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CUBAN DEVELOPMENTS

A high-level Soviet trade mission left for Havana on 12 December. Economic talks in Moscow by the Cuban mission headed by Che Guevara were interrupted for the second time on 13 December when Guevara left the Soviet capital for his scheduled visit to East Germany. It was announced that he would return to continue negotiations. The American Embassy in Moscow speculates that the Cuban-Soviet economic talks may have been too complicated for Guevara's delegation or that the meetings in Moscow have been unable to achieve agreement.

Talks were suspended earlier when Guevara's mission left Moscow on 16 November for negotiations in Communist China, North Korea, North Vietnam, and Mongolia. The Cuban mission had returned to Moscow on 8 December after concluding major trade and assistance agreements in Peiping and trade and exchange agreements with the Asian satellites.

The establishment of Cuban diplomatic ties with North Vietnam and Mongolia during visits to those countries by a portion of Guevara's mission suggests that Cuba may accord formal diplomatic recognition to East Germany during the visit there, leaving Albania the only bloc country unrecognized by the Castro regime. Recognition of East Germany would probably provoke a break in relations between Cuba and the Federal Republic.

On the domestic scene, the Castro regime, faced with growing but still uncoordinated resistance, is taking ever-stronger measures to combat it. Six Cubans were executed on 10 December on counterrevolutionary charges, and more executions

are expected. The civilian militia, although not invariably reliable, now rivals the regular armed forces as an instrument for suppressing dissident activity. It is composed largely of the lowest income groups, where loyalty to Castro continues strongest. The American Embassy in Havana estimated that at least 15,000 political prisoners are now in Cuban jails. They are arrested arbitrarily, confined under extremely harsh conditions, and subjected to both mental harassment and physical brutalities.

daily acts of sabotage and terrorism by opposition groups throughout the island. Militiamen in particular are frequently falling victim to the dissidents' tactics. Anti-Castro guerrilla operations have recently been under way in at least three separate locations in Las Villas and Pinar del Rio provinces. Fidel Castro is reported

to have been directing operations against a guerrilla band on the north coast of Las Villas. Many of the guerrillas are deserters from the regular Cuban Army, and some of them brought their weapons with them.

The purging of the leaders of the electrical workers' union on 12 December will at least temporarily suppress the revolt of that union against domination by the Communist-controlled Confederation of Cuban Workers. The electrical workers' protest march on the Presidential Palace on 9 December was a rare show of defiance against Communist control, and resentment will continue to smolder among organized workers. The anti-Communist leaders of

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the electrical workers sought asylum in various Latin American embassies on 13 December. Members of the electrical workers' union were evidently responsible for the bombings in Havana power plants late last month.

Che Guevara, speaking in Moscow on 10 December, declared, "Counterrevolutionary terror will be met with equal terror." In saying "We are not yet united and organized into a single party," he implied that the regime will shortly seek to fulfill this project. If carried out, this device would

further strengthen police state controls and increase the scope of Communist entrenchment. At present, the Communists have the only organized party in the country.

Meanwhile,

reported conclusion of a contract for ten Soviet AN-2 aircraft for delivery to Cuba in the first quarter of next year. These small planes, used in the Soviet Union for such jobs as rescue work and mapping, would be useful in Castro's antiguerrilla efforts.