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FROM : HABANA 953 October 31, 1950

Encl. Clippings

REF : Habana's 940 October 27, 1950

SUBJECT : GENERAL STRIKE FAILS TO PREVENT EMPLOYERS' MEETING BUT  
ACHIEVES CERTAIN MEASURE OF SUCCESS AS DEMONSTRATION OF  
WORKERS UNITY.DCR  
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The general strike of Cuban workers which was called from 5:00 A.M. to 12:00 Noon on October 28 in protest against a meeting of employers for the purpose of forming an organization to oppose unwarranted encroachments by organized labor achieved a controversial degree of success.

Insofar as preventing the meeting of the employers the strike was a failure. However, as a display of worker unity and as an indication of the potential power of labor, it was successful to a fairly large degree.

The transportation system in Habana and, according to early unconfirmed reports, throughout the Island was virtually paralyzed. The only exceptions were taxicabs and some privately owned busses operating in the interior villages.

Work at the docks was completely stopped during the seven hours the strike was in effect. Rail transportation was at a standstill and plane service was disrupted.

Work stoppage among other industries and employee groups was sporadic. The caterers union failed to issue a definite resolution on the stand it would assume and, as a result, several of the larger public restaurants which depend exclusively on hired help were closed while private club and hotel restaurants and smaller eating establishments operated by owners and families remained open. Garages were closed but service stations which are generally operated by individuals on a percentage basis were kept open to the public.

Although the leaders of the National Association of Government Employees had previously agreed to support the strike, Saturday morning found the majority of them at their desks. Radio announcers were also on the job in spite of a

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previous statement that they would adhere to the strike movement. Most commercial establishments and offices were open but were short staffed. It is rather difficult to assess to what extent those workers absent from their jobs supported the movement since many of them undoubtedly were unable to reach their respective places of employment because transportation was not available. Drugstores were about evenly divided with only one or two of the larger downtown establishments being able to open because many employees did not appear for work. (Again transportation may have been responsible for their failure to report for work.) Smaller drugstores in the outlying districts appeared to open or close at the will of the proprietors. Many grocery stores and food markets, including the large public markets, were closed until noon when the strike officially terminated.

The electrical workers, headed by Angel COFIÑO, remained faithful to their prior commitment (see reference despatch) and cut off the power supply for ten minutes on the evening preceding the strike. Although this action would indicate support for the movement it is questionable whether the workers would be able to deprive industry of power for any prolonged period of time in the event of further demonstrations of this sort.

The Barbers Union which is Communist-dominated was the only workers organization publicly to denounce the strike.

Shortly after twelve o'clock on Saturday Senator Eusebio Mujal, Secretary General of the CTC, issued the following statement to the press:

"All the sectors of the thirty national federations of industries belonging to the CTC have followed the strike order issued by the central organization. In the interior not only the organized workers but many who have escaped the orders issued by the Communists have also responded. In Habana some commercial centers have worked as well as some grocery stores that were opened by the police.

"We protest against the abuses committed by the police who unjustly arrested hundreds of workers and many leaders of the CTC and we demand their rapid release since in most cases their only offense was to go about in automobiles bearing CTC legends.

"At all events we want to avail ourselves of this opportunity to answer the slander of a few petty Communist leaders and orthodox leaders to the effect that this national strike movement of protest had been carried out in collusion with the employers. It would hardly be necessary to clarify

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these facts because it cannot be conceived that in this struggle of ours against the employer sector we should act in accord with it.

"The CTC always acts firmly, truthfully, and out in the open. Our objectives have been declared publicly in the exposition handed to all the national press. Here are our objectives and our opinion in this struggle: 'Against employer reaction and that of their allies, the Communists, and for the maintenance of all the advances gained by the workers.' Therefore, in fulfilment of the resolutions of the Secretariat of the CTC the movement of protest which started at 5:00 o'clock in the morning is considered at an end at 12:00 noon. Eusebio Mujal Barniol."

Some five thousand merchants and industrialists met on Sunday morning, October 29, as scheduled, to discuss the problems confronting them and to formulate plans for the establishment of an employers organization.

The three main topics of discussion were as follows:  
1) the action of the Administration in setting aside a Supreme Court decision in a labor dispute; 2) certain statements made by the Minister of Labor which the employers claim incited the workers to take action against the order of the nation; and 3) determining what action the employers should take in view of the present situation.

Aurelio MARTINEZ Arizala, a member of the organizing committee, (Arizala is also one of the owners of Omnibus Aliados which was directly affected by the Supreme Court's decision) gave the opening speech in which he said: "We cannot permit anyone to push us around, nor do we propose to abuse anyone. We only ask the government for the same protection any citizen is entitled to and we hope to construct, in an atmosphere of calm and understanding, a better future for everyone concerned."

Other speakers strongly criticized the Administration for its indifferent attitude toward the strike and blamed it for not having prevented it. Senator Eusebio Mujal was also the object of severe attacks by the speakers.

The following resolutions were passed by the assembly:

1. To take the necessary steps for immediate organization of an Employers' Confederation.

2. To declare "socially dangerous" the attitude of any government representative who incites the masses against democratic procedures. (This was aimed directly at Mujal, who is

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a Senator, and indirectly at President Prio, who didn't refute statements by his CTC boss that he backed the strike objectives.)

3. To label as irresponsible and provocative any act that tends to ignore the right of the employer class to organize under the laws and constitution of the country.

4. To appoint a committee to integrate the work of organizing the employers and set forth the principles which inspire such organization.

5. To reject belligerent statements by Eusebio Mujal concerning Judge Riera Medina, "an honest and capable official." (Mujal had condemned Medina for attempting to enforce a decision of the Court of Constitutional Guarantees pertaining to wages and hours of bus workers.)

6. To thank the press for publishing news of the gathering despite opposition of the CTC.

The employer group has indicated that it feels the meeting was a definite success and that the full cooperation of perhaps ninety-five percent of management could be counted on in the event a showdown between labor and management should emerge from the present situation. The employers also feel that Senator Eusebio Mujal's and, consequently, labor's position has been seriously weakened since Mujal's avowed purpose of preventing the meeting of the employers was thwarted. Also, the fact that many people were seriously inconvenienced by the strike may have a profound effect on their heretofore sympathetic attitude toward labor.

The Administration remained silent throughout the strike period and has not yet found it expedient to issue any sort of statement either approving or condemning the actions of the workers.

There were no serious conflicts as a result of the strike, although a few minor disturbances were registered when those workers adhering to the strike movement attempted to persuade employees in commercial establishments to leave their jobs. Unconfirmed reports indicate that between fifty and eighty persons were arrested, but all were released shortly after the work stoppage terminated.

The press has been unanimous in denouncing the strike as illegal, unwarranted, and as a complete failure. All papers have carried editorials and front page articles on the question, copies of which are being enclosed.

For the Chargé d'Affaires ad interim:

*Ray H. Crane*  
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Assistant Attaché.

Enclosures: *AM*  
✓ Clippings.

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