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The Situation in Cuba

The arrival of Fidel Castro in Havana on 8 January, after his triumphal progress from Oriente Province, will assist the regime of Provisional President Urrutia in its efforts to form a workable government. Numerous decisions on governmental policy, on military reorganization, and on relations among competing rebel groups had awaited his arrival. [Meanwhile, there are some signs of feeling against the US Government among members of the new regime and a general desire to speed the "Cubanization" of foreign-owned industries, particularly sugar plantations. At present, about 50 percent of total sugar investment in Cuba is US capital. The percentage has been declining for some years.]

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The US Army attaché found Camp Colombia, Cuba's chief military base near Havana, completely disorganized on 7 January. The army is undergoing a thorough purge of all officers guilty of "crimes" under Batista, and at least 15 are reported already to have been executed. Even the capable Colonel Barquin and other professional officers associated with him in the 1956 attempt to oust Batista have apparently been retired. Officers of the 26 of July Movement in Havana told the attaché that the highest army rank will be major and that present officers of higher rank permitted to remain in service will have to accept demotions. Many rebel soldiers are expected to be integrated into the armed forces. These drastic measures may well, in the long run, create a core of embittered former career officers dangerous to the regime.

Fidel Castro, who is slated to head the armed forces, is quoted as belittling the value of the US Military Mission to the Cuban Army under Batista and claiming that it is no longer needed. He has also indicated, however, that the government will not establish diplomatic relations with Sino-Soviet bloc governments, or any other dictatorships.

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