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3 Enclosures

TO : Department of State

FROM : HABANA 455 August 28, 1950

REF: Embtel 79, August 24, 1950

File D7. ...

SUBJECT: CUBAN GOVERNMENT INTERVENES COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER HOY

File

①

Culminating several months during which there has been continued agitation in Cuba against all Communist activities, and in face of the growing demands by labor groups, the press and anti-Communist organizations l/ for the banning of Hoy, the Cuban Government on August 24 intervened and took over the premises and property of that Communist newspaper. The intervention was decreed by a Ministry of Labor resolution signed by Prime Minister Manuel A. VAKONA who on August 21 also became acting Minister of Labor. Dr. Antonio OTERO Dalmau, an official of the Ministry, was absent on intervention and officially resumed his duties early Thursday morning.

The resolution, which is quoted in translation as enclosure No. 1, authorizes the intervention on the basis that the paper was originally founded and financed by contributions of workers of numerous syndicates; that the Confederacion de Trabajadores Cubanos has now complained to the Ministry that the paper has been used by a small portion of the proletariat to further their own interests and has consistently disregarded the legitimate interests of the main body of workers and syndicates; that it is the duty of the Ministry of Labor to safeguard the rights of the workers; that Hoy has been carrying out anti-democratic propaganda which threatens the peace and political stability of the country; and that, contrary to the

l/ The anti-communist groups which had threatened to march on Hoy on August 1, and were only stopped from doing so by a personal appeal from President Prío, had scheduled a meeting for August 24 to reconsider the matter. The announcement of the meeting referred to the President's promise to take action against the paper. It said that since almost a month had passed and the Government had not fulfilled its promise, the anti-communist groups would meet to renew their original plans. This scheduled meeting possibly may have had some influence on the Administration's deciding to proceed at this time (or it may have been arranged to give the Government an added excuse to take action).

HAHoyt/elw
August 28, 1950

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purposes for which it was founded, the newspaper has been carrying out an editorial and information policy designed to destroy American unity and the goodwill between countries having democratic ideals. Hoy's defense of the North Korean Communist troops, its attacks against the Government and Army of the United States "which has gone to the defense of Korea in compliance with the resolution adopted by the Security Council of the United Nations, with the favorable vote of the Cuban delegate and supported in every way by the Government of the Republic of Cuba" are cited in the resolution as examples of propaganda designed to destroy continental solidarity.

The resolution provides that the interventor shall, after taking possession of Hoy, review the situation and make recommendations to the Ministry of Labor as to the steps which should be taken to reorganize the paper as a legitimate worker's organ. A high official in the Ministry has intimated to the Embassy that this investigation will be prolonged, and that Hoy would probably not be published at all for some time. However, the Secretary General of the CTC, following the intervention ceremonies, stated that his organization had been officially informed that the paper would be turned over to the CTC. He felicitated the Government and President Prio for this "valiant political action in giving the paper to its real owners and thus preventing the Communist Party from continuing to use property which wasn't theirs." MUJAL promised that the CTC would use the paper in defense of democracy and of Cuba. Whether or not the paper is actually turned over to the CTC or not, there seems little doubt that one of the principal reasons that labor leaders Eusebio Mujal and Emilio SURI Castillo have kept their groups in the vanguard of those demanding the banning of Hoy has been their hope of obtaining it for their labor organization.

Police were stationed at the newspaper's offices at 5:00 A.M. August 24, and the official act of intervention took place at 7:00 A.M. after police experts had carefully searched the premises for bombs or other explosives. Those present included, (in addition to Minister Varona and the interventor) Police Chief General Quirino URIA, labor leaders Mujal, Suri Castillo, and numerous other high officials of the Ministry of Labor, of the Police and of the various labor organizations. It was reported that two Communist flags, pictures of Lenin and Stalin, files headed "Prio", "Worker's Organizations", "Negroes", "United Nations", "Korea", et cetera were all found on the premises.

The editor of Hoy, Anibal ESCALANTE, was present at the ceremony and his statements were included in the official notarial act which was drawn up at the time. Escalante refused to deliver the keys of the cabinets and safes or to sign the inventory which was taken. He stated that the intervention

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would be appealed as illegal and in violation of the Constitution. Escalante also said that he had informed the National Association of Journalists, the Cuban Press Society, the United Nations and the International Press Association of the intervention and that he had denounced it to those organizations as a violation of citizenship rights. He placed the paper's value at \$200,000.

The Communists immediately attempted to create a substitute for Hoy by getting out a special edition of their weekly paper America Deportiva. The police, however, forbade the distribution of this paper and on August 25 Prime Minister Varona ordered the Ministry of Interior to close it on the basis that it was Hoy published under another name. (The Embassy had previously been informed that some of the machinery used to print Hoy had been taken by the Communists from the premises in anticipation of the intervention, and that it was their intent to try and utilize America Deportiva as a substitute for the intervened newspaper.)

Several incidents occurred on August 24 which were related to the intervention. At about noon a small group of Communist youths were arrested by the police as they paraded downtown in protest of the Government action. Among those reportedly arrested was the sixteen year old daughter of Anibal Escalante. An attempt of a group of dock workers to start an impromptu protest strike was frustrated when armed maritime police occupied strategic positions on the waterfront, and the majority of the dock workers refused to go along with the agitators. One, Rafael AVILA Gonzalez, was arrested by police when he tried to incite bus workers on route 20 to strike in protest of the intervention. Numerous persons were reported arrested in the town of Cardenas when they attempted to demonstrate in favor of Hoy. Arrests other than those mentioned above have also been made. This reflection of a hardening attitude on the part of the Government may be emphasized in coming weeks and may presage action against the P.S.P. itself.

The press also reported that police searched the Circulo Socialista in the nearby town of Artemisa and found a Hammingraffer portable radio transmitter, model E-38, which allegedly was being operated clandestinely, and a large amount of Communist propaganda.

The intervention has also been protested by non-Communists. The same morning one of Habana's radio stations denounced it as an arbitrary act of the Government without legal basis, and one which sets a bad precedent for future Government action against Cuba's free press. The station also referred to the rumor that the paper would be turned over to the CTC and deplored

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it as an attempt by labor leaders to limit freedom of speech. Pardo Llada on his program Thursday night also denounced the intervention as a further encroachment of the Government on freedom of the press. Stating that he is opposed to the Communists and their methods, Pardo asserted that he has not in the past been a member of any political party.

Prime Minister Varona, Minister without Portfolio, issued a very strong editorial (copy enclosed) against the intervention in Friday's issue of his newspaper Alerta. Vasconcelos says that he is convinced, after hearing the statements of Mujal and Suri Castillo, that the intervention is an example of the worst type of syndical politics backed by an official action which has failed to prove any imminent danger against the security of the State, against good international relations, or even against public order.

Vasconcelos points out that the United States has not outlawed the Communist Party or banned any of its functions. He says that if this "intervention" is allowed to stand, no paper in Cuba will be free from the threat of similar action; that under such a situation freedom of press no longer exists. He denies that the Hoy was founded exclusively with syndicate funds, saying that politicians, capitalists, non-politicians and the man-on-the-street all contributed at the time the funds were solicited.

Violently attacking Mujal and Suri Castillo, Vasconcelos says that their only purpose in trying to get control of Hoy is to make it possible for them to collect money from the public just as Lazaro PENA previously did.

He concludes by stating that there is much not visible to the naked eye behind the anti-communism of these labor leaders. He deplores the fact that a quarrel which is purely a labor matter has been used as the motive for this Government intervention. Finally, Vasconcelos says that the intervention of Hoy establishes a lamentable unnecessary precedent not fitting for a Government which has its origins in revolutionary principles.

This editorial immediately provoked a controversy which threatens to have serious political repercussions. Prime Minister Varona denounced Vasconcelos strongly and asked that he submit his resignation as a cabinet member. Other Cuban officials have praised the intervention to members of the Embassy staff and have condemned Vasconcelos' editorial. Pardo Llada, however, attacked Varona for his denunciation of Vasconcelos. Pardo said that if the Council of Ministers is to be a real advisory group rather than just a body of "yes men" criticism

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such as Vasconcelos' is necessary and healthy.

The coincidence of Varona's being Minister of Labor at this time has also not escaped the attention of the critics of the intervention. It has been pointed out that President Prio was Minister of Labor when the Communist radio station Mil Diez was banned, and when the Communists were ousted from the CTC. Some have suggested that perhaps Varona's sudden replacing of Morell ROMERO as Minister of Labor and the subsequent issuance of the resolution authorizing the intervention of Hoy are part of a plan to build Varona up as the P.R.C.(A) presidential candidate in 1952.

In direct opposition to this criticism, however, is an editorial which appeared in the August 25 issue of Diario de la Marina (copy enclosed). Stating that the action was taken as a result of popular demand which was becoming uncontrollable and more urgent, Marina says that the intervention has not silenced a newspaper but only an instrument of Soviet imperialism. It says that no one should become alarmed at this action or believe that it constitutes a violation of the freedom of the press. It adds that the Prio Administration has never persecuted a newspaper or restricted any liberty, but that it could not remain deaf to the popular demand for the restriction of this Soviet organ.

Marina expresses the opinion that there cannot be any vacillation at this time; that one must either "be with the Communists or against them". It contends that the Communist Party cannot be compared to any of the Cuban opposition parties such as the Ortodoxo, the IAU, et cetera; that it is in the opposition for completely different reasons; that what it practices is really not opposition but conspiracy; and that it is absurd to try and picture the intervention of Hoy as an act of aggression against one of the opposition parties.

The intervention of Hoy is not, says Marina, a Governmental whim or a sectarian act. It is a verification of the fact that Cuba is at war with Communism; "not the Government of Dr. Prio, not the Autenticos, but our Country which has declared itself as unwilling to accept worldwide Communist aggression."

Denying that Hoy's purpose was that of a true newspaper, Marina calls it a bulletin of a foreign political party and says that anyone who raises his voice in defense of Hoy is raising it also in favor of a Communist victory. It adds that it is ridiculous and anti-patriotic to claim that the Communists should have the same rights as other citizens, pointing out that if they were in power they would annihilate all political opposition and close all opposition newspapers immediately. The editorial states further that one can't talk about

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democratic rights for those who openly declare their preference for a regime which makes mockery of democracy.

Marina's only criticism of the intervention is that the Government waited so long to take the step.

Finally, concludes Marina, "those who are alarmed by the intervention of a bulletin of the Russian Army, whether they know it or not, or whether they wish it or not, are nothing but Communists. Responsible citizens, Cubans, be they Autenticos, Ortodoxos, Liberales, Caupistas, Democratas, Republicas, or of no political leanings, who wish for their country a national Government of their own, faithful to the republican conscience forged for us by the Founders, applaud and support the decision to prove to the world that the Communists in Cuba have met their Waterloo"...

Comment:

As previously reported, President Prio has stated confidentially that he personally had instigated some of the clamor by labor groups against the Communists and Hoy in order to give him a basis for taking action to ban them. There is little doubt that much of the anti-Communist agitation by labor is due to the fight for control between Communist and non-Communist labor leaders in the unions, and that their demands for the outlawing of the Party and the banning of Hoy may be due more to practical than idealistic reasons.

Nevertheless, it is also true that the general public is in favor of strong action against Cuba's fifth column, and it is believed that the measure taken against Hoy will, in general, be a popular one. The publicity and editorial comment given to the Cuban Government's definitive stand on the side of democracies and its open backing of the United Nations action in the Korean conflict has served during recent months to define more clearly public opinion and create open opposition to anything communistic.

The technical consultant of the Ministry of Labor who drafted the resolution decreeing the intervention of Hoy, told the Embassy's labor reporting officer that he does not consider the action legal. Prime Minister Varona previously wanted the Ministry of Labor to issue such a resolution, but it was pointed out to him at that time that any such act should rightfully come from the Ministry of Interior 1/. However, when Varona was made Acting Minister of Labor he immediately

1/ It is interesting to note that the action against America Deportiva was taken by the Ministry of Interior.

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proceeded to issue the resolution, despite the legal advice to the contrary. Other Government legal sources have confidentially informed the Embassy that the action is illegal. They state, however, that any judicial proceedings designed to overrule the resolution can be delayed in the Cuban courts for at least two years, and the Government feels that by that time the whole domestic and international picture will have changed.

There now is little doubt that Morell Romero's departure from the Ministry of Labor at this time was due to the action contemplated against Hoy. Morell is a judge and it was felt that his judicial standing might make it embarrassing for him if the resolution banning Hoy is protested in the courts. Information now available to the Embassy indicates that Morell may return to his position as Minister of Labor within a few days.

For the Chargé d'Affaires ad interim:

Henry A. Hoyt

Henry A. Hoyt,
Second Secretary of Embassy.

Enclosures: *OT*

1. Translation of Resolution.
2. Editorial by Ramon Vasconcelos
3. Editorial from Diario de la Marina of August 25.

TRANSLATION

OFFICIAL GAZETTE - Extraordinary Edition No. 31,
August 24, 1950.

MINISTRY OF LABOR
Resolution 2600

Whereas: The Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba, (Confederation of Cuban Workers CTC), the labor unions members of said Confederation and numerous workers individually who contributed financially to the purchase of the machinery and shops located at Nos. 108-110 Desague Street in this City and to the formation of the capital of the concern that edits the newspaper HOY which is in the possession and at the service of a small fraction of the national proletariat, have addressed this Ministry advising it that said concern and the Direction and Management of the said newspaper are repeatedly and systematically disregarding the lawful interests of the said unions and workers and request that the necessary measures be adopted to guarantee their rights and recover the same.

Whereas: The capital stock of the concern that publishes the newspaper in this city entitled HOY has been constituted through direct and voluntary financial contributions of the workers and of numerous unions for the purpose of maintaining a daily newspaper to represent the legitimate general interests of all the workers on an equal basis, without distinction of political beliefs or of syndical groups and inspired upon democratic ideals, having representation thereon of all the working sectors that contribute toward its support.

Whereas: Law No. 91 of 1935, the Organic Law of the Ministry of Labor grants to the Minister of that department the superior vigilance and application of the social legislation in force, as well as the fiscalization and fulfillment thereof, and it is an essential function of this Ministry, within the present order of a juridical nature in social matters to see that the rights of the workers, in union as well as in personal matters be properly safeguarded. Likewise it is entrusted with the guardianship of the internal life of the union organizations as well as with the proper supervision so that union funds and the financial contributions of all kinds made by workers be applied for their legitimate purposes.

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Whereas: Having taken notice of the charges that have been made and in view of the investigations made by the Ministry of Labor corroborated by what has been published in HOY which entitles itself "a newspaper in the service of the people edited at the shops which the people acquired for that purpose", it is proper in the exercise of the supervisory action conferred upon the Ministry of Labor by the laws in force in union matters, to adopt pertinent measures to prevent that the organ of publicity of the working classes of Cuba, created and sustained thereby, continue being controlled by a small partisan group which took it over unlawfully at the time that the directorship of the Cuban central union (CTC) was held by it and which continues using the same to its own advantage and improperly.

Whereas: The newspaper HOY has been carrying on propaganda contrary to the aspirations of democracy and unity which inspire the Cuban workers, leading to promote the idea of treason to the nation, to place some social groups against others within the framework of Cuban society and raising a spirit of hatred and rancour and a very dangerous task of division and confusion which involves serious dangers for the political and social stability of the nation.

Whereas: The newspaper HOY itself, contradicting the purposes for which it was founded is carrying on a policy of information and editorials which attempts to break up the American unity, the good will and understanding among the peoples of democratic ideals to the serious risk against continental solidarity which is proved by its defense of the North Korean troops, justifying and considering lawful the aggression against South Korea and attacking the Government and Army of the United States of America which has come to its aid in fulfillment of a resolution of the Security Council of the United Nations which was adopted with the favorable vote of the Cuban Delegate on that body and supported fully by the Government of the Republic of Cuba as lawful representative of our nation.

Whereas: It is proper that without further delay, action be taken to reorganize the editorial concern of the newspaper HOY in order to guarantee in its government and management the lawful rights and interests of the workers and of the unions that contributed to the formation of its capital and to restore it to the purposes for which it was founded as representative of the general interests of the workers, inspired in the democratic ideals, thus avoiding the political and social danger involved in the continued publication of an organ that attacks the fundamental principles of the nationality and of the constitutional institutions and the aggression and mockery which for the interests of the Cuban workers is found in the present partisan character of the newspaper HOY.

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Therefore: In use of the powers vested in me

I RESOLVE:

1. To appoint Dr. Antonio Otero Dalmau, as Delegate of the Ministry of Labor, to intervene and take possession of the newspaper HOY, its direction, management, editing, shops, machinery and all its belongings located at number 108-110 Desague Street in this city, as well as of the editorial concern of said organ of publicity, and the seizure of the books of accounting, minute books and such documents as may be necessary for the better carrying out of its purposes.

2. The Delegate of the Ministry of Labor on the newspaper HOY and its editorial concern, once he takes over his duties will immediately proceed to make an inventory and take proper investigatory steps to determine the manner and conditions in which the workers and union organizations which contributed to form the capital which allowed it to be founded are represented on the editorial staff of the newspaper HOY.

3. The Delegate of the Ministry of Labor shall propose to the Ministry the measures that should be adopted for the re-organization of said concern, by establishing the legitimate rights appertaining thereon to the unions and workers and the participation which should be given them in the management and direction in order that it may be placed in a position which will allow it to fulfill its proper purposes and to publish a newspaper that will be the organ of expression of the working classes of Cuba, without distinction as to political creeds or improper groups of their general interests, assuring the proper expenditure and application of the funds contributed by the workers and lawfully constituted unions.

4. To authorize the Delegate of the undersigned on the newspaper HOY to request the most effective cooperation of the police in the event he should deem it necessary for the better fulfillment of the mission that is entrusted to him hereby.

5. Notify this Resolution to the appointed Delegate, to the Chief of the Central Division of the National Police and to the interested parties for immediate fulfillment, and send a copy to the Ministers of the Interior and of Defense and have it published in the Official Gazette of the Republic for general publicity.

Done in Habana, Ministry of Labor, on this 24th day of the month of August, 1950.

MANUEL A. DE VARONA
Minister of Labor

Translated:llg/dts

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ALERTA
AUG 25 1950

HAK

ENTREACTOS

PRECEDENTE FUNESTO

Por Ramón Vasconcelos

HASTA que leí la prensa vespertina ignoraba el motivo de la intervención de "Hoy". Suponia que se trataba de alguna irregularidad relacionada con las leyes sociales: falta de pago, conflicto laboral, escamoteos recaudatorios o cosa por el estilo. Pero después de conocer las declaraciones de líderes tan *autorizados e imparciales* como los camaradas Mujal y Surí Castillo, no me queda la menor duda de que en el fondo de la cuestión no hay más que política sindical de la peor especie apoyada por una acción oficial que no justifica ningún peligro inminente contra la seguridad del Estado, ni contra las buenas relaciones internacionales, ni siquiera contra el orden público.

Los Estados Unidos, que llevan el liderazgo del anti-comunismo —en nombre de una democracia que no practican en muchos casos— permiten el desenvolvimiento de un partido comunista, con sus órganos correspondientes y con actividades iguales a las que desenvuelven los demás partidos. Si alguna vez los comunistas soslayan o violan la ley, en el acto se produce la denuncia a los tribunales de justicia y se inicia el procedimiento normal. La Constitución yanqui, como la nuestra, garantiza la libertad de expresión, y limitar esa libertad en cualquier forma, constituye un atentado contra los derechos fundamentales. En Cuba lo peor es el precedente. Después de *intervenirse* —es un eufemismo de ilimitada elasticidad— un periódico por fas o por nefa, no hay empresa periodística que esté exenta de sufrir amordazamientos o coacciones del mismo tipo. Esto se llama en criollo *dar la cañona* por falta de agilidad mental o capacidad polémica. En ese plano y con ese sistema no hay libertad efectiva de prensa. Sobre la cabeza de todos los periódicos habrá siempre un pretexto para decapitarlo en un momento dado.

Mujal y Surí no son más que políticos de militancia definida y manejan *pro domo sua* los cuadros sindicales que debieran servir únicamente para que dentro de ellos se desenvuelvan los problemas de aplicación de las leyes vigentes, sin exasperaciones subversivas, desde luego, pero a la vez sin demagogías lucrativas.

No es cierto que el periódico "Hoy" lo adquirieran con recaudaciones sindicales exclusivamente: en la colecta pública que abrieron los trabajadores de todos los ramos en días de relaciones bonancibles entre la CTC y el Gobierno, no hubo criollo o no criollo a que dejaran de acudir las comisiones de *activistas* con el consabido bono. Obreros, capitalistas, políticos y apolíticos, soltaron los cinco pesos, y fué así como la CTC llegó a tener una tribuna propia, a cuya acción de proselitismo y propaganda se agregó la radioemisora Mil Diez, adquirida de análoga manera.

¿Para qué quieren "Hoy" Suri Castillo, director del semanario pornográfico "Gente", y Mujal, dueño de los talleres en que se editaba antes "Prensa Libre" y que le regaló Grau para que editara un periódico anticomunista? Nada harán, porque su propósito es imitar en lo posible a Lázaro Peña en el funcionamiento del torniquete recaudatorio, sin los resultados de disciplina, unidad y eficiencia sindical —dígase en honor a la verdad— que reconocían hombres tan derechistas como Casanova y otros patronos formados en el contacto íntimo con los problemas del trabajo.

No es sana doctrina defender al marxismo acogotador *contra* una cubanía amplia y cordial; pero tampoco es doctrina sana convertir en querrella sectaria, virulenta, intransigente hasta el acoso, luchas del trabajo que sólo las técnicas laborales y la voluntad de las masas de trabajadores organizados deben decidir.

Detrás del anticomunismo existe lo que se ve y lo que no se ve, lo que se confiesa y lo inconfesable. Quien ha dado en el clavo en declaraciones de ayer ha sido Wallace: para vencer a Moscú hay que dar al hombre de la calle más que lo que da Moscú.

La clausura de "Hoy" —que eso es en realidad la intervención— sienta un precedente funesto e innecesario, estando como está franco el palenque de todas las controversias bajo la égida de un Gobierno engendrado por la violencia en el claustro materno de la Revolución y por lo tanto obligado a mantener, indeclinablemente, los principios que deben ser la *suprema razón de ser* de su existencia, el oriente fijo de sus preocupaciones y responsabilidades históricas.