

Cuba Continues to Tighten Soviet Bloc Ties: The Castro regime continues its efforts to secure industrial goods and technical assistance through the conclusion of trade and aid agreements with the Sino-Soviet bloc.

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[REDACTED] Polish officials to authorize the Polish commercial mission in Havana to negotiate a long-term credit for industrial development similar to the agreements concluded by Cuba with the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. [REDACTED] the Cuban Foreign Ministry authorized visas for a Chinese Communist commercial mission.

General discussions have taken place with Soviet officials on the possible construction of a steel plant, a petroleum refinery, and probably also smaller factories under the \$100,000,000 Soviet credit agreement concluded last February. A large number of Soviet technicians have already arrived in Cuba. A team of Soviet geologists is reported by a high Cuban official to be investigating the extraction of nickel in Cuba. It is possible that the technicians are working with the Cuban Government on a move against the US Government-owned NiCaro Nickel Corporation or the American privately owned Moa Bay Company, the only nickel companies operating in Cuba.

The departure of a Cuban mission, headed by Armed Forces Minister Raul Castro, for Czechoslovakia and the UAR indicates that Cuba is continuing to seek military aircraft which it has been unable to procure from other sources. It is not known whether agreements for the supply of bloc military equipment were concluded during the recent Cuban-Czech trade talks, but a high-level Czech official often associated with bloc arms deliveries is now in Havana. The Sino-Soviet bloc thus far, however, has not provided military aid to the Castro regime.

Meanwhile, the Cuban Government's oil-storage facilities are full, and further shipments of Soviet petroleum are en route. This may well precipitate seizure of the country's major refineries, American and British owned, which have refused to process Soviet crude.

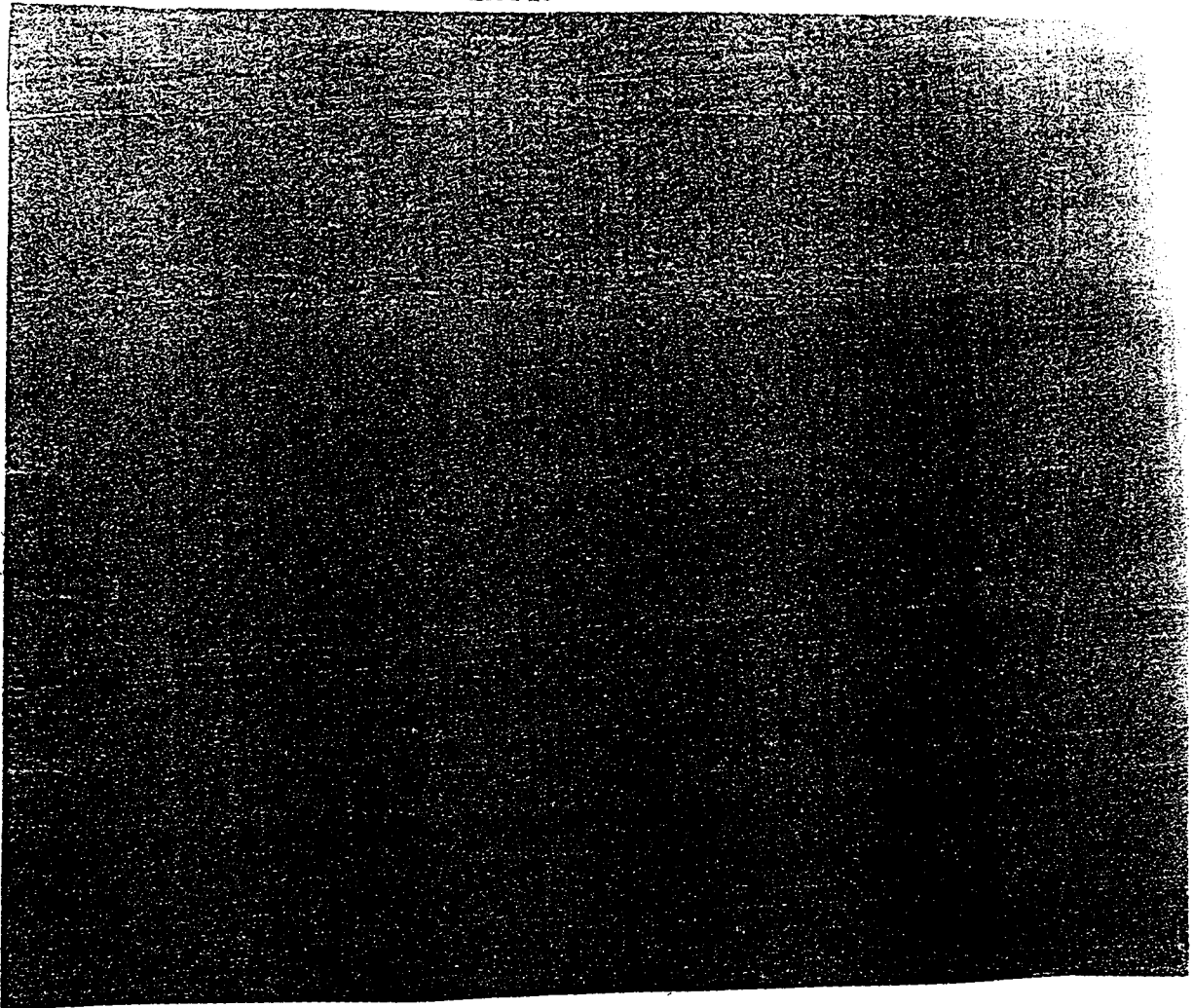
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Cuba. Reportedly to Negotiate "Nonaggression" Pact With Soviet Union: Cuban Armed Forces Minister Raul Castro, following his current "good will" mission to Prague, will also visit Moscow to negotiate a "nonaggression" pact with the Soviet Union, according to an "often well-informed" source of the American Embassy in Havana. The embassy comments that such a development would be consistent with the increasing pro-Soviet orientation of the Cuban regime.

The Czech news release announcing Castro's arrival in Prague on 26 June stated that he would be in Czechoslovakia "a few days": The only other announced point on his itinerary is Cairo on 26 July. He could well be planning a Moscow visit in the interim. A "nonaggression" pact with the Soviet Union would have significant propaganda value for the Castro regime, which continues its

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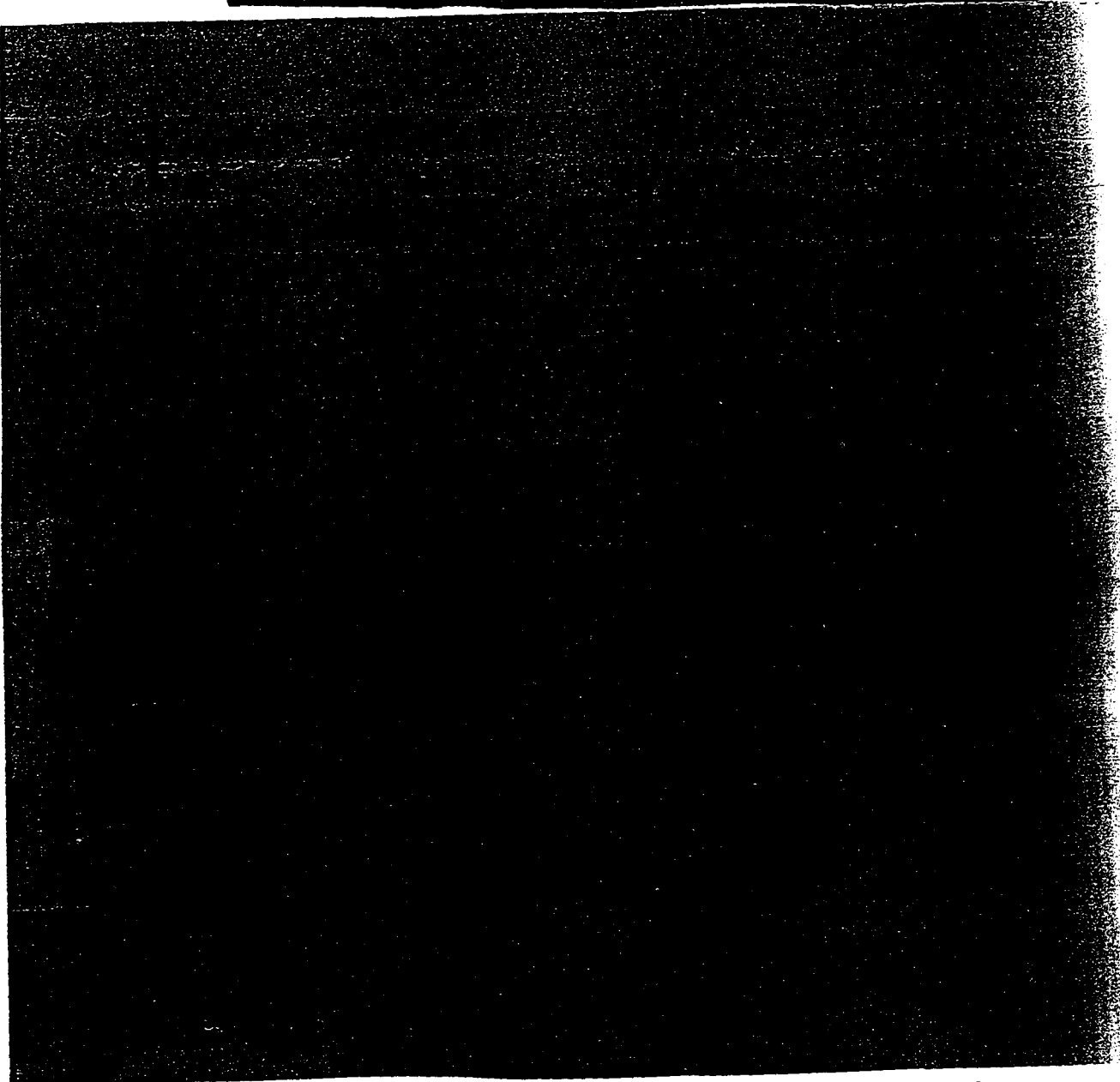
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strident campaign charging the United States with acts of "economic warfare" and subversive plotting against Cuba-- charges which are echoed in Moscow's propaganda broadcasts. The conclusion now of a mutual defense assistance pact between the two countries, frequently rumored in Havana, seems unlikely.

Raul Castro's mission in Czechoslovakia and the UAR probably is primarily in search of military equipment, including aircraft.

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