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JUL 27 1952

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMEMBASSY, HABANA DEPARTMENT OF STATE 145

July 28, 1952

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON. BUREAU OF INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

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REF : None

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SUBJECT: Fiftieth Anniversary Celebrations for poet Nicolás GUILLEN

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On July 10, the celebrated Cuban communist Negro poet Nicolás Guillén celebrated his fiftieth birthday, an event which occasioned a series of celebrations and considerable press publicity in commemoration.

The first of these celebrations was held by the Pen Club of Havana at the Paris restaurant in answer to a petition signed by a group of Havana intellectuals the month before. Among the signers of the petition were persons regarded as Communists and fellow travelers as well as persons generally believed to be friendly to the Embassy. For example, Juan Marinello, former communist candidate for president, Anibal Escalante, editor of the communist daily newspaper Hoy, Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, fellow traveling historian of the city of Havana signed the petition, but so did such persons as actresses Ana Sainz, Violeta Casal, Minin Bujones, members of the cultural section of the Ministry of Education such as Felix Lizazo and Celeste Boeras, and poet Regino Pedroso, many of whom have been extremely helpful to USIS-Habana in the past. Like many petitions in the past, the one requesting a celebration for Guillén seems to have been communist inspired. It was published in Hoy for July 8 and in Ultima Hora, communist weekly magazine, for July 10.

Especially in honor of the fiftieth birthday of Guillén, Haitian poet Toussan Camille visited Habana, and in the small Bohemian restaurant called the Bodeguita del Medio, a rendezvous for artists of all political shades, presented him with a fountain pen at a ceremony at which Guillén and the Haitian poet recited verses to each other. This ceremony was covered only by Hoy.

On July 23 in the auditorium of the Normal School, the Municipal Committee for Habana of the Partido Socialista Popular (Communist) held the final tribute to Guillén at which he was praised, according to the account in Hoy, for his "firm and patriotic communistic militancy." A picture showing two-thirds of the auditorium and omitting the balcony was printed with the story of the celebration in Hoy for July 25.

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Other than Hoy, only the Habana morning papers Alerta and Mañana noticed the celebration to any great extent, the former printing a first page editorial praising Guillén as a poet and a full-page account of his life, and the latter printing a sonnet in praise of him by Cuban poet José Sanjurjo.

Ultima Hora, moreover, devoted its issue of July 10 to Guillén by printing seven of his new poems, several biographical sketches, critical essays, and remembrances of his trips to various foreign countries written by celebrated literary men of those countries.

Because of the complete coverage of all major events in this series of celebrations by the communist publications and the relatively small space devoted to them by the rest of the press, the Embassy concludes that the series was a communist propaganda venture in which, as usual, the names of innocent but unthinking persons were used to give the appearance of respectability.

For the Ambassador:

Walter M. Bastian, Jr.
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Cultural Affairs Officer

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