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Castro's Subversive Capabilities in Latin America

Submitted by the
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE
Concurred in by the
UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD
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**Castro's Subversive Capabilities
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CASTRO'S SUBVERSIVE CAPABILITIES IN LATIN AMERICA

THE PROBLEM

To describe and evaluate Castro's capabilities, with Soviet help, for carrying out subversion and sabotage in Latin America after satisfaction of all US conditions relative to the withdrawal of strategic weapons systems from Cuba and a consequent US commitment not to invade.

NOTE: In this estimate we have considered Castro's raw capabilities, taking note of, but not working out in detail, US and Latin American capabilities for counteraction.

SUMMARY

A. The dangerously unstable situation that prevails throughout much of Latin America is the product of fundamental inequities and historic circumstances; it is not the creation of Castro and the Soviets. Castro's efforts, with Soviet help, to exploit this situation by means of subversion and sabotage have not produced significant results. Propaganda exploitation of Castro and Cuba as symbols of revolution has probably been more effective to date than other subversive activities. Castro's influence in Latin America had waned by the time of the missile base crisis and was further reduced by the revelation that he had accepted Soviet strategic missile bases on Cuban soil and by the manner of the Soviet decision to withdraw them.

B. Implementation of an agreement between the US and the USSR whereby the strategic weapons systems would be withdrawn and the US committed not to intervene in Cuba with force will leave Castro with a new immunity and a greater freedom

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for subversive actions throughout Latin America. The extent to which this potential is realized will depend upon the situation in Cuba, Soviet policy toward Cuba, and the policies and performance of the other Latin American governments and of the US with respect to the Castro threat. There are many targets in the hemisphere vulnerable to Castro-Communist subversion and sabotage, and the Soviets are likely to assist Castro in reaching them by contributing both to his security at home and to his capability for action overseas. As in the period before the missile base crisis, the effect of Castro's subversive activities will depend not only upon his capabilities but upon the attractiveness of the Cuban example and the willingness of the American governments to take determined counteraction. This willingness will probably be weakened by fulfillment of the US commitment not to invade Cuba.

C. We have examined how Castro's subversive potential would be affected by alternative courses of Soviet policy regarding Cuba: (1) virtual withdrawal of support; (2) continuation of economic and military support ranging from present up to substantially increased levels. We believe that course (1) would considerably reduce Castro's subversive potential, and that the Soviets are unlikely to elect it. We conclude that Soviet course (2) would maintain Castro's potential for subversive action at least at present levels or actually raise it to the point where he could undertake amphibious and/or airborne subversive operations against close-in targets.

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THE ESTIMATE

I. CASTRO'S SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES BEFORE THE MISSILE BASE CRISIS¹

Aims

1. From the time of his accession to power Fidel Castro has sought to gain acceptance of the Cuban revolution as a model for others and of himself as the leader of revolutionary forces throughout Latin America. He has constantly sought to foment revolutions in other Latin American States. Moreover, Castro has generally had the support of the Sino-Soviet Bloc in the pursuit of these aims.

Means

2. Castro began his career of sponsorship for revolutions in Latin America in 1959 with landings of small rebel forces in Nicaragua, Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti. None of these were successful and he turned to other means.

3. From the beginning, propaganda has been one of the principal instruments on which Castro has relied. In addition to the main transmissions of Radio Havana for external listeners, which have had a great deal of revolutionary content, he has beamed special programs devised to stimulate revolutionary action to each of half a dozen selected countries.² A major effort has been made through *Prensa Latina*, the Cuban news service, to disseminate Castro-Communist propaganda. Printed propaganda has also been sent from Cuba into most other Latin American States, and Cuban diplomatic missions and personnel have actively disseminated it. Students returning from indoctrination in Cuba have helped establish Cuban Institutes for Friendship among Peoples which have functioned as propaganda outlets.

4. Thousands of Latin Americans have been brought to Cuba; about 1,200 foreign trainees are believed to be there now. Many hundreds have been trained in revolutionary techniques and guerrilla warfare. Cuba has been made a main transit point for travel between Latin America and the Bloc.

5. Financial support has been provided by Cuba to revolutionary groups in a number of countries, although the cases on which we have reports involved relatively small sums of money. Arms shipments have

¹See Annex A.

²Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic.

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also been reported, but the evidence is unclear as to quantities shipped and the extent of Cuba's role in these transactions. We believe that there is an extensive agent net in Latin America directed from Havana.

6. Castro has associated himself with revolutionary activist groups throughout Latin America. In most cases these have been Communist, but where the regular Communist Party favored a legal or parliamentary line he has not hesitated to support dissident Communist groups, e.g., in Brazil, and non-Communist revolutionaries, e.g., in Guatemala and El Salvador. In some cases he has sponsored new revolutionary organizations, e.g., in Panama, Colombia, and Peru. In Chile he has endorsed a popular front coalition made up of Communist and moderate leftists.

Evaluation

7. Instances of financial and material support sent by Cuba to revolutionaries in other countries which have come to our attention are probably only a part of the total effort. Even so, the effort seems to have been relatively small and ineffective. Yet along with the political and psychological stimulus which Castro's influence has provided, Cuban subversive activities have perceptibly strengthened activist revolutionary groups. Dangerous situations subject to exploitation by Castro and the Communists exist in a number of Latin American countries— notably Venezuela, Brazil, British Guiana, the Dominican Republic, and Bolivia. These dangers arise from political and social tensions which existed long before Castro came to power. They might lie dormant for some time; but with Castro as a potential detonator, they are more likely to blow up. The detonative compound will exist as long as Castroism survives, whatever may happen to Castro personally.

8. The most dangerous aspect of Castroism has been its broad appeal as a symbol of revolutionary change and nationalist assertiveness in Latin America. Propaganda from Cuba has taken advantage of this fact and has almost certainly been a more important influence in the Latin American situation than Castro's other subversive activities. During 1960 and 1961 Castroism became a force to be reckoned with politically in a number of Latin American countries. Certain governments felt obliged to move in the direction of neutralist and leftist positions. This influence waned, however, after Castro identified himself with the Bloc in late 1961. Nevertheless, the appeal to Castro's movement continued to be a source of major concern to almost all governments and seriously restricted their willingness to associate themselves, at least publicly, with the US.

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II. CASTRO'S SUBVERSIVE POTENTIAL IN THE AFTERMATH OF AN AGREEMENT UNDER WHICH THE SOVIETS WOULD WITHDRAW THEIR STRATEGIC MISSILES AND THE US GIVE ASSURANCES THAT IT WOULD NOT INVADE CUBA

9. Castro's subversive capabilities—and his disposition to use them—will be enhanced by the sense of security provided by such sophisticated weapons as are retained in Cuba after the withdrawal of Soviet strategic missiles. The IL-28 bombers, if retained, and other modern equipment noted in Annex B, would be important in this regard. A US commitment not to invade Cuba will further strengthen his sense of immunity from reprisal and almost certainly encourage him to intensify subversive activities in other Latin American countries.

Response of Castro Supporters to Missile Base Crisis

10. Castro's supporters throughout Latin America, with few though important exceptions (e.g., sabotage of oil facilities in Venezuela), failed to respond to the missile base crisis with effective acts of sabotage or with impressive public demonstrations. Two important limiting factors should be taken into account in judging this response, however. US action to alert Latin American governments led them to make extensive advance preparation, including deployment of security forces and the roundup of suspects, a condition of readiness which is unlikely to be maintained indefinitely. There also may have been some uncertainty among the activist followers of Castro whether they should make their big effort in response to the announcement of the US blockade, or wait for the anticipated US invasion. Moscow's apparent failure to provide guidance may have contributed to the confusion. It is our judgment, however, that the response to Castro's appeal for attacks on the US and its friends indicates that his power to command revolutionary action, at least in the circumstances of the missile base crisis, is limited.

Support Which Castro Can Expect in the Future

11. The range of Castro's support has been, we believe, considerably narrowed by events since Castro declared himself a Communist. Revelation of the fact that he had allowed the Soviets to establish offensive bases under exclusive Soviet control has alienated many non-Communist nationalists, genuine neutralists, and even revolutionaries seeking social and economic betterment. San Tiago Dantas, formerly Foreign Minister under President Goulart and an author of Brazil's nonalignment policy, and leading Mexican officials have publicly expressed their disenchantment.

12. The activist revolutionaries are probably the only important force on which Castro can now count, but even their support has apparently been rendered less effective by differences on the question of Soviet relations with Castro and with Latin American Communist parties.

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Castro's Resources for Continued Subversive Activity

13. *Arms.* (See Annex B.) Castro has substantial stocks of arms. In addition to Soviet Bloc materiel there are stores of arms inherited from the Batista regime not being used by Castro forces and available for distribution outside Cuba. In the past he has apparently been hampered in his efforts to use arms for subversive purposes by problems of transport and delivery. He has at his disposal, however, 11 IL-14 transports belonging to Cubana airlines which could be used to deliver arms under certain circumstances. The IL-28's now in Cuba are inappropriate for subversive purposes. However, they could be used for air drops. Cuba has many small craft suitable for infiltration of men and arms. The 6 Khronshtadt subchasers, 16 P-6 motor torpedo boats, and 12 Komar missile boats obtained from the Bloc could also be used for arms deliveries. If the projected trawler base is built up, trawlers—both Cuban and Soviet—could be used for arms deliveries. If Soviet submarines call at the trawler base or at other Cuban ports, they, too, could be used in support of subversive activities. We see no evidence that Cuba has or is developing a sophisticated amphibious warfare capability, and all the means of delivery of arms by sea noted above would be vulnerable to precautionary measures by Latin American military and naval forces.

14. *Propaganda apparatus.* Castro's propaganda machine remains intact. For the time being, however, his diplomatic missions are likely to find it harder to disseminate propaganda than in the past, both because of new precautions by local governments and because of a reduction in the numbers of cooperative volunteers outside the organized Communist groups.

15. *Money and equipment.* Despite differences between Castro and the USSR concerning dismantling of the missile bases, we believe that the Soviets will continue to supply Castro with money, supplies, and equipment for subversive activity. The Soviets have certainly supplied Castro with sophisticated instruments of intelligence collection, sabotage, and clandestine communications.

16. *Organization.* The organization of Castro's subversive assets throughout Latin America was shown by the recent crisis to be loose and otherwise faulty. We estimate that Castro will make a strong effort to strengthen and improve it, and that he will continue to receive support in this effort from the Soviet apparatus, both in Cuba itself, where the Soviet Ambassador is a veteran officer of the KGB, and in other important centers of Soviet activity such as Mexico City and Montevideo.

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Other Factors on Which Castro's Subversive Capability Will Depend

17. If the US and USSR reach and implement the agreement stated in the problem Castro will gain an immunity which he lacked before the missile base crisis. He will, furthermore, still have most of the arms and equipment which were delivered in the post-July buildup, as well as enhanced capabilities provided by accelerated training. Presumably his enemies will have about the same, or less, freedom to engage in propaganda, sabotage, support for resistance activities, and other actions designed to overthrow Castro than they had before the crisis—almost certainly not more. Unless Castro is gravely endangered by internal political and economic problems, there is no reason to believe that anti-Castro activities are any more likely to jeopardize his position than they did before the crisis.

18. *Situation in Cuba.* Castro's ability to engage in subversive activities will be influenced significantly by the strength and stability of his position at home. Heightened political and economic difficulties in Cuba would restrict Castro's subversive effort, while the more secure he is at home, the more freedom and strength he is likely to have for subverting other governments and re-establishing his prestige and influence. Castro's position in Cuba will depend in part on his own policies, but is likely to depend even more upon those of the Soviets.

19. *Alternative Soviet policies.* There are several courses of action with respect to Cuba which the Soviets are likely to consider. Some leaders may argue that the whole policy of economic and military support for Castro should be abandoned along with the plan for the deployment of strategic missiles in Cuba. We believe, however, that the Soviet stake in Cuba as an ally and as a Soviet center in Latin America is still too high to abandon. The stake in Castro as a person, however, is questionable. If the Soviets did make a decision to withdraw support either from Castro or from Cuba, we believe that Cuban capability for subversion in Latin America would be greatly reduced, at least for a time. This capability would be reduced more in the case of the Soviets' withdrawing support from Cuba than in the case of their abandonment of Castro alone.

20. An alternative course would be for the Soviets to continue to extend economic and military assistance. Such assistance could range all the way from the amounts necessary to maintain Cuba in its present condition, including support of the expanded military establishment, to substantial increases. Such a policy would probably reduce considerably Castro's internal problems and thus give him additional freedom to engage in external subversion and sabotage. Additions to Castro's stocks of small arms would not in themselves change his capability for subversive activity, as he already has supplies of surplus arms. However, if the Soviets were to provide substantial additional air and

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sealift capability, the Cubans would be able to mount large-scale subversive interventions in neighboring countries. Furthermore, whatever degree of success is achieved in improving Cuba's position and in expanding its physical resources, Cuba's net capability for subversion and sabotage will in the last analysis largely be determined by the overall situation in Latin America.

21. We do not believe that Castro or the Soviets can yet foresee what the effects of the recent crisis will be over the long term on their relationship. The crisis has probably created difficulties of a political and psychological nature that neither of them can readily solve, however determined they may be to do so. Castro may have been moved by the treatment he has received at the hands of the Soviets to consider modifying his relationship with them and seeking to improve his relations with the OAS and possibly even the US. We believe, however, that he is unlikely to find feasible ways of reducing his dependence upon the USSR. The Soviets certainly must consider that they have effective means of exercising control over Castro. Furthermore, his repeated assertions of continued loyalty to Marxism-Leninism make it unlikely that he is seriously contemplating a restoration of relations with the OAS, or that he could succeed if he tried.

22. *Policy of other American nations.* Castro's subversive capabilities will be greatly influenced by the policies and actions of other Latin American nations, as by those of the US. We believe that the high state of security alert that has prevailed since 22 October and the show of unity that marked the recent crisis are unlikely to last. There is sure to be a revival of nationalist sentiments. On balance, however, we believe that the prospects for countersubversive action by Latin American States, on their own and in conjunction with the US, are improved. Many responsible Latin Americans will have interpreted recent events to mean that firm and united action can be effective against the Soviet threat from Cuba. However, Latin American governments will probably be less willing to take coordinated action against Communist inroads if the US commits itself not to invade Cuba.

Likely Future Targets for Cuban Sabotage

23. The extent of Castro's capabilities for sabotage and other clandestine activity in Latin America will depend upon the complicated factors noted above. Whatever his capabilities are, he will not be at a loss for targets against which to use them. Some of the more obvious targets are:

a. *US missions and personnel.* US missions and personnel all over Latin America were designated as targets for attack in the various calls for action which went out during the recent crisis. Action against

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such targets has a primarily political and propaganda value to Castro in that it tends to show public opposition to US policy. It is also relatively easy for Castro to promote attacks against official US installations in a crisis situation and to get help from all the various elements which are opposed to American influence in the area. Future attacks may be anticipated in situations in which Castro feels that the public resentment of US policy exists or can be stirred up.

b. *Physical targets vulnerable to a limited sabotage effort.* Prime targets for sabotage will be mining, industrial, and business installations in which there is a large proportion of US capital, which are otherwise associated with the US, or which are so important to the local economy that damage to them would create difficulties for governments which are anti-Castro and cooperating with the US. Oil facilities in Venezuela, including the oil and water pipelines to the refineries on the Paraguana Peninsula, and similar facilities are likely to be chosen as targets for Cuban sabotage. Installations for the handling of Venezuelan iron ore are also likely objectives. US installations in Panama might be attacked.

c. Port and communications facilities are generally vulnerable to sabotage and are appealing targets to Cubans and other Latin American Communists particularly in countries which are cooperating with the US and whose communications media are taking an anti-Castro line. Telephone, telegraph, radio and television facilities, and most public utilities, particularly electric power and transformer stations, are potential targets. Selection of targets for sabotage will depend on the importance of particular facilities but even more on the varying access of Castroites and Communists to them.

d. *Political targets susceptible to exploitation.* Political instability throughout Latin America, in almost every case characterized by pressures from below upon relatively conservative and generally anti-Communist governments, provide Castro with opportunities for subversive political activity. Particularly unstable situations include the following:

- (1) *Venezuela*, where Communist-inspired disorders have been kept in check by the government, but where continued Communist and leftist violence may lead the military to take control. In a country such as Venezuela, where the stability of an anti-Castro and anti-Communist government depends heavily upon one man, assassination is another danger.
- (2) *Nicaragua*, where Communist-led groups, in anticipation of coming elections, may seek to incite or exploit violence against the Somoza regime.
- (3) *Guatemala*, where President Ydigoras' position is weak and uncertain.

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- (4) *The Dominican Republic*, where the problems of political reconstruction after a generation of dictatorship have proved almost more than the caretaker government can handle, and where some political groupings amenable to Castro's influence are seeking to gain a footing.
- (5) *Bolivia*, where the struggle for dominance within the ruling MNR Party between the moderates and those on the far left is ready-made for exploitation by Castro.
- (6) *Brazil*, where Communists have penetrated the government and military to some limited extent, the tide of nationalist and anti-US feeling is strong, and depressed socio-economic conditions and inefficient government administration provide Castro many opportunities, especially in the northeast.

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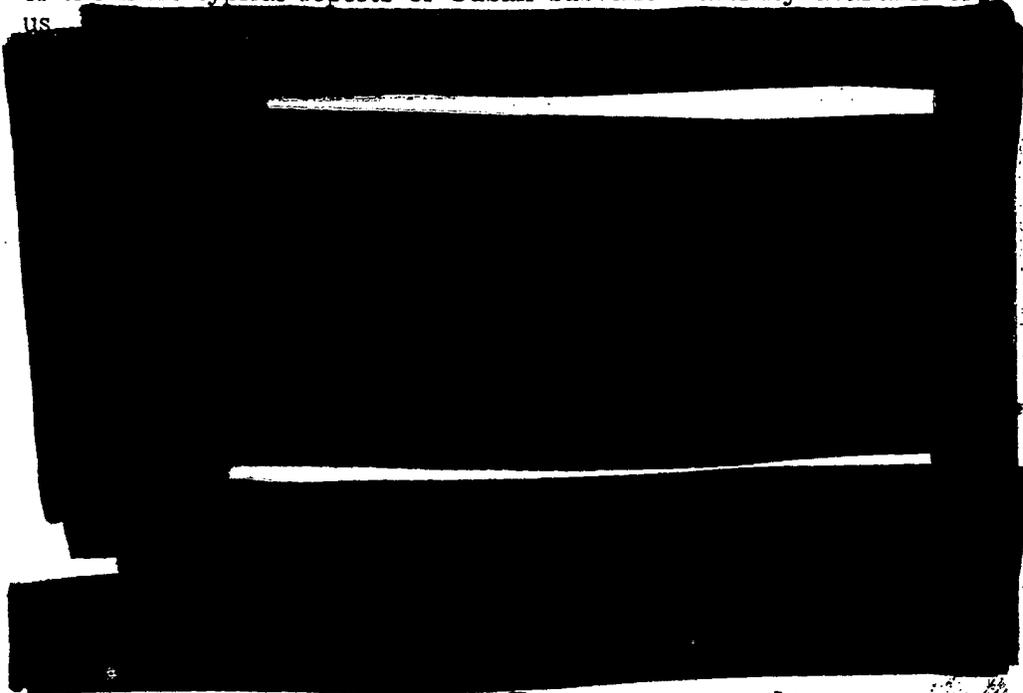
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ANNEX A

HIGHLIGHTS OF CUBAN SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES IN
OTHER LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES TO DATE

1. Cuban subversive activities of one sort or another have been directed toward virtually every other Latin American State. Cuban Embassies have been without exception centers for propaganda and efforts to cultivate receptive local groups, whether they be Castroite, regular Communist, leftist, or simply disgruntled with the existing regime.³ The Cuban Embassy is commonly a disbursing office for subversive purposes. Radio propaganda from Havana has been and is being beamed at each of the Latin American States, sometimes tailored to have particular local impact. Sympathetic nationals from the other Latin American States have been encouraged and given financial support to come to Cuba for varying lengths of time for training, goodwill visits, or for purposes of instruction and coordination of subversive programs.

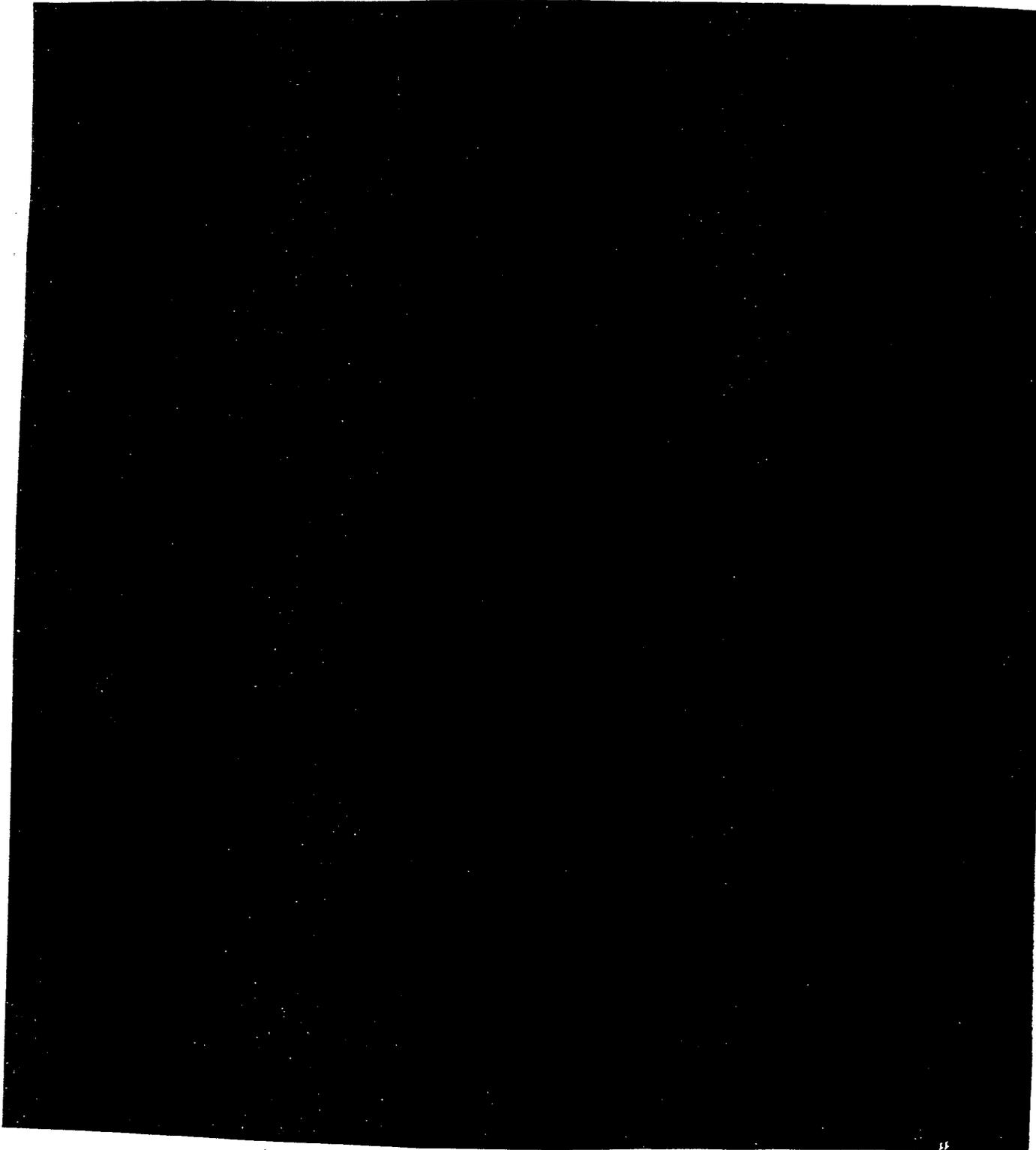
2. The above represents a general pattern. There are, of course, significant variations and different degrees of effort, depending on how Castro's regime views the importance and vulnerability of the target country. The following represents a summary, country by country, of the most typical reports of Cuban subversive activity available to us.



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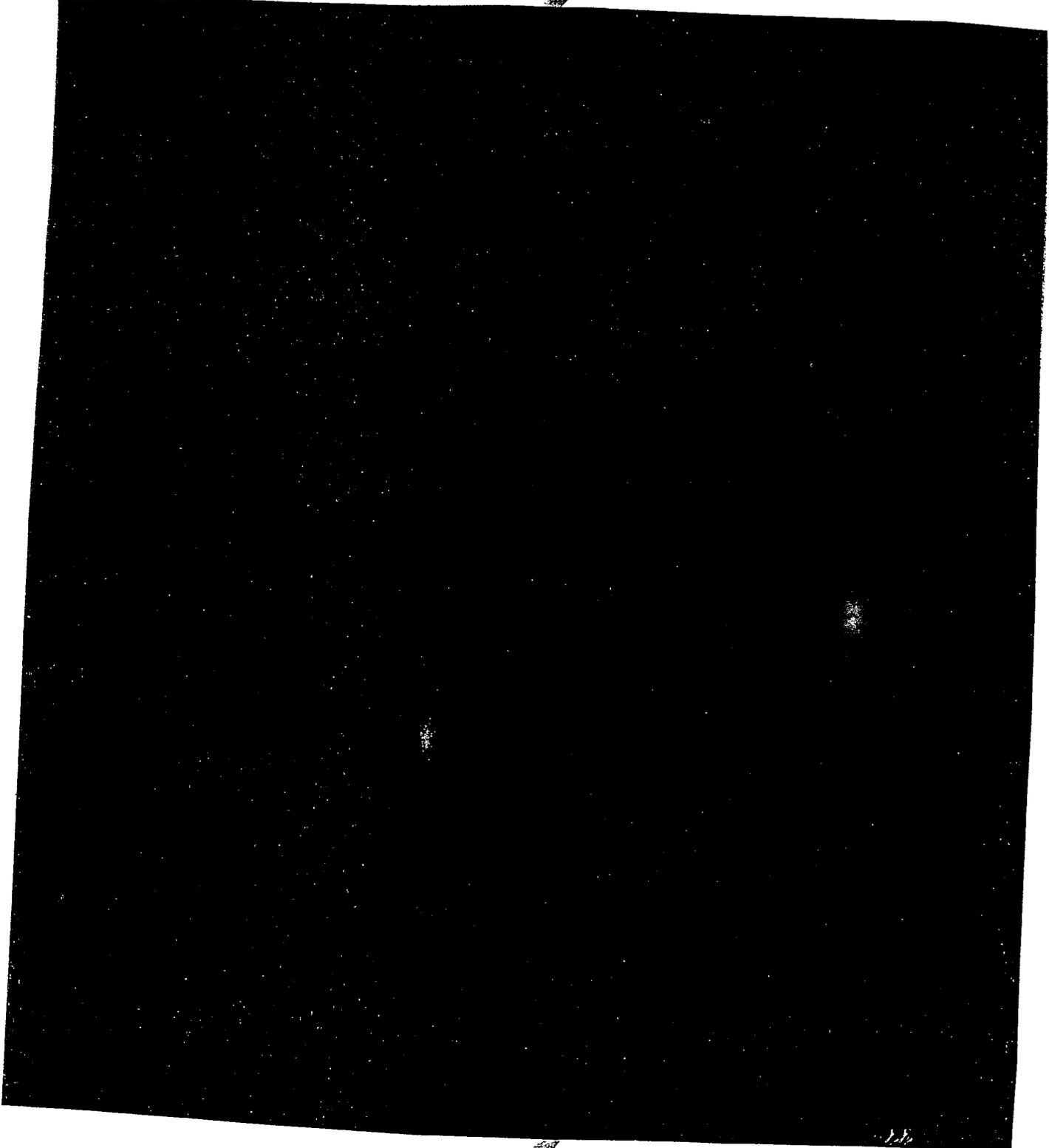
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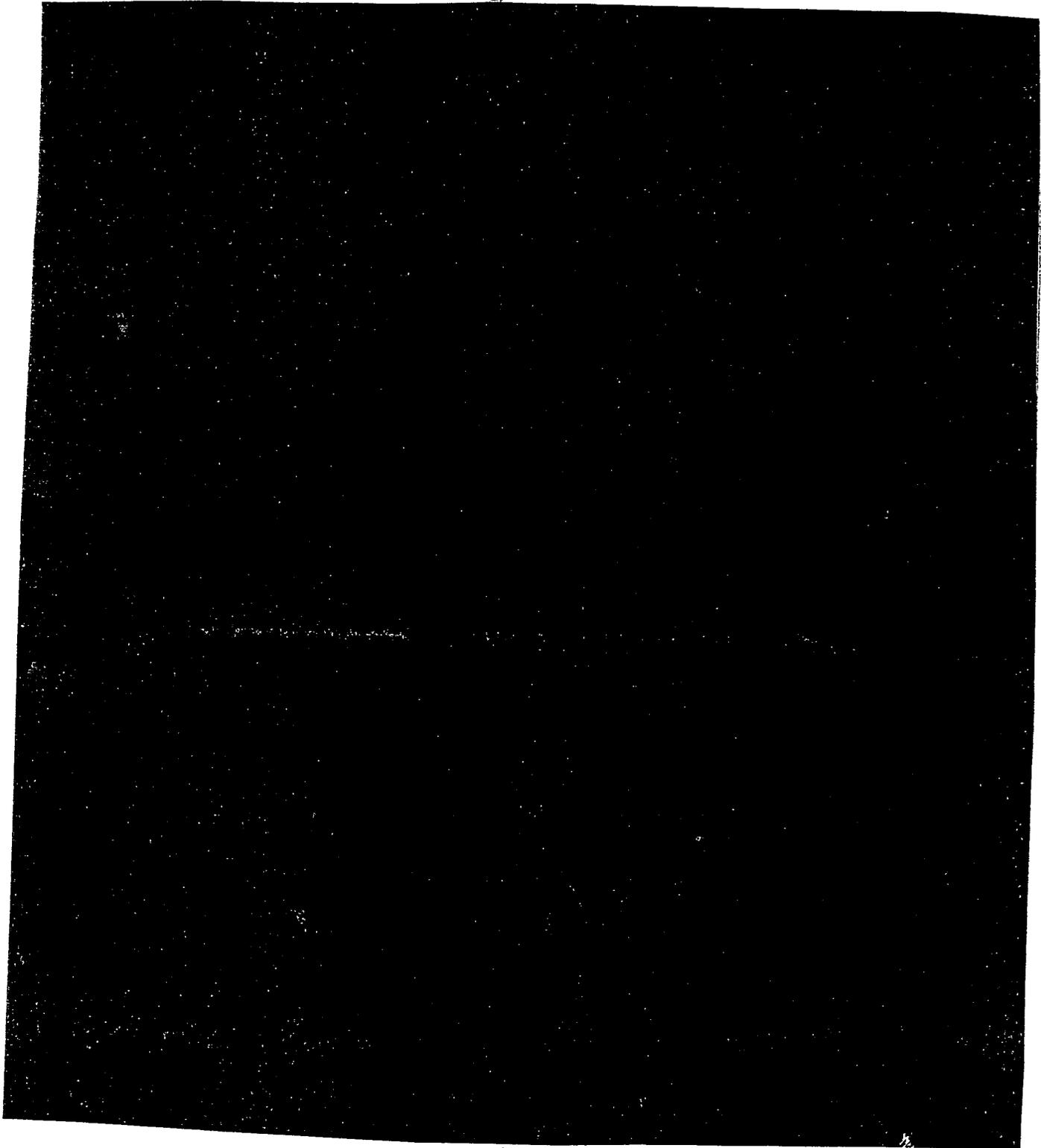


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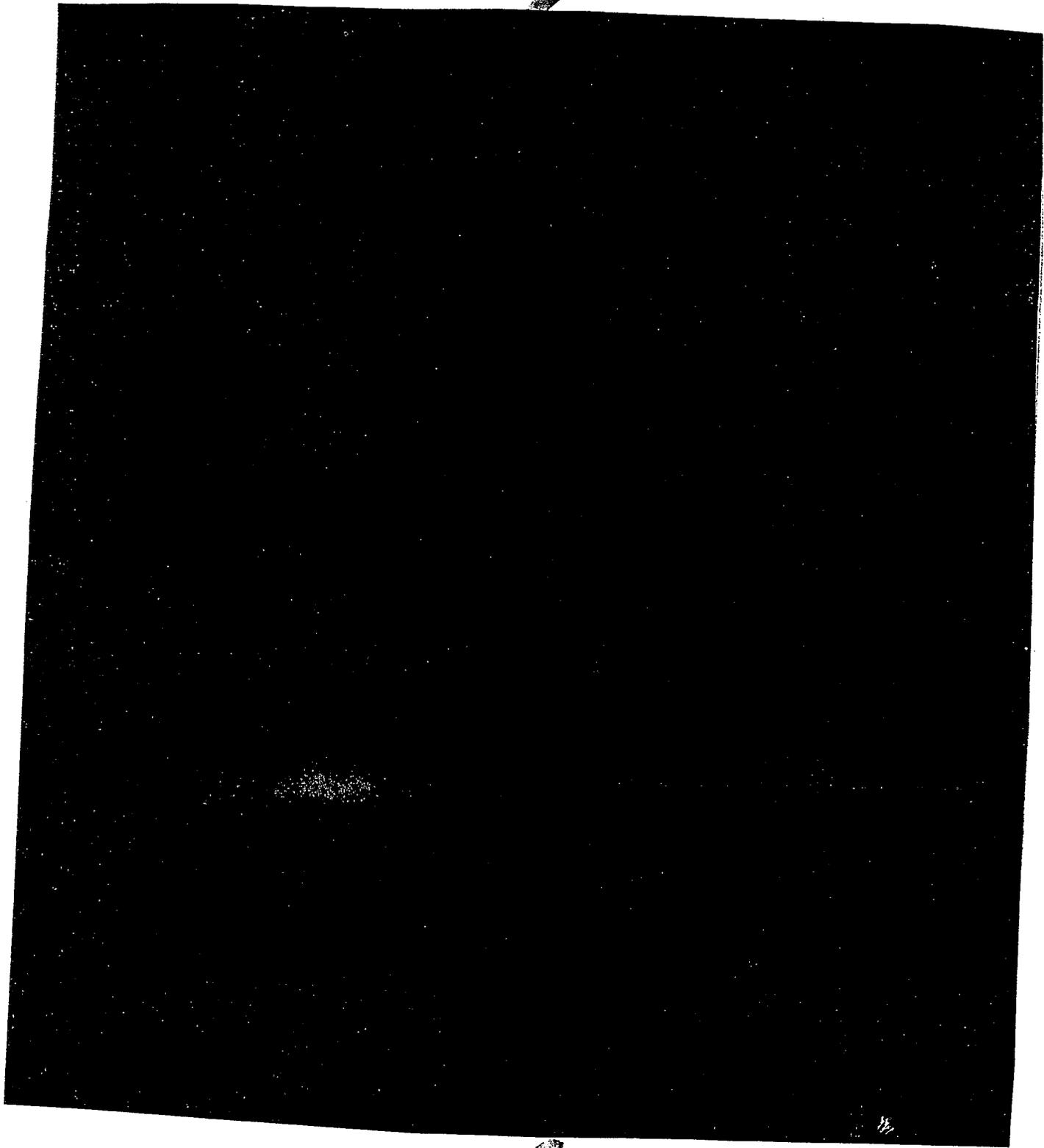
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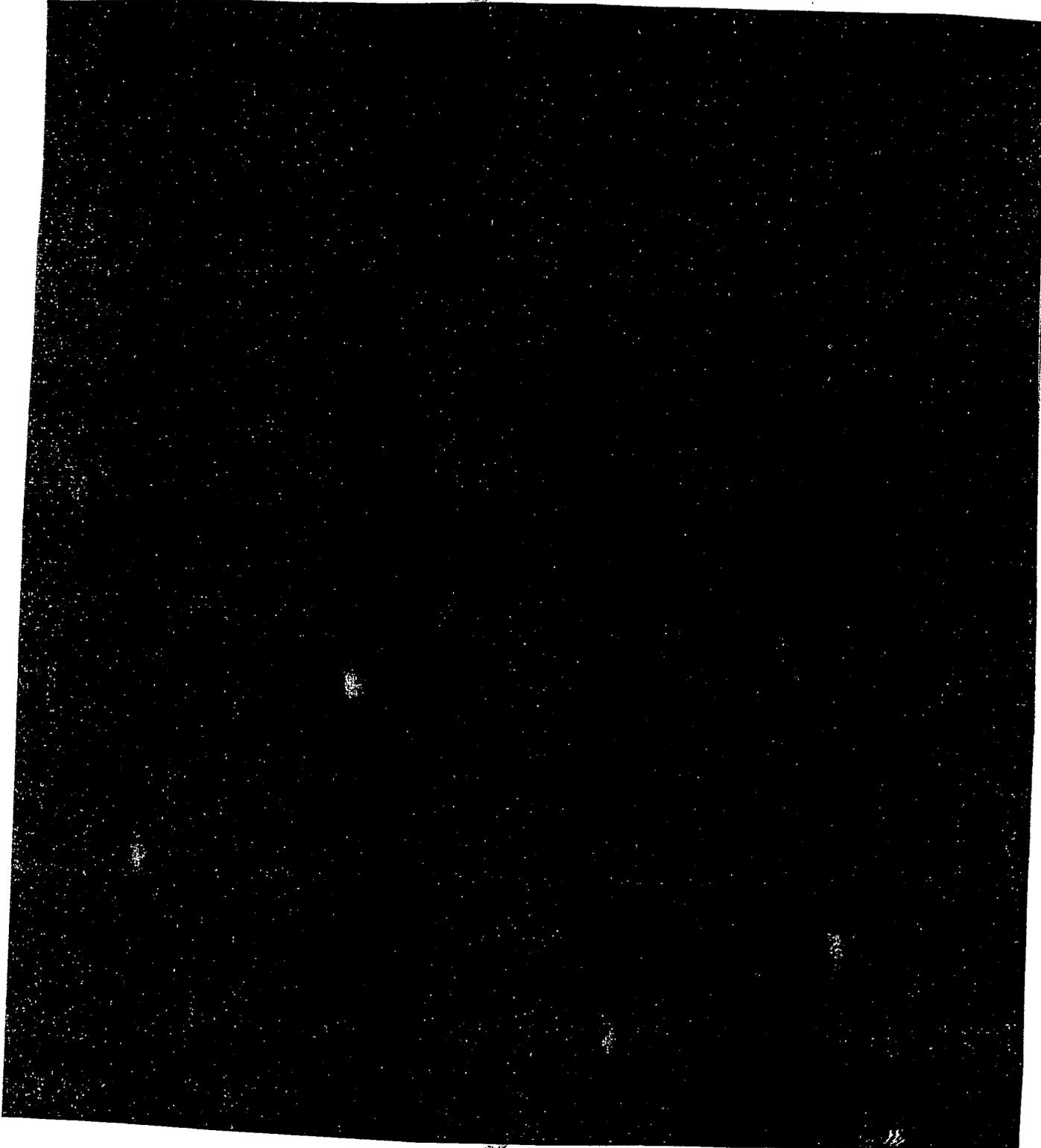


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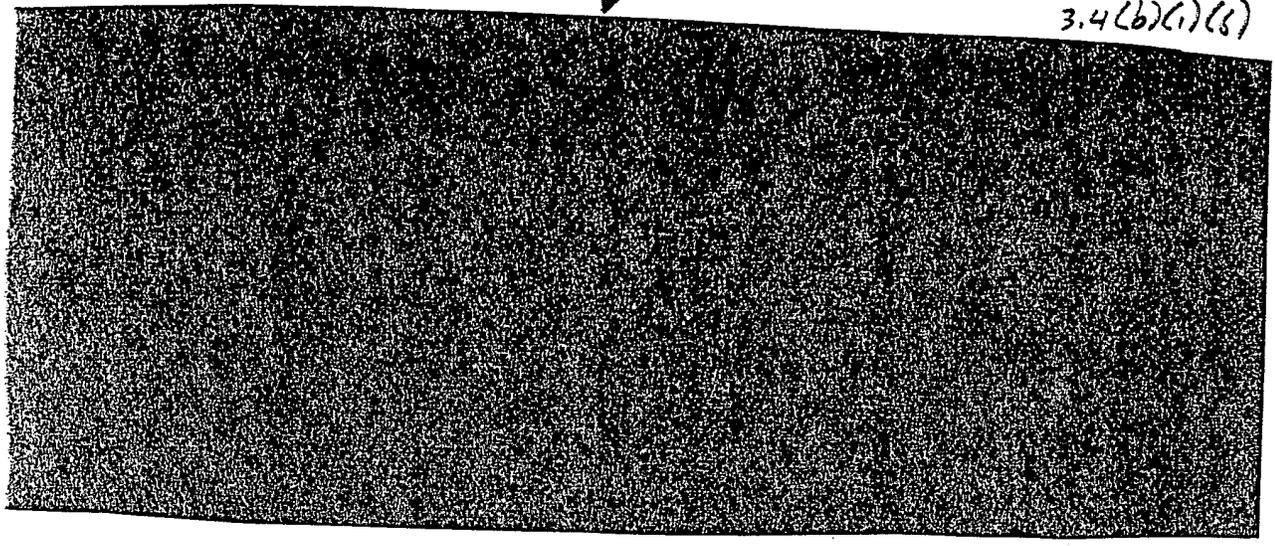


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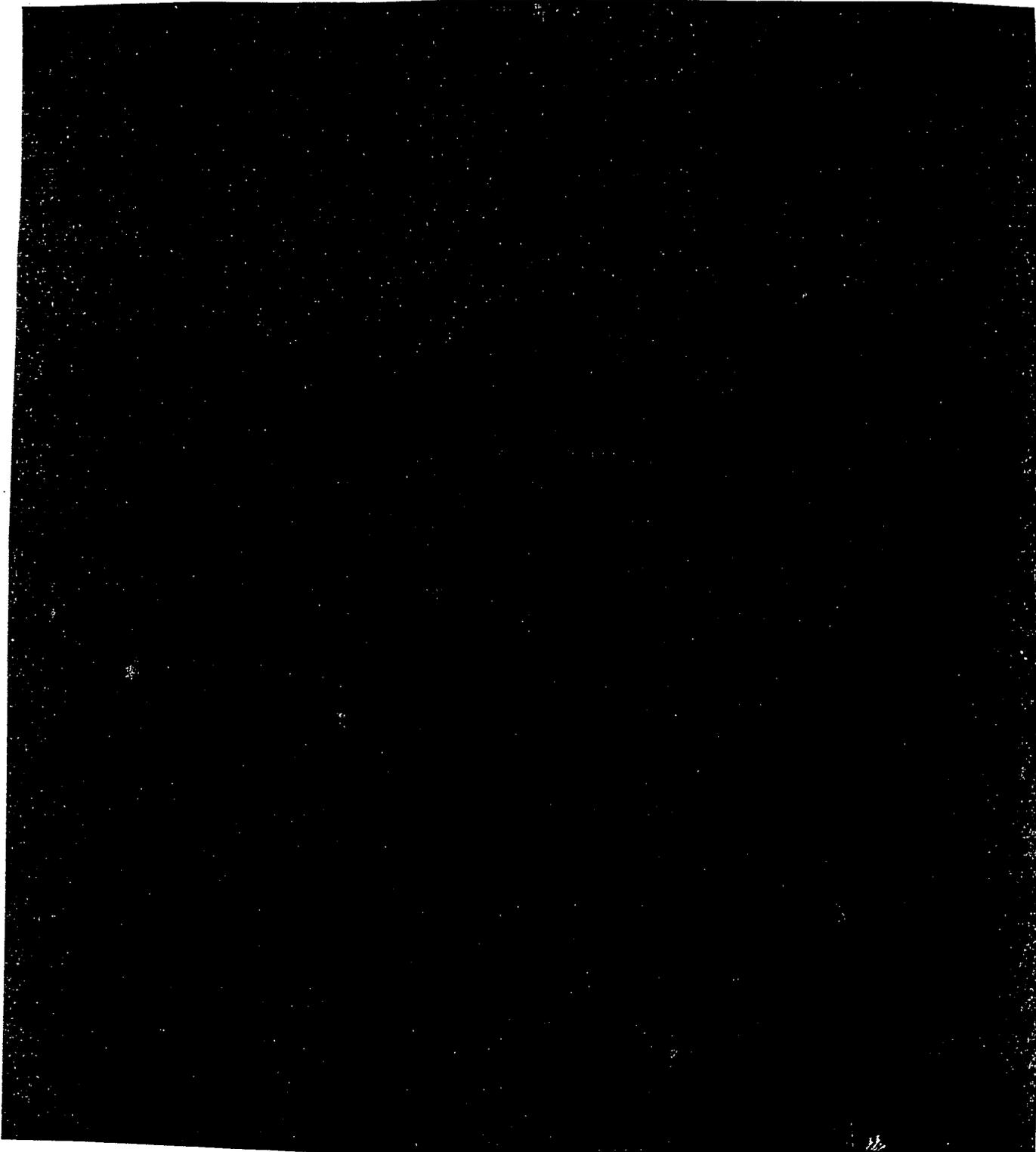
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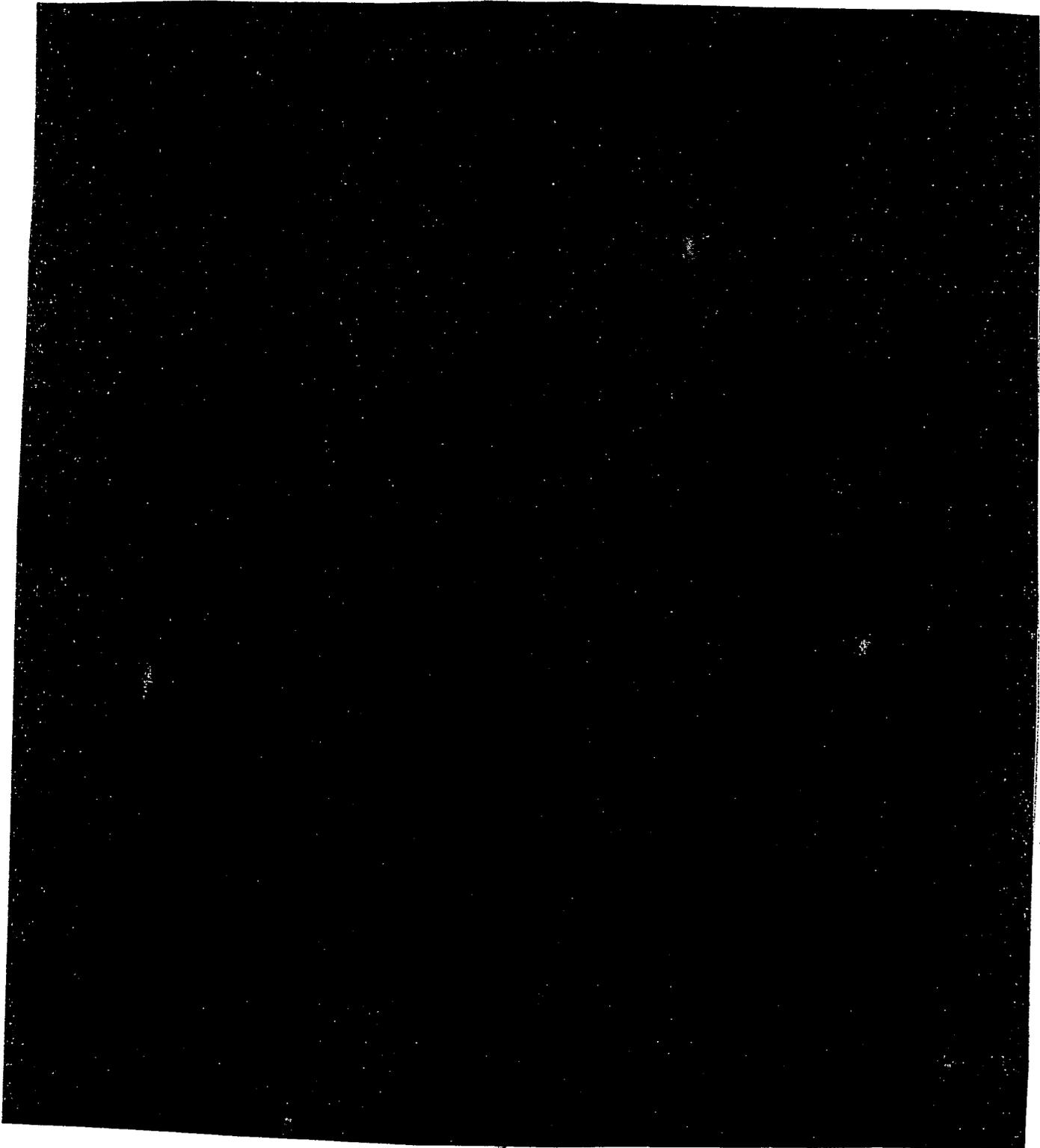
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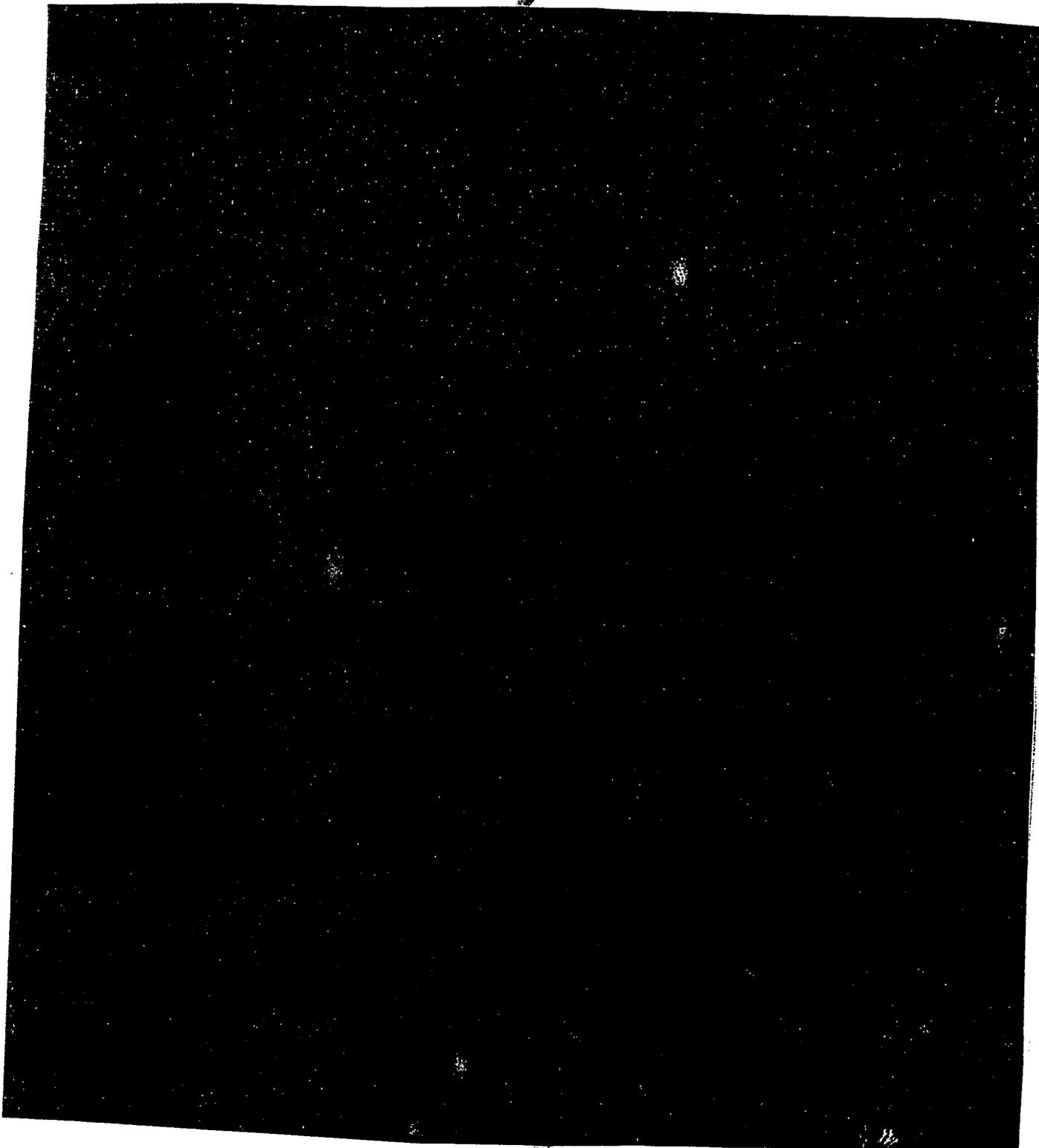
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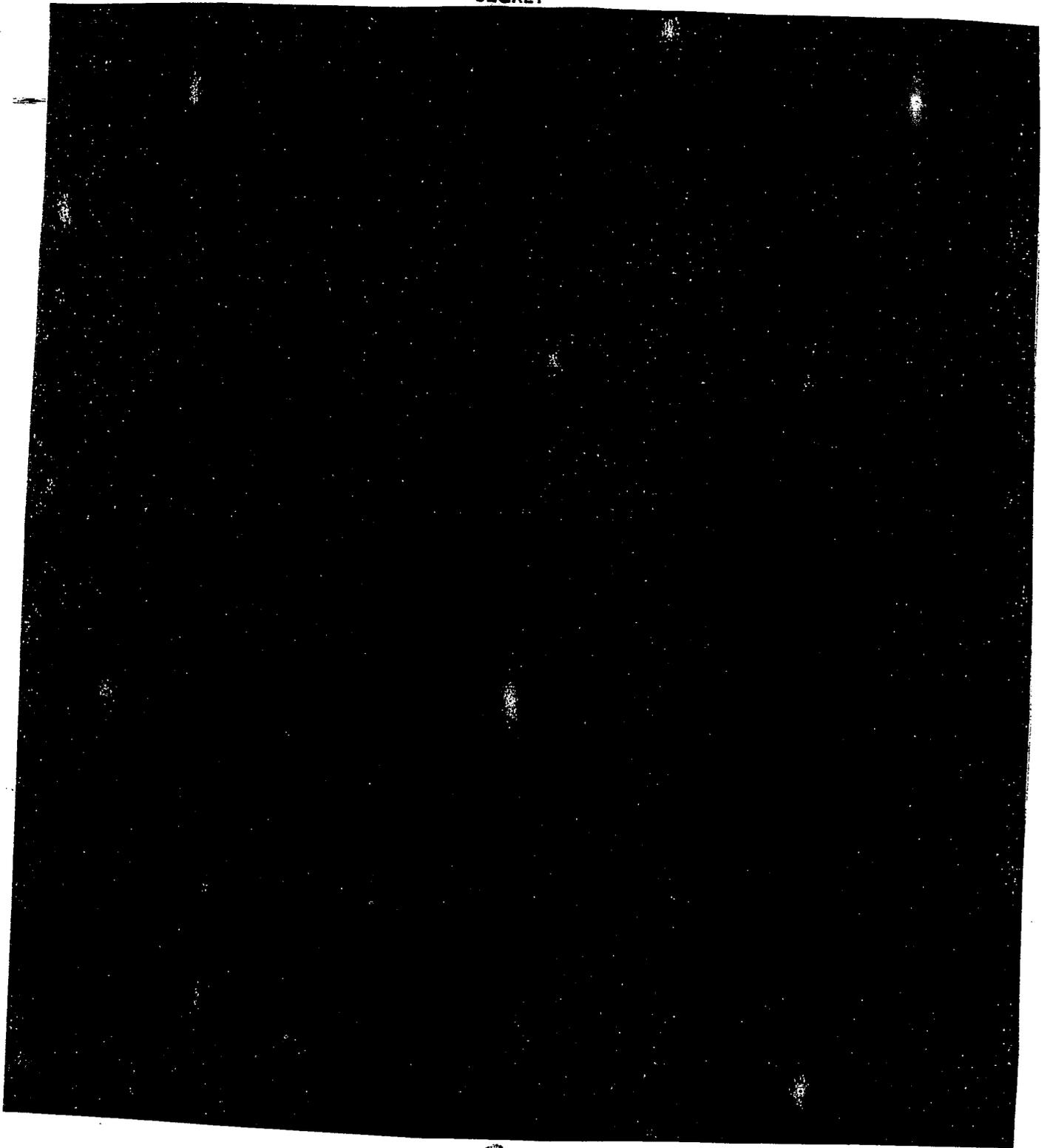


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