

STAFF NOTES:

Latin American Trends

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Ecuador: Reopening the Political Prisoner Controversy

The military regime's hypersensitivity to opposition seems undiminished by its critics' new and increasingly credible charges of government harassment. In fact, the government has resorted to a little-used tactic in exiling the national director of the Conservative Party, Julio Cesar Trajillo, to a remote military post in the jungle. Trujillo was charged with holding an unauthorized political meeting and writing a pamphlet that allegedly slandered a cabinet minister.

Banishment to the jumple was a more common fate for opponents of the government during the two years following its taking power in February 1972. For about a year now, however, there have been no known political prisoners. Socialist leader Gonzalo Oleas Zambrano, the last political prisoner of importance prior to the current spate of criticism, was released from jungle continement in May 1974. His release resulted at least in part from a strong public outcry against the denial of due process and political imprisonment in general.

Although Trujillo lacks the following of Oleas, the press is almost certain to make an issue of the case. This in turn may tempt the government to intensify its campaign against journalists, at least two of whom have been arrested recently. At that point, editorialists such as Julio Prado, who is writing from underground to evade an arrest order, would surely reiterate their charge of government garassment. This cycle is likely to continue until the regime either tempers its reaction or cracks down hard though to silence public criticism.

Colombia: Labor Reformer Reelected -- With Reservations

The unexpectedly discordant reelection of Tulio Cuevas as president of Colombia's largest labor confederation may foreshadow a slowing of the organization's leftward drift.

Since he was first elected president of the Union of Colombian Workers (UTC) in 1963, Cuevas has gradually liberalized the organization, guiding it away from its traditional Roman Catholic ties and occasionally allying it in the past with Communist labor groups. Cuevas has always been careful to promote only programs with great appeal to the rank-and-file, thus virtually guaranteeing the grudging support of more conservative UTC leaders. Over the years, his tactics, as well as his programs, have increasingly antagonized the UTC hierarchy, although his popularity with the masses has never diminished.

Cuevas' present reelection was by the narrowest margin of his tenure, and the congress at which the balloting took place was the most contentious in recent memory. After the vote, the main Opposition candidate and the eight unions supporting him walked out, announcing their intention not to participate in affairs of the UTC except to try to reform it. This will strengthen Cuevas' control of the organization, but his base will be somewhat diluted, particularly if the dissidents form a splinter confederation.

For the first time, Cuevas seems to recognize the existence of a threat to his position and to the integrity of the UTC. Prior to the election, he tried to work out a single compromise slate of candidates incorporaing as broad an ideological spectrum as possible. The failure of that effort, combined with the apparent defection of the dissidents, is likely to subdue Cuevas in the future. He can be expected to show less progressive zeal and more conciliation in formulating UTC policy and particularly in dealing with the remainder of the UTC leadership.

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Brazil: Vietnamese Refugees

The prospects for securing active Brazilian assistance in the resettlement of large numbers of Vietnamese refugees do not appear bright. The non-committal response to Embassy approaches on this subject reflects a substantial lack of enthusiasm for the idea.

Another, perhaps more significant indication comes from an influential Rio de Janeiro newspaper, which sometimes expresses official views. On May 2 the paper referred to a Foreign Ministry statement pointing out the "lack of any political motive" for Brazil to help solve a problem it did not create.

Indeed, Brasilia undoubtedly perceives strong motives for not helping the US. For one thing, the administration may well feel that to assist in any way with the refugee problem could harm Brazil's image in the Third World, by identifying Brasilia, however remotely, with the war in Indochina. Moreover, the current situation provides a perfect opportunity for Brazil to make a conspicuous show of its independence of the US, at little cost to its relations with this country.

The practical problems of absorbing an influx of aliens, ill prepared linguistically and in most cases professionally, to make their own way in a new environment, are, of course, very real. If and when the government formally decides in the negative, it is likely to point to such problems as the reason behind the refusal.

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Argentina: Increasing Censorship

The Argentine government has started to ban the circulation of books it deems "subversive." According to a respected Buenos Aires newspaper, the Office of Communications recently prohibited the mailing of several works, including the classic Cuba, Our America, and the United States by Jose Marti. This move constitutes an "about face" for the Peronist leaders, who following their return to power in March 1973 lifted all censorship restrictions on books and magazines that had been in force under the preceding military governments of Ongania, Levingston, and Lanusse.

At the same time right-wing terrorists, whose activities are tacitly supported by Mrs. Peron, have forced the suspension of the prestigious Panorama magazine, a weekly publication similar in format to Time and Newsweek. The suspension occurred when the publishers, along with several other writers and artists, left Argentina two weeks ago after receiving assassination threats.

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Trinidad-Tobago: Strikes End - Co	nference Begins
The strikes that had crippled and sugar industries ended late la final resolution of the issues that is clear that the government of Eric Williams emerged on top in bo of the more than 100 percent wage oil workers had demanded from the they eventually accepted the compa percent interim increase plus a bo 1974 wages, with the other outstansettled by the labor courts. The pute, which involved issues such a of unions and profit-sharing, in a will also be dealt with by the courhave returned to their jobs.	st month with no t caused them, but Prime Minister th cases. Instead increase that the Texaco affiliate, ny's offer of a 25 nus of 6 percent of ding issues to be sugar workers'dis- s legal recognition ddition to wages, rts, and the workers
Williams also used the oil wor achieve his goal of securing public over Texaco's distribution operation partial control of the company's 30 refinery-Texaco's major acception	c support for taking ons, and for obtaining
refineryTexaco's major asset in	Trinidad.
Williams' antipathy to multing in general was the major theme of hosession of the UN Economic Commission which opened in Port of Spain on Mathe conference, Williams lost no tipe activities of all multi-nations	is speech to the 16th lon for Latin America, by 6. As chairman of the in launching his

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Netherlands Antilles: Local Election Results

Unofficial returns from the elections on Curacao, Aruba, and Bonaire on April 25 indicate no major surprises (see April 23 Staff Notes) but may foreshadow some significant policy changes for the three Dutch dependencies. Approximately 85 percent of the registered voters cast ballots.

<u>Curacao</u> "Papa" Godett's leftist Workers Liberation Front won a plurality that apparently gives it 8 of the 21 seats in the Curacao Island Council. Before the election, Godett said that if his party won a plurality but not a majority he would prefer to form a governing coalition with the Democratic Party and might even consider an alliance with the National People's Party or the Social Democratic Party.

If he emerges with control of the council, Godett will have the power to create considerable mischief on Curacao and the other islands. He would be likely to demand and get a minimum of two ministerial posts in the Netherlands Antilles central government. Prime Minister Evertsz would attempt to isolate Godett's men but, as a minimum price for their participation in his cabinet, he would have to accept some leftist policy initiatives. If economic conditions do not improve before the next general elections in mid-1977, Godett's socialist rhetoric and popular but impractical schemes could increase his appeal and catapult him into a leadership role in the central government.

Aruba The People's Electoral Movement, apparently winning 13 of the 21 seats in the Aruba Island Council, has a clear mandate to press ahead with its demand that Aruba cut its ties with the central government of the Netherlands Antilles. Pressure from The Hague, concessions from the central government, as well as internal party differences may still prevent separation.

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Bonaira The incumbent Bonaire Patriotic Union	
has apparently captured only 4 of the 9 wests in that	
island's council, but it should be able to regetiate	
an alliance whabling it to continue governing much ag	
it has.	

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