

TELEGRAM

Foreign Service of the
United States of America

INCOMING

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

ACTION

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 FM SECSTATE WASHDC
 TO RUESAS/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 2247
 RUESUZ/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 9647
 RUEHCR/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN 8442
 RUESBG/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 3348
 RUESBA/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 2594
 RUESON/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN 9261
 RUESGT/AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA 3821
 RUESKN/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON 5562
 RUESLZ/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ 8330
 RUESLM/AMEMBASSY LIMA 6020
 RUESMG/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA 5737
 RUESMO/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 0526
 RUESDO/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 2919
 RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 1612
 RUEHCR/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO 2587
 RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN 6702
 RUESQI/AMEMBASSY QUITO 1728
 RUESUA/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO 2219
 RUESJO/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE 7101
 RUESAL/AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR 5740
 RUESUP/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 6364
 RUESNA/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 3878
 RUESD/AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO 7846
 RUESTE/AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA 6774
 RUFHBS/USMISSION EC BRUSSELS 1585
 RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 7568

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TAGS:

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SUBJECT: PREPARATIONS FOR EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS OF ORIT

REF: (A) BUENOS AIRES 1638, (B) EC BRUSSELS 2610,
(C) CARACAS 1057, (D) OTTAWA 0271

1. SUMMARY: A WORKING COMMITTEE MET IN CARACAS LAST JANUARY TO START PREPARING FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS OF ORIT, NOW SCHEDULED TO BE HELD IN THE SAME CITY NEXT AUGUST. ON MARCH 24 A DELEGATION OF ARGENTINA CGT LEADERS MET WITH AFL-CIO INTER-AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVE ANDREW MCLELLAN TO DISCUSS TERMS UNDER WHICH ARGENTINA COULD JOIN THE INTER-AMERICAN LABOR SYSTEM FOR THE FIRST TIME. THE WORKING COMMITTEE, POSSIBLY WITH ARGENTINE PARTICIPATION, WILL MEET AGAIN NEXT MONTH. A TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR THE CONGRESS INCLUDES (1) A PLAN TO DECENTRALIZE THE NEW ORGANIZATION BY ESTABLISHING OFFICES IN MEXICO, CARACAS, AND ARGENTINA, (2) A REVISION OF THE CONSTITUTION, WHICH AMONG OTHER THINGS WOULD DETERMINE THE NEW ORGANIZATION'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS, (3) ELECTION OF OFFICERS, AND (4) FINANCIAL MATTERS, FOR THE PURPOSE OF DETERMINING WHAT RESOURCES THE NEW ORGANIZATION COULD CALL UPON. PROBLEMS ABOUND, BUT THERE

IS HOPE. END SUMMARY.

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OBSERVATION
2. THE MOST RECENT STEP IN PREPARATIONS FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS OF ORIT NEXT AUGUST WAS A MEETING IN MONTEVIDEO ON MARCH 24 BETWEEN AFL-CIO INTER-AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVE ANDREW MCLELLAN AND A DELEGATION OF ARGENTINE LABOR LEADERS HEADED BY CGT SECRETARY GENERAL CASILDO HERRERAS.

3. ACCORDING TO MCLELLAN THE ONLY REAL CONCERN EXPRESSED BY THE ARGENTINE ABOUT JOINING ORIT WAS THE NAME ORIT ITSELF, A SYMBOLIC BUT IMPORTANT POINT FOR THE CGT SINCE 1951, WHEN IT WAS ACCUSED OF BEING A TOOL OF A FASCIST ICTATORSHIP AND PREVENTED FROM PARTICIPATING IN ORIT'S FOUNDING CONGRESS.

4. THE CGT ALSO HAS A PLAN FOR THE DECENTRALIZATION OF ORIT THROUGH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL OFFICE IN CARACAS, BUENOS AIRES AND MEXICO CITY. WHILE WE DON'T HAVE THE DETAILS OF THE CGT PROPOSAL WE BELIEVE IT IS SIMILAR TO ONE DISCUSSED IN THE CARACAS MEETING OF THE WORKING COMMITTEE LAST JANUARY.

5. IN ANY EVENT IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT SOME KIND OF DECENTRALIZATION PROPOSAL WILL BE INCLUDED ON THE AGENDA OF THE CONGRESS. BASICALLY THE IDEA IS TO DIVIDE THE COUNTRIES OF THE HEMISPHERE AMONG THREE REGIONS: MEXICO WOULD CONTINUE TO BE THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE ORGANIZATION AND WOULD INCLUDE CANADA, THE UNITED STATES, AND PUERTO RICO IN ITS IMMEDIATE JURISDICTION. CARACAS WOULD INCLUDE CENTRAL AMERICA, THE CARIBBEAN, AND THE ANDEAN COUNTRIES, AND BUENOS AIRES THE REST OF SOUTH AMERICA (SEE COMMENT, BELOW).

6. ACCORDING TO MCLELLAN, THE ARGENTINES DO NOT FEEL AS STRONGLY AS THE VENEZUELAN AND THE CANADIANS ABOUT THE DESIRABILITY OF MAINTAINING CLOSE TIES TO THE ICFTU. RATHER, THEY PROFESS TO LEAN TOWARD THE POSITION OF THE AFL-CIO AND THE MEXICANS THAT ANY NEW ORGANIZATION OUGHT TO BE MORE INDEPENDENT OF THE ICFTU THAN HAS BEEN THE CASE WITH ORIT. APPARENTLY, THE CGT'S RELATIVELY SHORT EXPERIENCE AS AN AFFILIATE OF THE ICFTU HAS RAISED SOME DOUBTS ABOUT EUROPEAN INTERVENTION IN HEMISPHERE LABOR AFFAIRS (SEE COMMENT, BELOW).

7. MCLELLAN HAS URGED THE CGT TO SEND OBSERVERS TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE WORKING COMMITTEE SCHEDULED FOR MAY 31 IN MEXICO AND TO TAKE WHATEVER STEPS MAY BE NECESSARY TO ENABLE IT TO PARTICIPATE TO THE FULLEST POSSIBLE EXTENT IN THE CONGRESS IN AUGUST. UNDER ORIT'S CONSTITUTION ALL ICFTU AFFILIATES ARE ELIGIBLE FOR MEMBERSHIP. THEREFORE, MCLELLAN BELIEVES THE CGT'S APPLICATION, PARTICULARLY IF ACCOMPANIED BY A FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION, WILL BE APPROVED BY AUGUST. IN ANY CASE, THE MERE PRESENCE OF CGT DELEGATES IN THE CONGRESS AS OBSERVERS AND PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS OF ANY EMERGING ORGANIZATION WOULD HAVE A SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE ON THE CONGRESS EVEN IF THEY COULD NOT VOTE.

8. IN GENERAL, THE ARGENTINES SEEMED, FROM THE AFL-CIO POINT OF VIEW, QUITE COOPERATIVE. OBVIOUSLY, THE UNCERTAIN

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FUTURE OF THE CGT, AND IN PARTICULAR OF CASILDO HERRERAS, CONTRIBUTED TO THAT SPIRIT, BUT MCLELLAN IS CONVINCED THAT THE CGT'S DECISION TO PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY IN INTER-AMERICAN LABOR AFFAIRS IS GENUINE AND NOT MERELY THE PRODUCT OF POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY.

9. COMMENT: THE FUTURE OF ORIT OR A SUCCESSOR ORGANIZATION IS BY NO MEANS CERTAIN, BECAUSE AGREEMENT AMONG THE PRINCIPAL LABOR MOVEMENTS ON SEVERAL KEY ISSUES IS NOT CERTAIN. IT SHOULD BE NO PROBLEM TO MAINTAIN THE FACADE OF A HEMISPHERIC LABOR MOVEMENT, BUT TO MAKE IT EFFECTIVE IS ANOTHER QUESTION.

10. THE PROBLEM OF FUTURE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE ICFTU IS ONE WHICH HAS MANY RAMIFICATIONS, ECONOMIC AS WELL AS POLITICAL. WHILE THE ICFTU AND THE EUROPEANS HAVE APPARENTLY GIVEN UP ANY IDEA THEY MAY HAVE HAD OF ACHIEVING CLOSER CONTROL OVER THE REGIONAL ORGANIZATION, AND NOW PROFESS A "HANDS OFF" ATTITUDE TOWARD THE UPCOMING CONGRESS, THEY MIGHT BE RELUCTANT TO GIVE SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT TO ANY ORGANIZATION THEY CONSIDER TOO INDEPENDENT. ICFTU SUPPORT STOPPED COMPLETELY AFTER THE 1974 ORIT CONGRESS WHICH DRAFTED A PROPOSED NEW CONSTITUTION CALLING FOR MORE REGIONAL AUTONOMY

11. THE DECENTRALIZATION CONCEPT IS A GOOD ONE IN THEORY BUT IT, TOO, COULD PROVE A STUMBLING BLOCK, BOTH IN TERMS OF GETTING APPROVAL IN THE CONGRESS AND IN FUNCTIONING EFFECTIVELY AFTERWARDS. THE MEXICANS, AMERICANS, AND PROBABLY THE BRAZILIANS WOULD OPPOSE THE PLAN AS IT HAS BEEN DESCRIBED, ALTHOUGH THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE VARIOUS REGIONS IS SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATION BOTH BEFORE AND DURING THE CONGRESS. THE DANGER IS THAT SUCH A PLAN MIGHT RESULT IN PRACTICE IN THE CREATION OF THREE NEW LABOR ORGANIZATIONS, EACH WITH ITS OWN "SPHERE OF INFLUENCE" INSTEAD OF ONE.

12. NOBODY SEEMS TO THINK JULIO ETCHEVERRY, ORIT'S SECRETARY GENERAL SINCE THE LAST CONGRESS IN 1974, HAS MUCH OF A CHANCE FOR REELECTION, IN SPITE OF THE SUPPORT HE COULD EXPECT FROM THE AFL-CIO AND PROBABLY FROM THE MEXICANS. MUCH WILL DEPEND, OF COURSE, ON WHETHER A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE CANDIDATE IS OFFERED TO THE CONGRESS.

13. FURTHER PROBLEMS HAVE TO DO WITH THE DATE AND THE COST OF THE CONGRESS ITSELF. FIDEL VELAZQUEZ OF THE MEXICAN CTM NOW SAYS THE AUGUST DATE AGREED UPON IN CARACAS TO ACCOMMODATE THE CANADIANS IS UNACCEPTABLE. VELAZQUEZ HAS NOT GIVEN ANY REASON WE KNOW OF, BUT IT IS WIDELY ASSUMED THAT HE IS UNHAPPY ABOUT THE DECENTRALIZATION PROPOSAL. PERHAPS HE SEES THE PROPOSAL AS A MOVE TO DIMINISH MEXICO'S INFLUENCE IN ANY NEW HEMISPHERE LABOR ORGANIZATION.

14. AS FOR THE COST OF THE CONGRESS, THE AFL-CIO HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT IT DOESN'T INTEND TO PICK UP THE TAB. THE AFL-CIO POSITION AT THE PRESENT TIME IS THAT THE MAJOR COST OUGHT TO BE BORNE BY THE ICFTU AND THE VENEZUELAN CTV, WHOSE INITIATIVE IT WAS TO CALL THE CONGRESS IN THE FIRST PLACE. THE AFL-CIO WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO WAIT FOR 1977, WHEN THE NEXT ORDINARY CONGRESS WAS DUE TO TAKE PLACE.

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15. ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS ARE ON THE AGENDA OF THE NEXT MEETING OF THE WORKING COMMITTEE SCHEDULED FOR MAY IN MEXICO. HOPEFULLY AT THAT TIME THE PRINCIPAL ACTORS IN THE PLAY WILL BE ABLE TO AGREE ON THE BASIS FOR A CONGRESS WHICH MAY YET ACHIEVE THE IMPORTANT BUT ELUSIVE GOAL OF "REVITALIZING" THE INTER-AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC LABOR SYSTEM.

16. THE DEPARTMENT WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION OR COMMENTS ON THIS SUBJECT WHICH ADDRESSEE POSTS MAY CONSIDER PERTINENT. THE POSITION WHICH ORIT AFFILIATES WOULD BE LIKELY TO TAKE ON THE VARIOUS ISSUES DISCUSSED IN THIS CABLE WOULD BE PARTICULARLY USEFUL. KISSINGER

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