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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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FROM : AmEmbassy, Habana

DESP. NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

April 9, 1957

DATE

REF : Voluntary Labor Report

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SUBJECT: LABOR LEADERS VISIT BATISTA

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The purpose of this despatch is to provide additional details to the Embassy's brief report on the recent visit which approximately two hundred labor officials of the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC) paid at the Palace to congratulate President Batista on his and his family's escape from injury during the attack on the Palace on March 13, 1957.

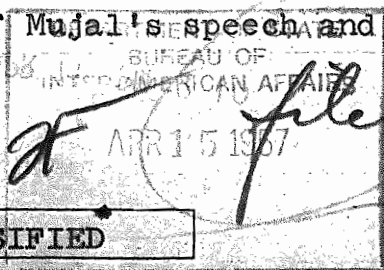
The main features of the labor leaders' visit were (1) a speech by Eusebio MUJAL, CTC Secretary General, and (2) the response made by President Batista.

Other less important but not to be disregarded aspects were (1) the personal greeting and handshake given each individual labor official by the President; (2) the listing by name in the press of every labor leader present; and (3) the heavy press play given the occasion at which also were present the Ministers of Labor; of Public Works; and of Health.

It should be noted that at the same time Batista received the CTC representatives he also received the top officials and many members of the National Organization of the Veterans of the Independence.

These visits by the workers and the veterans pioneered a series of visits and calls made by numerous other economic and financial organizations and social groups. Throughout the week of April 1, to the 7th these visits were prominently and fully written up in the papers. As in the case of the CTC leaders individual names of callers and well-wishers were printed. All of these visits were climaxed by the huge rally held for President Batista on April 7.

The significant themes of Mujal's speech and Batista's reply are summarized herebelow:

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1. What Mujal Said.

Mujal, speaking in behalf of both the CTC and FNTA (the National Federation of Sugar Workers), expressed the CTC's unqualified condemnation of violence and insurrection and its ardent espousal of civic and democratic solutions (elections).

Pointing to proletarian discipline, he asserted that this had "permitted us to have a strong and powerful labor movement and has placed the Cuban working classes permanently at the service of the Republic".

Mujal said that the CTC visit was made so "nationals and foreigners might see that Cubans are a single group when we try to hold on high the institutions of our country and especially when, as is the present case, President Batista is working for the Nation".

The CTC leader emphasized the need for worthy political solutions not only for the political parties but also for the national economy...."which for the present and future of the Republic is of as great interest as are the political interests." The needs of the country require peace and work and also "order, to prevent the country from falling into anarchy".

Mujal praised Batista for the "absolute respect for the opinions of the labor organizations which has been the orientation put into effect by the Executive Power and the Minister of Labor".

Mujal then outlined labor successes since January: (1) the equalization of the pay of bus workers; (2) 5% restoration in pay for public employees; (3) the 6% increase in pay for sugar workers recently ordered by the President upon recommendation made by a tripartite committee of workers, cane growers, and mill owners; and (4) the restoration of 8% differential at the beginning of the Zafra. All in all in the sugar industry this with other factors means more than 100 million pesos, he asserted.

Mujal further congratulated President Batista on his policy of "consolidating the national economy, increasing the purchasing power of the workers without losing sight of the sources of production and the logical encouragement of capital which, together with the workers, is an essential part of the country's progress."

Mujal stressed the danger of inflation and cautioned against the inflational spiral which could be induced by unreasonable pay demands of more than 1,200,000 of our members.

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He warned (1) the Minister of Commerce to keep prices down in order to obviate wage increases and (2) employers that "selfishness which prompts them to make several millions will only lead the country into inflationist policy ruinous for everyone."

Finally, Mujal explained the non-political character of the CTC, saying: "In our Central Union and by virtue of resolutions adopted since 1955 there are no political tendencies, nor partisan politics, nor electoral passions..... All of these things are practiced outside the CTC and in proper organizations..... In the CTC there are proletarian ideals, union militancy without following any given standard, but with a democratic and anti-communist orientation."

Mujal concluded by declaiming "the CTC will always stand against Communism....because with the Moscow varminths the CTC has only one watchword: - War Without Quarter."

2. What Batista Replied.

President Batista, after offering his sincere thanks to the workers for their congratulations on his escape from the "bestial attack", explained that scarcely four hours had elapsed before he was back at work so "that the Republic would not suffer". As a result from the 13th of March to the present "there are more than 150 million pesos in new investments (this refers to the new telephone agreement).....and through the measures that have been appliedincreases will represent around 130 million pesos which will circulate throughout the island, only through workers and employees."

Batista said the words of the CTC General Secretary had filled him with satisfaction. He explained that it is the duty of the Government "to drive the car of progress, maintain peace and order". The Government, the President and its ministers may be criticized or attacked "in a democratic regime such as ours". This is authorized by the constitution and is proper. What can not be done because it is illegal and contrary to the good sense of the people, is "to exercise violence, carry on a campaign of terror and encourage anarchy and chaos."

All this, Batista pointed out, is illustrated by your organization which as Mujal said is composed of men and women of different political followings but "they are guided more by their sentiment toward the nation and by a common purpose which is the general interest of the nation and of the organization they represent rather than any political party or tendency which they may follow."

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He continued: "When I speak of common tendencies and orientations I am also placing myself in that framework. As President of the Republic I must not be a man dominated by my passion so that I may govern as Marti wished, with everyone and for the good of everyone".

Batista then congratulated the working classes for "the sound and responsible manner in which they have acted; permitting the Government to give full speed and efficiency to its plans for development, the result being that Cuba marches incessantly over the road of economic progress....."

Finally, Batista concluded: "I again express my thanks and wish to say that the workers may be calm: neither will my serenity be lost nor will my thoughts be led by other than those roads that may be the most convenient for Cuba and its people."

Classified Comments attached as appendix.

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APPENDIX

COMMENT:

Late on the afternoon of the Palace attack, Mujal visited the President to embrace him and congratulate him on his escape from injury. At that time Mujal classified the effort to kill the President "as a stupid and criminal act".

It is not known whether or not a future visit of all the CTC leaders was discussed on that occasion. It is possible. In any event, the visit on March 29, by all of the CTC leaders was the first of many calls by other organizations.

It is pretty definitely established that many of these later visits were "inspired" for predetermined purpose. They certainly were far from "spontaneous".

It is interesting to note that Batista greeted each person personally and that each person's name was listed in the press. Thus it appears that everyone had to stand up and be "counted". Obviously, these demonstrations of loyalty and support were robbed of much of their effectiveness by "suggested" or "prompted" procedures.

A significant omission in the list of labor leaders present on March 29, 1957 was that of Angel Cofiño, secretary general of the Electric Plant Workers. His Federation was represented by Oscar Samalea, his bitter rival. On the other hand, Vicente RUBIERA Feito of the Telephone Workers, who is opposed to recent legislation (Decree 538) and also is at odds with the CTC leadership was present.

Of significance is the fact that Mujal pointed to the "equalization of pay" of the autobus workers as one of the CTC economic successes since January. This, at present, is not an accomplished fact. In spite of ministerial decree ordering the equalizing of pay, it has not been complied with by the company.

Also of significance were Mujal's statements on wage demands and inflation. It is clear that he is worried about potential inflation and he will not press for a general wage increase. Rather he will look at every demand on an industry by industry basis. Right now, Mujal's emphasis appears to be on a policy to encourage the broadening of local markets and increasing investments.

For the Ambassador:

John F. Correll
John F. Correll
Labor Attache

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