that the services are reverently followed by the congregations.

It is not unnatural, against that background, that a conversation between Father Oslé and the two priests who minister to the Catholic employers, at which the reporting officer was present, singled out corrupt politicians and national leaders and the Cuban passion for politics as the great deterrent to the country's material progress and spiritual health.

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X RETIREMENT FUNDS

Dr. Antonio ZELEKA, Chief of the Social Security Division or Office of the ILO passed through Habana for a few days in November and again in December, on his way to and from Mexico, and made what at best could have been only cursory surveys of the Cuban system of retirement and social insurance funds. However, even a less qualified person than Dr. Zelenka would be able to arrive at a few important conclusions about the system in shorter time, so glaring are its inadequacies and shortcomings, and Dr. Zelenka made a report to Dr. Gustavo Gutierrez, head of the National Economic Council, who, as the Embassy has reported is a leading advocate of the reform of the Cuban system and tried very hard as Minister of the Treasury to improve it. The report has not been made public, although the Embassy understands that it will be.

XI GASTRONOMICAL WORKERS

The Habana-Hilton Hotel is finally showing above ground, and it is expected to rise fast from now on. Where the Embassy reported sometime ago that the Gastronomical Retirement Fund expects to finish a floor a month, it must now make an amendment to report that the tower floors--all but the first few--are expected to be finished at the rate of one a week.

As Retirement Fund President Aguirre feared, the bids for decorating, furnishing, etc. proved higher than the budget could stand. The Caja and the Hilton interests are of course reluctant to discuss these matters, but the Embassy gathers that there has been considerable paring of expenses for these items, probably as much as \$1,000,000. The hotel should now cost within the \$14,000,000 last budgeted; but it will not be quite as splendid as originally planned.

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The Gastronomical Workers Federation concluded an agreement with their Mexican counterparts looking towards the employment of nationals of the two countries in the other country without restriction, although the Embassy would think that in the case of Cuba the nationalization of labor laws would still be a bar to the employment of Mexicans in Cuban hotels and restaurants. The agreement may by its terms be subscribed to by gastronomical unions of other countries.

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In the elections for a new Federation Executive Miguel QUINTERO, the Communist Secretary-General of the Beach Club Workers' Union, was elected one of the Federation secretaries. He is the only avowed Communist in the country to be a union Secretary-General or a member of a Federation Executive. In Despatch 419 of December 8, 1955 the Embassy discussed this situation in the context of the CTC anti-Communist campaign and passed along the explanation confidentially given it by Mujal that Aguirre is afraid to act against Quintero for fear that he would become a fresh and influential enemy of the Habana-Hilton project.

XII GUANTANAMO NAVAL BASE

The Embassy has been regularly reporting the developments leading to the intervention once again of the Union of Workers and Employees of the Guantánamo Naval Base (Despatch 438 of December 19, 1955.) That intervention, though ordered by the Minister of Labor on December 16 was not effected till ^{just} before the executive that had obtained the largest number of votes at the December 11 elections was scheduled to take office. The Base reports that no word of the impending intervention had transpired to Guantánamo, leaving the Base in the perplexing position of being alone in the region with knowledge of it.

XIII ATLAS

Cuban Atlas has not so far dissolved itself as a result of the fall of Peron; but of course, it was so near non-existent before that the difference now is hardly noticeable. Argentine Labor Attaché Alejandro MIÑONES is reported to have tried to encourage the Atlas people with stories of how Peron was bound to come back. He, incidentally, is expected to leave the Embassy in Habana very shortly.

It is of incidental interest that Fernando PEREZ Vidal, once Continental Atlas Secretary-General, now heads the Workers' Committee or Secretariat of José PARDO Llada's Movimiento de la Nación, while José MARMOL Diaz, who was once also prominent in Atlas, is on the Priísta Comisión Obrera Nacional. Neither has any labor following.

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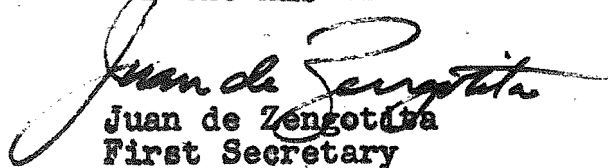
XIV SUGAR STRIKE

The sugar strike of the week of December 26, which had as its object the retroactive readjustment of the wages paid in the industry during 1955, has been reported upon in Despatch 464 of December 30, 1955.

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The preceding report of this series (Despatch 106 of August 3, 1955) was extended to cover the month of July last, because at the time it appeared that the Embassy was losing its labor officer through transfer and would be without the services of another for a protracted period. The putative transfer accounts in part for the delay in the preparation of this next "quarterly report" after Despatch 106.

For the Ambassador:


Juan de Zengotita
First Secretary


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