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Cuba-Chile: Prisoners 15C

Cuban President Fidel Castro apparently plans to respond publicly to the offer from Chile to exchange Chile's number-two communist leader, Jorge Montt, for Castro's long-time political prisoner, Huber Matos.

Castro has been cool to the Chilean offer, and his attitude has probably been reinforced by the negative reaction of some Western communists to the Bukovsky-Corvalan exchange.

Castro intends to get off the hook by challenging the Chileans to account for all their political prisoners before any exchange of prisoners can "be taken seriously."

The attempted assassination of Huber Matos' son in Costa Rica Monday night has added a new dimension to the Chilean

exchange offer. The younger Matos, who has lived in Costa Rica since 1959, when his father was imprisoned by Castro, recently stepped up his efforts to obtain the release of his father. Costa Rican President Oduber responded last weekend with a letter to Castro urging him to free Matos.

The younger Matos, who was apparently shot twice from ambush, alleges that his attacker was a "communist" and that Castro is either directly or morally culpable, but we have no confirmation of his charges. It seems unlikely that Castro would have ordered such an attack and risked the unfavorable publicity, but leftist extremists could well have acted on their own.