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CUBA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Che Guevara's ten-man economic mission to Czechoslovakia, the USSR, Communist China, North Korea, and East Germany left Cuba on 21 October. On the eve of his departure, Guevara told a television audience that he was going primarily to negotiate Cuba's commercial exchange for the coming year under trade pacts with these countries. Guevara will probably seek expanded arrangements with the bloc to compensate for items that Cuba can no longer receive from the United States. However, because of the nature of Cuba's industrial plant, it may be forced to seek immediate alternative sources of supply in nonbloc countries, which are better equipped to supply Cuba's import needs.

His TV talk clearly implied efforts toward the further economic integration of Cuba with the bloc. He referred to foreign "comrades" in the Cuban Petroleum Institute "who are going to the USSR to get equipment" and implied that bloc technicians in other industries are also performing such services.

Cuba and Rumania signed a trade agreement and technical assistance protocol in Havana on 25 October, and a joint communiqué declared their intention to exchange ambassadors. The composition of the Rumanian delegation suggests that that country may provide Cuba with technical assistance for its petroleum industry.

Moscow has moved on several fronts this past week to foster the impression that there is a real danger that the US will intervene militarily in Cuba and that, in that event, the USSR stands ready to lend every assistance to Cuba. The Soviet

objectives are apparently to increase suspicion of US intentions and to stimulate some action by the neutralists in the United Nations which might put the United States in an embarrassing position.

Soviet propaganda coverage of the Cuban situation has been stepped up and now includes daily warnings of alleged American plans for "counterrevolutionary invasions," along with denunciations of US trade restrictions and of Ambassador Bonsal's recall. At the United Nations, the Soviet delegation has come out strongly in support of the Cuban complaint, which includes the charge that the US is planning to begin a large-scale invasion of the country "in a few days."

Despite these efforts to arouse concern over the possibility of US intervention in Cuba, it seems unlikely that the USSR anticipates such action. Khrushchev's threat on 9 July to use rockets "if necessary" in defense of the Castro government in the event of US aggression was so qualified as not actually to constitute a commitment to any specific course of action, and it has never been repeated. Furthermore, TASS quoted Khrushchev as saying in a press interview on 25 September, when asked about his rocket threat,

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"...you needn't worry.....Since America does not intend to attack Cuba, this means that there is no danger whatsoever."

Soviet bloc military shipments to Cuba thus far include small arms, machine guns, anti-aircraft artillery, and tanks. More shipments are expected. The quantity of this equipment is clearly excessive for Cuban internal needs and will permit release of Cuba's Western-manufactured weapons for clandestine military support elsewhere in the hemisphere, should this be the Cuban intention.

In view of the lack of qualified personnel in Cuba, the Castro regime will be required to rely heavily on the Soviet bloc for training the Cuban military in the use and maintenance of the new weapons and military-related items such as communications equipment and radar. Increasing numbers of Cubans will probably be sent to the bloc for training, particularly if the Castro regime follows through with its apparent decision to build up a qualified "defense force" based on Soviet bloc equipment.

The Cuban Government responded to the new US export restrictions by increasing its propaganda attacks on the United States for this "new act of aggression." On 25 October, most of the remaining American-owned businesses in Cuba were nationalized.

Most other Latin American governments appear to feel that the US action was justified. Official circles in Mexico and Chile, however, are critical and feel it will give Castro an important propaganda advantage in the hemisphere. Other governments, while sympathetic to the US position, have expressed concern over what they expect will

be a strong negative reaction among the Latin American public.

Some of these governments may also see the move as obviating the need for their own participation in any future multilateral sanctions against the Castro regime. Many Latin American leaders prefer to regard the Cuban issue as a bilateral problem between the United States and Cuba, and the Ecuadorean foreign minister frankly explained that a number of Latin American governments are too weak to run ahead of public opinion on this issue.

The Castro regime, which has been embarrassed by a number of defections this year among Cuban officials abroad, is apparently recalling diplomatic and consular officers to screen them. Officials in Brazil and Mexico are already returning home, and more will probably follow. A decree of 27 September removed job tenure rights from foreign service personnel. It is becoming apparent that those officials regarded as "reliable" for foreign assignment are those who unquestioningly accept and are willing to promote the Communist position on Cuban and international issues. The Cuban ambassador appointed to Paris on 20 October, for instance, has a long record of Communist associations.

Scattered opposition groups continue active inside Cuba despite elaborate government efforts to give the impression they have been wiped out.

counterrevolutionary activity and acts of sabotage in many parts of the country. Widespread rumors in Oriente Province suggest that a new "invasion force" of about 80 persons landed on the north coast on or about 20 October, and increased government military

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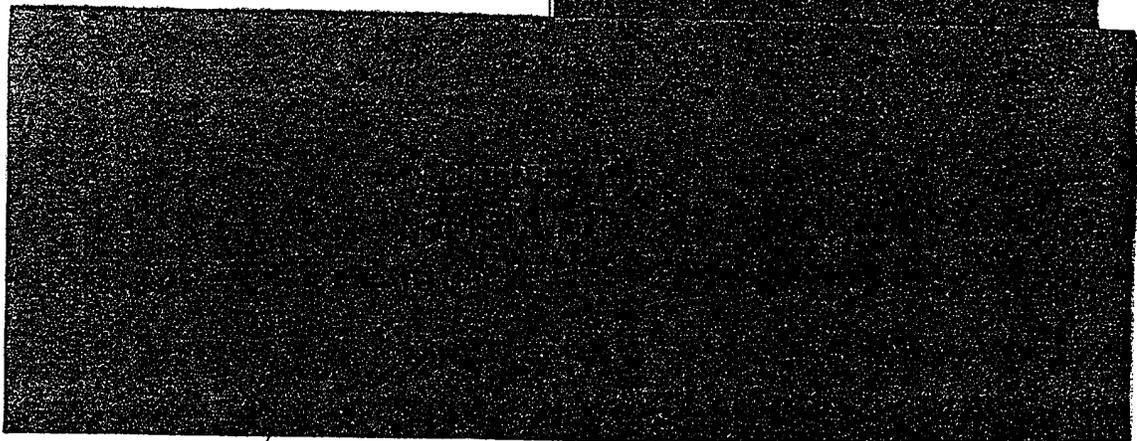
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activity noted in that province lends support to reports of continued guerrilla activity. There is still no indication, however, that the opposition has the unity and leadership necessary to become a genuine threat to the regime.

In the cities, tenants are reported to have reacted with enthusiasm to the 15 October urban reform law, which offers them the prospect of becoming homeowners. The government probably calculated that the solidification of its support among lower income groups would more than compensate for the further alienation of the landlords, many of whom will lose their sole source of income.

 the formation of "revolutionary watch committees" throughout the country. They are evidently in response to Fidel Castro's call on 28 September for the establishment of a block warden informant network in towns and cities as another instrument to combat "counterrevolutionary intrigue." The Cuban Army G-2 is to have "complete responsibility" for the committee.



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