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9 February 1968

# CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY



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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

Approved for Release  
Date 07 APR 1976

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9 February 1961

## CUBA AND THE CARRIBBEAN

Cuba

Despite Castro's seizure of the company which controls the water supply of the Guantanamo Naval Base, there is still no indication that he will attempt to use force against the base. The action does not enhance Cuba's ability to cut off the water supply to the base. However, it will enable the Cuban Government to raise water rates in an effort to obtain additional needed dollars.

During the television interview on 1 February Foreign Minister Roa reaffirmed an earlier Castro statement that Cuba would seek the recovery of Guantanamo through the channels of international law. The Cuban contention, according to Roa, is that the 1903 US-Cuban contract for the lease of the base is invalid because Cuba was not then on "an equal footing with the United States." Also, Roa said, Cuba did not agree to the lease of its own free will, "because the Cuban people were coerced by a system of government imposed from abroad."

The Castro regime during the past week stepped up its propaganda attacks on the US

administration. A broadcast assailed the US action in providing \$4,000,000 for Cuban refugees in the United States, saying that since the previous administration had allotted only \$1,000,000 to the "counterrevolutionaries," President Kennedy was "four times more the enemy of Cuba" than was his predecessor. President Dorticos told a teachers' rally in Havana on 4 February that the intensification of counterrevolutionary activity by the Roman Catholic clergy and private school students was closely connected with the US action.

The teachers' rally was convoked by the government in an attempt to counter the growing opposition efforts of Catholic students and private educational institutions. The regime's attacks on these groups probably foreshadow a take-over of all Cuban private schools.

Students at private secondary schools and colleges throughout the country apparently participated in large numbers in a "strike" staged on 6 February as a protest against the execution of counterrevolutionaries by government firing squads.

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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

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Acts of sabotage and counterrevolutionary guerrilla activity continue to be reported, and there has been conflicting information on the progress of the campaign by militiamen to isolate and liquidate anti-Castro forces in the Sierra Escambray area of Las Villas Province.

A major fire in a Havana tobacco plant on 6 February causing damage estimated at several million dollars was apparently the result of a sabotage operation.

Newspapers and radio stations have begun a full-scale propaganda offensive to mobilize "volunteers"--including women and children--to harvest the first "people's crop" of sugar cane. A shortage of cane cutters, which has put the harvest behind schedule, has resulted from the government's mobilization of the militia against the alleged US "invasion threat" during most of January. In the city of Guantanamo, municipal police have reportedly been ordered into the cane fields.

The Colombian Government is under increasing domestic pressure to break diplomatic relations with Cuba, partly because of the belief that Cuban agitation has encouraged the rising violence in rural areas of the country. Peru, Paraguay, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic already have broken or "sus-

pending" diplomatic relations with Havana.

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PART I

OF IMMEDIATE INTEREST

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PART II

NOTES AND COMMENTS

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INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

COUNTRY Cuba REPORT NO. OO- B 3,180,309

SUBJECT Second Meeting with Ernesto Betancourt/  
Confirmation of Planned Sugar Mill Demolition and Militia's Unwillingness to Fight  
Escambray Rebels/Khrushchev's Instructions to Guevara to Seek Improvement of US-Cuban Relations NO. PAGES 2

DATE OF INFO. 19 Feb 61 and earlier REFERENCES

PLACE & DATE ACQ -- 19 Feb 61

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

SOURCE

1.

2.

3. During this second meeting, [redacted] said that sabotage in Cuba soon will show a sharp rise, that anti-Castro activities in Oriente Province will show a marked increase within the next three or four weeks, and that Castro will be overthrown within three or four months.

4. Interestingly enough, [redacted] verified the following two items of information which I had previously heard from a Cuban refugee whom I have known for a number of years and who has no connection with [redacted].

(1) Castro has purposely overstated the size of the rebel forces in the Escambray Mountains to cover up the fact that the militia shows a marked disinclination to fight and that the local inhabitants are equally unwilling to feed or house the militia, and (2) the Castro regime has undertaken the employment of explosives at vulnerable spots in sugar mills for possible future demolition. With respect to the latter item, [redacted] stated that he does not worry because plans are afoot to neutralize the demolition charges at the first sign that the Castro regime is tottering.

5. [redacted] stated further that his contacts in Cuba have informed him that the Cubans were advised by Khrushchev during their recent meeting in Moscow that the USSR did not intend to enlarge its support of the Cuban economy and that Guevara should seek an improvement of US-Cuban relations. According to [redacted] Khrushchev, Guevara, disillusioned and discouraged by this advice, promptly upon his return to Cuba set about exploring ways and means of accomplishing the suggested betterment of US-Cuban relations by sending an emissary to a US newspaper reporter who has in the past been sympathetic to the Castro regime.

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COUNTRY	Cuba	REPORT NO.	CS -3/467,630
SUBJECT	Indications in Canaguey of Increasing Dissatisfaction with CASTRO Government	DATE DISTR.	10 March 1961
		NO. PAGES	2
		REFERENCES	RD
DATE OF INFO.	31 February 1961		
PLACE & DATE ACQ.	(21 February 1961)	FIELD REPORT NO.	

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION. SOURCE GRADINGS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

**SOURCE:**

1. The student strike on 6 February 1961 in Canaguey was partially successful, despite government threats to invalidate the year's work of students from the public schools who went on strike and to confiscate the property of parents of students in private schools. The authorities also threatened to confiscate the private schools at which students went on strike. Despite these threats, almost all students in private schools and more than half of the students in many public schools went on strike. At the Canaguey Institute classes were reduced to one-third their normal size.<sup>2</sup>
2. Most members of the militia in Canaguey Province have been sent to the Sierra Escambray area; others have been sent to Oriente Province, where an uprising was reported in Sierra Cristal. The militiamen left for the zone of fighting with little enthusiasm and only because they had no alternatives. Someone present at the final training exercise reported that the instructor had said that, once they were on the battlefield, if they were not given enough food for all the men, they were to throw the food away, since all of it should die. Supplying food to those fighting against the opposition forces in the Escambray is one of the government's biggest problems.
3. Many people in Canaguey believe that the CASTRO regime is tottering and that the situation can at any moment degenerate into bloody anarchy, with consequences that no one can foresee. The opposition forces in the Escambray are enjoying great popularity with the Cuban people, even though their true ideology is not known. These forces do not have a radio station capable of being heard all over Cuba, and all that is generally known about these groups is that they are anti-CASTRO.
4. Many items of food are lacking in Canaguey, and butter is rationed. The price of pine of any size is double that of normal times. Residents are lined up to get small pieces of soap and so-called detergent, which is made up mainly of ashes.

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Headquarters Comments

1. There have been no previous reports of open government threats to confiscate private schools or take similar drastic action, although there was considerable speculation by private schools concerning such possible actions.
2. The accuracy of these figures is difficult to judge. Before the scheduled strike was called the government ordered classes dismissed and examinations scheduled. Students were required to report to school only at the times their examinations were scheduled.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

21 February 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Why the Cuban Revolution of 1958 Led to Cuba's  
Alignment with the USSR

1. In the world at large there is a widespread disposition to suppose that Fidel Castro's alignment of Cuba with the USSR was forced upon him by hostile actions on the part of the US. It is true that this development was not inevitable when Castro came to power -- conceivably it could have been averted --but the US actions complained of followed developments within Cuba instead of causing them. A complex of factors is involved:

a. A widespread predisposition in Cuba to regard the US as responsible for the unsatisfactory status quo against which the revolution was directed, because of the role of the US in establishing the existing Cuban policy, through its interventions in 1898 and later, and because of the predominance of US interests

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Declassified by 058375

date 10 June 1976

in the Cuban economy. Related to this was a predisposition to believe that the US was particularly sympathetic toward the detested Batista dictatorship and desirous of maintaining it, or of restoring the fallen regime.

b. The psychotic personality of Fidel Castro himself.

c. Astute exploitation of the opportunity, first by the Cuban Communist Party (the Popular Socialist Party -- PSP), and later by the Soviet Union and its allies.

2. Prior to the overthrow of Batista, the 26th of July Movement was not Communist inspired or directed. It was primarily a middle class movement for liberation from the Batista tyranny. It won peasant support by vague promises of agrarian reform, a commonplace tenet among Latin American liberals. However, no specific program of reform had been worked out. The primary motivation of all concerned was simply to overthrow the Batista regime, after which the political and social order would appropriately be reformed.

3. Some individual Communists had indeed penetrated the movement, particularly in those elements led by Raul Castro and Che Guevara, but the PSP itself (which enjoyed certain privileges

and immunities under the Batista regime) withheld its support until the victory of the revolution was clearly impending. Fidel Castro, on his part, rejected Communist support when it was finally proffered. Indeed, on coming to power, he acted to break the control of organized labor which the Communists had seized on the collapse of the Batista regime.

4. If the 26th of July Movement was not initially pro-Communist, neither was it essentially anti-American. It made considerable efforts to solicit US sympathy and support, but, when these were not forthcoming, concluded that the US was committed to the preservation of the Batista regime. This conclusion was thought to be confirmed by the manifestly pro-Batista attitude of Ambassador Smith and by the supposed continuance of US military aid to Batista. Actually, the US had undertaken to render such aid to the Cuban Government only as a normal part of the hemisphere defense program and had suspended deliveries early in 1958, when it was finally realized that a real civil war was in progress in Cuba, but this fact was simply not believed by the rebels.

5. Thus Cuban revolutionary opinion was strongly prejudiced against the US when Castro came to power in January 1959. Castro undoubtedly believed that the US had tried to prevent his victory,

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and he must have realized that any serious reform in Cuba would inevitably impinge upon vested US interests, provoking further US hostility. Still, no sane man undertaking to govern and reform Cuba would have chosen to pick a fight with the US. If, at this point, Castro could have been persuaded that the US accepted his revolution as an accomplished fact and would cooperate with his reform program, a modus vivendi could probably have been arranged and subsequent developments could probably have been averted.

6. What happened next prevented any such development and began the train of events which has led to Cuba's alignment with the USSR. It is not a function of US policy and action, but of Castro's psychotic personality. It is evident, on the testimony of his supporters at the time, that Castro arrived in Havana in a high state of elation amounting to mental illness. He received the adulation of the masses, not only in Havana, but also in Caracas (in person) and elsewhere in Latin America (by report). But from the US he heard only universal condemnation of the summary court-martial and execution of Batista henchmen in the atmosphere of a Roman circus. He became convinced that the US would never understand and accept his revolution, that he could expect only implacable hostility from Washington. This was the conclusion of

his own disordered mind, unrelated to any fact of US policy or action.

7. The US accepted the wholesale expropriation of US private properties in Cuba pursuant to Castro's impulsive re-  
programs, particularly the agrarian reform  
form/initiated in 1959, but correctly insisted upon prompt and  
adequate compensation for the owners in accordance with inter-  
national law. This insistence was taken as further evidence of  
implacable hostility toward the Cuban revolution -- as were cer-  
tain incendiary flights from Florida, despite US apologies and  
efforts to stop the practice. By April 1959 Raul Castro had  
delivered the first public and official diatribe against the US.

8. Revulsion toward the excesses of the Castro dictator-  
ship, at home as well as abroad, had already become apparent by  
March 1959. Although Castro remained a hero to the peasantry,  
his original middle class supporters were increasingly disillusioned  
by his radical and impulsive reform measures and his chaotic ad-  
ministration. Defections from the 26th of July Movement became  
increasingly frequent. In these circumstances, the Communists  
became the only dedicated and effective organizers, operators,  
and supporters upon whom Castro could rely, and Raul Castro and  
Che Guevara were at hand to influence him toward increasing

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reliance on them. The evident extension of Communist influence throughout the administration stimulate further defections among Castro's original supporters. By midsummer, the figurehead President, Urrutia, had been forced from office for protesting against the Communist trend, and any criticism of communism had been declared to be counterrevolutionary.

9. These developments also alienated many Latin American liberals who had originally sympathized with Castro, including such widely respected reformist leaders as Figueres, Betancourt, and Lleras Camargo. But by now the USSR was ready to come forward to supply Castro's desperate need for outside recognition and support. The Soviet Union undertook to purchase Cuban sugar and Soviet propaganda began to praise the Cuban revolution as an exemplary national liberation movement. There followed in steady progression formal diplomatic relations with Bloc countries, wide-ranging trade and credit agreements, military aid, and a flow of Bloc personnel into Cuba. Finally, the Cuban revolution was accorded the dignity of recognition in Communist dogma as an explicit stage in development toward communism.

10. In May 1960 Castro ordered certain US-owned refineries in Cuba to refine Soviet crude oil and, on their refusal, expropriated them. Until this time, US policy toward Cuba had been

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marked by caution and restraint. The US now deprived Cuba of its privileged position in the US sugar market, not so much in retaliation for the seizure of the refineries as in reaction to the general trend of events. The general economic embargo established in October and the formal break in relations in January similarly mark the end of patience after a long endurance of unwarranted vilification and provocation.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

*Sherman Kent*

SHERMAN KENT  
Chairman

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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COUNTRY	Cuba	REPORT NO.	CS -3/469,391
SUBJECT	Growing Dissatisfaction of Cuban People with CASTRO Regime	DATE DISTR.	27 March 1961
		NO. PAGES	1
		REFERENCES	RD

DATE OF INFO. Early February 1961

PLACE & DATE ACQ. (22 February 1961)

FIELD REPORT NO.

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION. SOURCE GRADINGS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

SOURCE:

1. Activities of the Cuban people are constantly watched and reported to the Cuban Government by such persons as inspectors from the Department of Sanitation and from the Urban Reform Institute and postmen, all of whom can obtain access to private homes on a number of pretexts. This surveillance system has made it increasingly difficult for opposition groups to operate; however, the atmosphere of fear created by the system daily causes more people to oppose the government.
  2. The shortage of basic food and household items, felt by all levels of society, is causing increasing dissatisfaction. Because a lack of replacement parts has made many buses inoperative, bus service, especially in the workers' districts, is very poor.<sup>1</sup>
  3. Many policemen, postmen, and teachers have not received their entire salaries and have returned their paychecks because of the apparent error in the amount paid them.
  4. Opposition to the CASTRO regime is becoming more open; grumbling about government policies is becoming more audible. The lower classes are now actively opposed to CASTRO. In front of the G-2 offices the lines of those detained are made up of the poorer classes. Recent visitors to La Cabana Prison have reported that the majority of inmates there are from the lower class, which has been the source of CASTRO's main support.
1. Headquarters Command. An untested source has reported that in early February 1961 buses of Soviet and Czech manufacture were seen on the docks in Habana. As of 13 February they had not been put in service.

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ARMY	NAVY	AIR	NSA	STATE	DEFENSE	OTHER
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COUNTRY	Cuba	REPORT NO.	CS - 3/26, 320
SUBJECT	Diminishing Popular Support of the Castro Government	DATE DISTR.	16 March 1961
		NO. PAGES	2
		REFERENCES	RD
DATE OF INFO	25 February 1961		
PLACE & DATE ACQ.	(27 February 1961)	FIELD REPORT NO.	

THIS IS UNCLASSIFIED INFORMATION. SOURCE GRADUALLY AND DEFINITELY. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

SOURCE

1. The regime of Fidel CASTRO is facing many internal problems. The number of high-ranking officials who seek political asylum continues to grow. Persons previously considered loyal to the CASTRO government are being watched by G-2.
2. Many members of the militia are harassing physicians to obtain certificates to exempt them from military duties. One physician in Habana has said that when the militia was first organized he was constantly asked for certificates of fitness for those who wanted to serve in spite of their ailments. The same persons are now asking for certificates showing that they are physically unfit to continue in the militia.
3. In the Villas Province large numbers of militiamen have refused to fight. Recently a truck loaded with militiamen, shouting "they have arrested us because we do not want to fight our brothers", passed through the streets of Havana.
4. Public attendance at government-organized events in the cities has dwindled. A public meeting on 7 February 1961 in front of the Presidential Palace, at which thousands of students were expected, was attended by only eight hundred, many of them militiamen who were forced to attend. Crowds at the carnival celebrations in Habana in 1961 were small. On 19 February attendance was only about 15 per cent of that in 1959 and 1960. Stations which were televising carnival activities switched to other programs when they realized that the television program was providing visible proof of the failure of the carnival.

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- Despite government attacks on the Catholic Church, public reaction to the sale of cards and stickers by Catholic organizations in Habana to collect funds for Catechism Day was favorable.
- Popular support of the government among the rural population has also diminished. The ~~peasants~~ in the Sierra Escambray area are reportedly co-operating with the opposition groups. ~~Peasants~~ have been seen carrying signs which said "the revolution, yes; Communism, no." There is restlessness among workers on the agricultural co-operatives. For the initial five-year period members of the co-operatives were to receive 20 per cent of the net profits, and the government was to receive 80 per cent. The government has taken the entire profits from almost all the co-operatives, and the farmers feel that the government has cheated and deceived them. The government's failure to distribute profits as promised was the cause of an uprising by farmers in Corralillo, Las Villas Province.
- An indication of the attitude of the working classes towards the CASTRO regime was the drop in enrolment at the Mechanical-Electric School at the Helen Institute when the school was intervened by the government. Despite government pleas that continued attendance at the school was the patriotic duty of all good revolutionaries, enrolment dropped from 300 to about 50.

Headquarters Comment. An untested source who is a businessman in Cuba estimated in late February 1961 that CASTRO had the support of fewer than 20 per cent of the people and that fewer than 10 per cent of these supporters were true fidelistas. The same source said that, in contrast to the feelings of the average Cuban in January that the situation was hopeless, many Cubans think that it is possible that CASTRO will soon fall. It is generally believed, he also reported, that approximately 75 to 80 per cent of the militia units will defect when it becomes evident that the real fight against CASTRO has begun.