

INFORMATION REPORT

CD NO.

COUNTRY Colombia

DATE DISTR 19 MAR 51

SUBJECT Labor Situation in the Banana Zone

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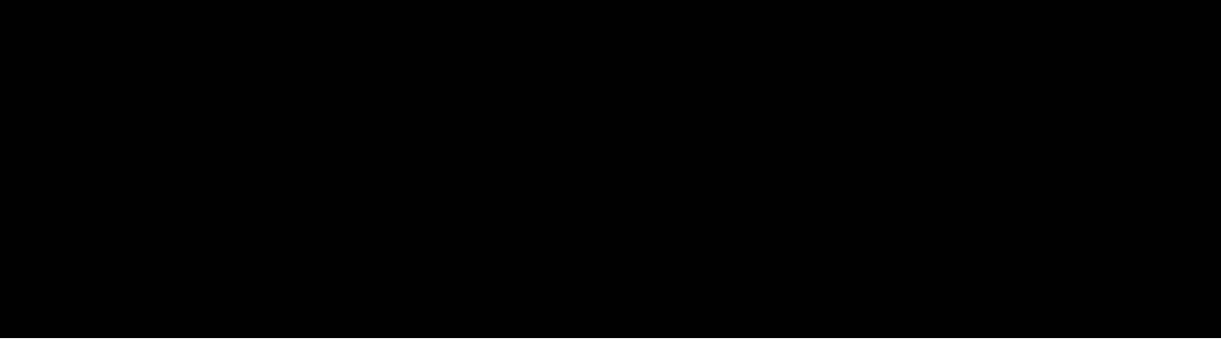
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The following background information has been [redacted] on the labor situation in the banana zone of Colombia:

1. Syndicate organization in Santa Marta and the banana zone has always had a leftist orientation and Marxist leadership. The so-called Socialist revolutionaries who directed the tragic banana strike of 1928 became Communists after 1930 and continued to direct the labor movement in the area. In spite of diminished production of bananas during the war, the Communists maintained control of the weakened labor forces.
2. When the split in the Confederacion de Trabajadores de Colombia (CTC) occurred in May 1950, the Magdalena delegation remained with the Communist or Independent CTC; as a result the Federacion de Trabajadores de Magdalena (FTM) and the banana workers' unions affiliated with it remained in the Independent CTC. In order to strengthen the banana workers' unions, the Independent CTC planned to prepare a series of demands calculated to unify all the workers of the zone and to promote a general strike. Carlos Arias, president of the FTM, Domingo Zamora, and Martin Camargo, all Communists, were responsible for carrying out the plan.
3. Some progress was being made in the implementation of the plan, especially in the union of employees of the Sevilla Fruit Company, but it was interrupted by the departure of Carlos Arias for Europe and the arrest of Zamora and Camargo, who are still in jail. The absence of these labor leaders facilitated the intervention of the Liberal CTC, which sent its president, Manuel Diaz Henricquez, to the zone. He was able at least temporarily to weaken Communist influence, and as a result the threat of a general strike has considerably diminished.
4. The Sindicato de Braceros de Santa Marta, which ordered a strike against six banana-producing companies in the Santa Marta section on 18 January 1951, to enforce demands for a wage increase and protest hiring of non-union workers, is not affiliated with either branch of the Confederacion de Trabajadores de Colombia (CTC), or with the Federacion de Trabajadores de Magdalena (FTM), and is directed by a former Communist, Jose de los Santos Chasin.

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