Approved For Release 2006/12/18 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006300060004-5

Secret

No Foreign Dissem

DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

Political Trends in Cuba

Secret

№ 40

15 March 1968
No. 0011/68A

MORI/CDF ID # 109056

Approved For Release 2006/12/18 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006300060004-5

Approved For Release 2006/12/18 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006300060004-5

SPECIAL REPORTS are supplements to the Current Intelligence Weeklies issued by the Office of Current Intelligence. The Special Reports are published separately to permit more comprehensive treatment of a subject. They are prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence, the Office of Economic Research, the Office of Strategic Research, and the Directorate of Science and Technology. Special Reports are coordinated as appropriate among the Directorates of CIA but, except for the normal substantive exchange with other agencies at the working level, have not been coordinated outside CIA unless specifically indicated.

WARNING

The SPECIAL REPORT contains classified information affecting the national defense of the United States, within the meaning of Title 18, sections 793 and 794, of the US Code, as amended. Its transmission or revelation of its contents to or receipt by an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

DISSEMINATION CONTROLS

THE SPECIAL REPORT MUST NOT BE RELEASED TO FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS and must be handled within the framework of specific dissemination control provisions of DCID 1/7.

GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic downgrading and declassification

Approved For Release 2006/12/18 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006300060004-5

Approved For Release 2006/12/18 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006300060004-5

POLITICAL TRENDS IN CUBA

The strident bellicosity and adventurism characteristic of Cuban foreign policy since early 1966 have obscured a number of modifications in domestic policy that have significantly changed the nature of the revolution and the role of Fidel Castro. With the gradual institutionalization of the regime, he is increasingly dependent on the governing apparatus he has created to implement his policies.

Castro is still unquestionably in charge and is effective in portraying himself as the life force of the revolution. The military and security forces are fervently loyal, and Castro still enjoys a large degree of popular support, especially among the youth, the peasants, and the poor working class. Despite his continued pre-eminence, however, Castro has increasingly isolated himself during the past two years. Meaningful political dialogue has almost ceased, and the regime has become considerably more inflexible. Castro seems to distrust the bureaucracy he has created and has surrounded himself with a "cult of guerrilla heroes" in order to preside over it better.

Castro's contact with the Cuban masses has also been reduced--partially as a result of the barriers imposed by the bureaucracy. He is still obsessively messianic, but his direct appeals to the people have decreased. In 1967 he made only 15 major speeches, fewer than in any year since 1961.

Political discussion has been effectively stifled in the bureaucracy and in the press, and the condemnation of a dissident "microfaction" in January was a reminder of the dangers of questioning Castro. Perhaps realizing that a political vacuum is being created below him, Castro has dramatically emphasized the importance of a small "cult of guerrila heroes"--confidants from his original 26th of July Movement--who constitute the second rung of leadership.

Approved For Release 2006/12/18 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006300060004-5

Approved For Release 2006/12/18 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006300060004-5

The New Radicalism

From mid-1964 until early 1966, the regime hewed to an essentially moderate domestic course. Great efforts were made to rationalize the badly mismanaged economy, and material incentives were used in an effort to increase lagging labor productivity. The revolutionary purists, such as the late Ernesto "Che" Guevara, who argued that only "moral incentives" were necessary, found their advice ignored by Castro. By early 1967, however, it became clear that the regime was shifting back and that "moral incentives" were again in vogue.

Last summer, antibureaucracy drives were widely publicized, and government ministries were forced to reduce their staffs by as much as 75 percent. Special party commissions reassigned excess workers to agricultural production and penalized more than 16,000 administrators who were accused of allowing bureaucracies to flourish. The regime was probably correct in its belief that the burgeoning ministries harbored many surplus workers, but the pervasiveness of Castro's "antibureaucracy" campaign suggests that he saw a potential threat to some of his policies.

Castro continues to be particularly concerned with Cuban youth. During the past two years, vigorous new campaigns have been launched to mobilize them behind the revolution and to expose them to "guerrilla experience." In 1966, a youth brigade was organized to trace "Che" Guevara's 1958 march through eastern and central Cuba. Last year, Red Brigades were constituted for agricultural work and for military training. These were replaced in November by "Che" Guevara agricultural brigades. The Union of Youth Communists, with a membership of over 100,000, provides leadership and cadres for the regime's efforts among the youth and functions as a testing ground for future party members.

The new regimen is also a result of Castro's concern that low labor productivity is a major cause of Cuba's continued economic plight. With the virtual abolition of "material incentives," workers are expected to volunteer long hours of overtime. In January, private consumers and public transportation systems were affected when gasoline was added to the long list of rationed goods. Castro has emphasized the need for hard work and sacrifice, pointing out that "the revolution is the abolition of the exploitation of human labor but not the abolition of human work."

The Cult of the Guerrilla Hero

Since 1959, Castro's most important power base has been essentially the same small group from his 26th of July Movement who form the top echelon in the military and security forces. Armed forces minister Raul Castro, his vice ministers, the members of the General Staff, and virtually all the top officers, are loyal 26th of July veterans. This is also true of Interior Minister Ramiro Valdez and the other important figures in the security forces. Until the end of 1965,

Approved For Release 2006/12/18 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006300060004-5

Approved For Release 2006/12/18 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006300060004-5

however, only eleven 26 July members held posts in the 25-man party directorate. In October 1965, when Castro's "prototype party" was formalized as the Cuban Communist Party (PCC), the 26 July group emerged with six of the eight politburo posts and about two thirds of the central committee membership. Servicemen comprise at least one fifth of the party membership, which now totals 60,000.

In addition, about half of the government ministers are military officers whose rank dates from their service with Castro's guerrillas. Politburo member Juan Almeida, a semiliterate former parking lot attendant, frequently served as the acting minister of armed forces in 1967. Following the pervasive antibureaucracy drives last year, it is likely that military officers have assumed larger roles in directing the ministries.

Since late 1967, and especially since the death of "Che" Guevara in Bolivia in October, the regime has been taking measures to glorify that 26th July group. Elaborate mythologies have been contrived and folklore has been encouraged to illustrate the "heroic guerrilla" exploits of Castro, Guevara, and the other revolutionaries who fought in the Sierra Maestra against Batista. In November, the Cuban Communist Party daily, Granma, began a series of feature articles extoling the guerrilla doctors who fought in the Sierra Maestra.

Military service continues to be obligatory for males over

CASTRO

16 and is viewed as a required badge of revolutionary valor. Participation in the anti-Batista and Bay of Pigs campaigns are causes for adulation. Some civilian leaders are appearing more frequently in military attire, and even the usually dapper President Dorticos has begun to don fatigues in one of his auxiliary roles as chief of the militia. In his speech on 2 January, Castro declared that 1968 would be known as the "Year of the Heroic Guerrilla."

Political Development

During the past nine years, Fidel Castro has devoted himself with varying degrees of intensity to developing a governing apparatus of total power under his hegemony, durable governing institutions, and a definitive ideology for the revolution. While strengthening his own absolutism, he has institutionalized the regime with the hope that it will survive him.

Approved For Release 2006/12/18 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006300060004-5

Approved For Release 2006/12/18 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006300060004-5

In pursuing these objectives, Castro initially manipulated and balanced political factions and then slowly united them. In 1961, he was balancing the radicalism of the 26 July Movement with the "orthodoxy" of the "old" Communists. Later, he directed the gradual coalescence of these factions and began constructing a united revolutionary party and a government bureaucracy. This process was often tumultuous, and in March 1962 it was marked by the purge of leading "old" Communist Anibal Escalante and hundreds of his followers. Two years later, Castro resisted the 26 July group, which was pressing for another purge, and forced the pendulum back to the center. By the end of 1965, however, this group emerged in the superior position because Castro invested it with a dominant role in the party.

Through the entire process of balance and assimilation between 1961-65, there was an active and at times violent competition of ideas. Castro profited from the debates that boiled beneath him, but stayed aloof in his role as supreme arbiter.

By so elevating the martial cult of the "guerrilla hero," Castro is excluding from prominence all but his most trusted followers from the Batista struggle and a few others who joined with him at that time.

Press Discussions Muted

During the first seven years of the revolution, many aspects of the process of political development were reflected in the Cuban press. For the past two years, however, the regime has insisted that the press should not discuss substantive issues, but should only set forth official policy.

By 1961, ten of the 14 daily newspapers published in Havana before the revolution had been appropriated by the regime. The two major papers to survive were Hoy, which represented the "old" Communists, and Revolucion, the organ of the 26 July group. These two papers were the principal vehicles for the ideological debates between the two groups during the first few years of the revolution. Even after the two groups were joined in the prototype party and after the Escalante purge in 1962, Castro permitted their journalistic fencing to continue.

With the founding of the PCC in October 1965, Granma began publishing as the official party daily, replacing both Hoy and Revolucion. Unlike them, however, Granma is a typical Communist party paper--sterile and largely uncontroversial. It devotes about 40 percent of its coverage to domestic issues, but the bulk of this concerns agriculture, education, and youth activities. Periodically it carries a dull political column.

The theoretical journal Cuba Socialista was published monthly from the spring of 1961 until February 1967. It had an editorial board of five, including three "old" Communist theoreticians. Like the pre-Granma newspapers, it was frequently used by spokesmen of various groups as a vehicle for

Approved For Release 2006/12/18 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006300060004-5

Approved For Release 2006/12/18 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006300060004-5

relatively open discussions of domestic issues. It was most dramatically used in this fashion in 1964 when the dispute between "Che" Guevara and his opponents was made public in its pages.

Cuba Socialista was replaced by Pensamiento Critico--a tedious journal that is essentially a "revolutionary's Reader's Digest" of old Castro speeches and tomes by various proponents of Cuba's foreign policy. It has an editorial board of six young militants from the philosophy department at the University of Havana who were associated with Regis Debray. Unlike its predecessor, Pensamiento Critico does not discuss domestic issues.

The "Microfaction" Exposed

The exposure of a dissident "microfaction" in January was the latest example of Castro's efforts to prevent policy discussions from originating in the bureaucracy. From 24 to 26 January, the central committee of the PCC met to hear Raul Castro's elaborate charges against Anibal Escalante and a "microfactionary" group of dissidents, including central committee members Ramon Calcines and Jose Matar. Ultimately, Escalante was sentenced to a 15-year prison term, and 34 minor bureaucrats received lesser sentences. Calcines and Matar were expelled from the central committee, and the former also lost his party membership.

Escalante, who had been exiled to Czechoslovakia and the USSR after his purge in 1962, was allowed to return to Cuba in late 1964 and to retire to a state farm. According to Raul Castro, Escalante was soon busy again, leading an antiparty clique in support of the Soviet line on "all the issues" that have caused the strain in relations between Havana and Moscow. In reality, the group posed no serious threat to the regime, and its members were guilty of little more than daring to question high policy matters. Their trial was probably staged as a warning to other malcontents and dissidents that opposition to Fidel Castro's policies will not be tolerated.

The Party and State Apparatus

By the end of 1965, the party had entered its final stages of organization. It had a membership of 55,000 and an elaborate apparatus extending to all levels. Since then, it has increasingly taken command through its own organization, through the mass organizations it controls, and through the state administration (Poder Local).

Castro envisions the party as a foil and overseer to the rest of the bureaucracy and has endeavored to keep it a small "vanguard" organization. Most of its important posts are occupied by 26 of July veterans, and it has clearly become the political organ of the "guerrilla heroes."

It appears that membership will not be expanded significantly beyond the present 60,000 for the next few years, but eventually the party will probably absorb a large portion of the youths in the Union of Young Communists. The first

Approved For Release 2006/12/18 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006300060004-5

Approved For Release 2006/12/18 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006300060004-5

party congress has been postponed and, according to Castro, it will not take place before 1970.

In August 1967, politburo member Guillermo Garcia was named party chief in Oriente replacing "old" Communist Armando Acosta, who had been political boss in that eastern province since 1962. This past January, former health minister Jose Machado Ventura was appointed as the politburo's representative on the Matanzas provincial party bureau, and, in February, Major Rogelio Acevedo received a similar post in Camaguey. The assignments of these favored comandantes as personal links between Castro and the provincial party organs may be an indication of his cautious approach to the bureaucracy--even within the party.

By the end of 1967, the state administration was finally constituted throughout Cuba as an outgrowth of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), Cuba's largest mass organization with a claimed membership of 2 million. Over 5,000 assemblies were held last September for the "election" of about 22,000 local administrators for Cuba's 43 regional and 321 municipal administrations. About 18,000 of these representatives were elected from the CDRs. The CDR has served as a neighborhood watchdog apparatus and as the regime's basic administrative organ.

Outlook

Castro's first priority is to continue the "revolutionary process" and to "prepare" the youth to join in leadership with him and the "guerrilla cult."

In the meantime, there may be some "rationalists" in the bureaucracy who see advantage in the "liberal" economic and political policies that are being discussed in some East European Communist countries.

Following the exposé of the dissident "microfaction" in January, however, they will be even more reluctant to criticize the regime. In any case, they are disorganized and subject to both party controls and the scrutiny of the security forces. They pose no threat to Castro, and with the muting of political and press discussions, there is little they can do to expound their views. (CONFIDENTIAL)

* * *

Approved For Release 2006/12/18 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006300060004-5

Approved For Release 2006/12/18 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006300060004-5

Secret

Secret

Approved For Release 2006/12/18 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006300060004-5