

DC/R

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
TELEPHONE  
*Memorandum of Conversation*

DATE: August 25, 1952

SUBJECT: Request of Cuban aviation workers for support of  
A.F. of L. in opposition to transfer of national  
airport from Rancho Boyeros to San Antonio de los Baños.

PARTICIPANTS: Serafino Romualdi, American Federation of Labor.  
MID - Mr. Wellman

COPIES TO: ARA - Mr. Mann  
- Mr. Fishburn  
AR - Mr. Nolan  
American Embassy, Habana (informally)

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Mr. Romualdi said that he was telephoning Mr. Wellman at Mr. Mann's suggestion about the open letter sent to President Batista by the Federacion Aerea Nacional a copy (attached) of which had been transmitted to Mr. Romualdi by Calixto Sanchez Whyte, Secretary General of the Federation. He asked Mr. Wellman what suggestions the Department might have which might assist the A.F. of L. in making a reply. Mr. Wellman told Mr. Romualdi that in his opinion the question of the transfer of the Cuban national airport from Rancho Boyeros to San Antonio de los Baños was an internal Cuban matter in which the United States Government should not intervene.

Mr. Romualdi said that he was impressed by the argument of the Cuban labor organization that military and civil airport facilities should not be combined for reasons of safety, and also with the allegation of the airport workers that labor would not have the same opportunity for organization and activity at a military airport.

Mr. Wellman

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Mr. Wellman informed Mr. Romualdi that Pan American World Airways and its affiliated Cuban company, Cia Cubana de Aviacion, oppose the transfer of the airport to San Antonio de los Baños and advocate improvement of facilities at Rancho Boyeros with the airport remaining under their management, or if deemed necessary, being taken over by the Government. Mr. Wellman observed that in a number of situations which have arisen in the past few years, the position of the airport workers, which are largely <sup>employees</sup> of Pan American or its Cuban affiliate, has been closely identified with the position taken by Pan American and its affiliate. He stated that other American airlines flying into Cuba reportedly support the transfer of the airport to San Antonio de los Baños. He said the Department has no information about the allegations of the Cuban airport workers union that persons in the Cuban Government interested in exploiting the new airport concessions and transport concessions from city to airport are behind the decision to transfer the airport.

Mr. Romualdi said that he intended to inform Calixto Sánchez Whyte that he had given a copy of the open letter to the Department of State and had discussed the matter with the Department officers responsible for the area without, however, receiving any indication that the Department would intervene in what was considered a purely Cuban internal matter. He also commented that since other American airlines did not oppose but support this move, the State Department would have no basis for intervention even if it were disposed to intervene. He said that in addition, he intended to send a telegram to Batista referring to the request for support from the Cuban aviation workers and ostensibly giving them what moral support he could. He commented that the Cuban aviation workers are one of the most effective Cuban unions from the point of view of the A.F. of L., and that Latin Americans generally appreciate a gesture such as a telegram to Batista, even though the A.F. of L. could give no real assistance. He observed that a communication from an American labor organization would not be construed as intervention by the United States Government.

ARA:MID: ~~Wellman~~ Wellman: jgh