

RESTRICTED - SECURITY INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: March 17, 1952

SUBJECT: Cuban Labor at the time of the Coup

PARTICIPANTS: Francisco Aguirre, Regional Secretary of the Inter-American  
Regional Organization of Workers  
Serafino Romualdi, Latin American Representative of AFL  
John T. Fishburn, Labor Adviser, ARA *JF*

COPIES TO: ARA - Mr. Miller, Mr. Mann  
MID - Ambassador Nufer, Mr. Wellman  
DRA  
Amembassy, Habana

Mr. Aguirre spent an hour at the Washington National Airport on Sunday morning enroute from Habana to attend the Executive Board Meeting of the ICFTU in Brussels. During that interval he supplied the following information. He also discussed with Mr. Romualdi a number of administrative problems of the ORIT:

Mr. Aguirre stated that the leaders of the CTC (Confederation of Cuban Workers) were informed of Batista's attempted coup at 3 a.m. the morning of Monday, March 10, 1952. At 7 a.m. they met in the former headquarters of the CTC. It was decided by the entire Executive Council to call a general strike in support of the elected Government. This decision was supported unanimously by all members of the Executive Council, including the members of Batista's own political party who were on the Council. By mid-afternoon it had become clear that the CTC was entirely alone and that there was no governmental, political or army group with whom they could cooperate, according to Aguirre. On the other hand, Batista sent them word through the Police Chief that he would respect the CTC's liberty of action and the independence of its leaders. The Executive Council decided, however, that it would accept no promises or arrangements unless directly from Batista himself. Consequently a meeting was held (Tuesday midnight, I believe) between Batista and Mujal, the Secretary-general of the CTC, at which time Batista promised complete freedom for the CTC and its leaders. Aguirre stated that the general strike was developing favorably and well, but that it was obvious that they could not win alone and that their attempt to fight the government alone would result in the complete destruction of the labor movement. Consequently when the assurances of Batista were received and it continued to be clear that the CTC was fighting alone, the CTC called off the general strike.

In response

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In response to a question, Mr. Aguirre stated that the elections would probably not be called in less than six months or more than a year from now. He added that Parliament would be permitted to resume sessions soon, possibly the day following--if it would agree to avoid controversial subjects. He was asked what he thought of the possibility that Batista would attempt to infiltrate the CTC in order to control its leadership and politics. In response he shrugged his shoulders and stated that he thought the existing leadership would be able to defend itself. It seemed clear that he and presumably the other leaders of the CTC greatly disliked recent developments but saw no alternative after they discovered themselves alone in attempting to fight the new administration.

ARA:JTFishburn:av