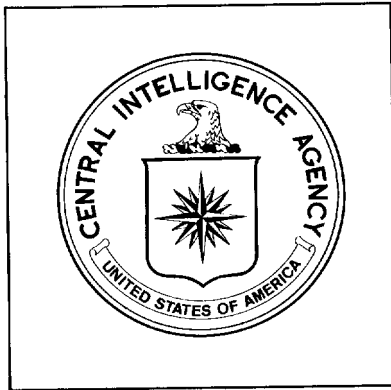


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STAFF NOTES:

Latin American Trends

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LATIN AMERICAN TRENDS



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Cuba's Small-Farm Owners Threatened

There are signs that the Castro regime is preparing to make yet another attempt to eliminate the only remaining major form of private enterprise in Cuba--family farms. Whatever moves are eventually undertaken are sure to be slow and careful. The farm owners and their families, probably the most conservative segment of the population, number over a million people or more than ten percent of the total population. They make a significant contribution to the economy, and the government has no desire to alienate them.

Apparently learning from his past attempts to get the farmers to give up their lands voluntarily, Fidel Castro has yet to lend his own name to current efforts. Instead, the task of spokesman has been left so far to Jorge Risquet, the official of the party's secretariat who is in charge of agriculture, and to Pepe Ramirez, president of the National Association of Small-Farm Owners. These two will probably be joined by others among the leadership in a lengthy propaganda campaign to convince the peasantry that the mechanization of agriculture has rendered the cultivation of small, individual plots an intolerably inefficient luxury. When action is eventually taken to incorporate the small farms into state lands, the move will have the appearance of enjoying the solid backing of the entire leadership.

Risquet opened the campaign in a speech on May 17 marking National Peasants Day. He warned that at the Cuban Communist Party's first congress in December of this year "our party intends to analyze the new types of organization that must be adopted for agricultural production...the party may call upon the peasantry to embark on the path toward socialist types of production in rural areas." He added that "a revolution in the

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relationships involving production and property...cannot occur until there is a change in the current methods of individual exploitation of the land." He paid silent tribute to the recalcitrance of the older peasants by praising the "collective mentality of the younger generation," suggesting that the regime's efforts to wean younger peasants away from the concepts of their parents has achieved some success.

Less than a month later, Ramirez echoed Risquet in an interview published in the party's daily newspaper. He identified the Fifth Peasant Congress--probably to be held next May--as another milestone in the regime's campaign and said that "on that occasion we shall agree upon socialist forms of production for our peasants, so that we may be able to apply science and technology to agricultural and livestock development..." It is thus clear that the party congress in December will "debate" how--not if--the peasant sector should be reorganized, and the subsequent peasant congress will be used to marshal popular support to rubber-stamp the decisions made earlier.

Until now the government has in most cases been satisfied to use a combination of moral suasion and material rewards to get peasants to give up their holdings voluntarily. This has enabled Castro to claim he has honored his pledge, made early in the revolution, not to take the small farms by force. The statements by Risquet and Ramirez, however, suggest that the regime now believes the time is near when the peasants can be pressured into surrendering their lands without serious political or economic risk.

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No Future For ORIT?

The Inter-American Regional Workers Organization (ORIT), a long-time fixture of pan-American cooperation, may become another victim of the Latin Americans' growing penchant for regional associations that exclude the US.

ORIT's heyday has been over for some time. The organization thrived as the symbol of democratic labor unionism in strenuous competition with Communist labor fronts during the fifties and sixties. The rivalry was sharp during those days, when organized labor stood as a major political force in the Latin American struggle for representative government.

The many political and economic changes in Latin America over the past decade have considerably weakened the role of labor in much of the region. Nationalist sentiment has taken its toll, too, on the commitment to international trade unionism. The US advisory role in Latin America through the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) and ORIT's dependence on the financial support of AFL/CIO have left these organizations easy targets for smear campaigns by local critics. A popular accusation over the past few years has been that they are manipulated by the CIA. Some labor federations affiliated with ORIT have thus found this association damaging to their credibility.

Venezuelan labor leaders have been trying to lead their counterparts in other countries toward an "authentic" regional organization, i.e., an all-Latin one. The major supporter of a revitalized ORIT with continued inclusion of the AFL/CIO is Mexican labor leader Fidel Velazquez. But Mexican labor is looked upon by many Latin Americans as a tool of the government, and therefore carries less weight than Venezuelan labor.

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Restructuring of trade union relationships in Latin America was a major topic at the recent Executive Board meeting of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in Brussels, as the group prepared for the ICFTU congress in Mexico City in October. ICFTU has been concerned about the disarray and ineffective leadership of ORIT, and its unclear statutory relationship to ICFTU. At ORIT's Eighth Congress last year, an amendment to its constitution left dissolution or suspension up to a decision by the ORIT Congress; previously such action could be taken only by the ICFTU.

The ICFTU leadership, not wanting a confrontation with AFL/CIO over the ORIT problem, has maneuvered to keep the Latin Americans' status off the agenda at Mexico City. But the Latins are being privately urged to make a definite decision on the question of a regional organization.

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[REDACTED]

Venezuela: Division Within the Opposition

Internal strife within the Social Christian Party (COPEI), the principal opposition group, could weaken its vote-getting ability in the 1978 presidential campaign, which is already in its opening phase. Left-wing leader Luis Herrera Campins is challenging the party's moderate founder, former President Rafael Caldera. At stake is the secretary-generalship of the party, a traditional stepping stone for the presidential candidacy.

Herrera is dissatisfied with Caldera's leadership and has accused him of imposing party candidates for national elections. Herrera's leftist leanings and lack of loyalty to Caldera are calling into question the ability of the former president to maintain his control of the party if Herrera should win the secretary-generalship. The test of strength between the two men will come later this year at the COPEI national convention. Herrera has strong support from the youth organization and from a number of influential leftist party leaders.

The party has been in disarray since its defeat in the 1973 presidential election. Unable to succeed himself as president, Caldera chose Lorenzo Fernandez as the COPEI candidate. Herrera, who claimed that he was the party's choice, opposed this maneuver as an illegal effort by Caldera to maintain his own influence. This bickering has weakened the party, and its efforts to restore unity are hampered by the conflict between the left wing, headed by Herrera, and the establishment personified by Caldera. [REDACTED]

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Chile: Unions Reject Junta's Labor Code

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Following the widespread criticism that greeted the military government's proposed amendments to the labor code [redacted] the junta decided to shelve plans for its promulgation during the second anniversary of the coup on September 11. The labor minister's announcement that the revisions would undergo intensive study by a commission that included labor and management representatives was probably a result of the almost universal condemnation of the proposals by the workers' organizations and the strong reservations reportedly held by the management sector.

According to an article in Ercilla, a weekly news magazine affiliated with the Christian Democratic Party, the most bitter objections by Chilean trade unions were reserved for the failure to repeal Decree-law 189, which among other things gives the government control over the appointment of labor leaders. Naturally labor leaders believe that this decree-law is an infringement of union freedoms. As an example, Ercilla points out that virtually no one dissents at union meetings for fear of being reported to the authorities.

The government would have found it awkward to cram the draft down the throats of labor and management arbitrarily once strong dissatisfaction had surfaced. Nevertheless, the junta will be reluctant to go very far in conceding the substantial changes wanted by its critics. Government hypersensitivity to any hint of labor opposition is likely to ensure that a hard line prevails.

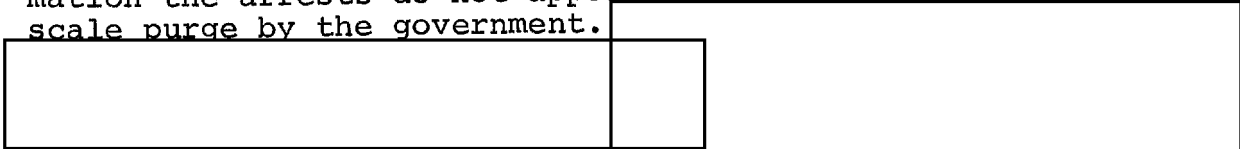
Meanwhile, in another development, seven prominent labor officials were arrested on July 18 in the northern copper mining region. They reportedly are

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to be sent to the Tres Alamos detention camp outside Santiago. Although the labor leaders were ostensibly detained for violating the curfew and participating in political meetings, there is little evidence so far that this was the case. On the basis of current information the arrests do not appear to presage a large-scale purge by the government.



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If the government does not negotiate a release with national labor leaders soon, however, relations can be expected to deteriorate even further. The resulting chill could then cause a complete breakdown of labor-government communication on the controversial labor code revision and perhaps provoke some open resistance to the government.



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Colombia: The Vestigial National Front

A minor cabinet shuffle this month has again demonstrated President Lopez' commitment to political parity. Although the 16-year National Front coalition of the Liberal and Conservative parties all but ended prior to Lopez' election campaign last spring, the constitution requires parity in appointive office until 1978.

Minister of Justice Alberto Santofimio Botero, a Liberal, resigned his post to return to party politics. Minister of Mines and Energy Eduardo del Hierro Santa Cruz, a Conservative, also resigned. In filling these positions, Lopez interchanged parties, but maintained the existing numerical equality. Conservative Samuel Hoyos Arango, a lawyer and economist, became justice minister, and Liberal Juan Jose Turbay, an economist and recent presidential adviser, took over the mines and energy portfolio. Before announcing the new appointments, President Lopez, the de facto leader of the Liberal Party, met with ranking opposition leaders, including Conservative Party president Ignacio Velez Escobar.

There may be additional cabinet changes as preparations for next year's mid-term elections begin. Minister of Finance Rodrigo Botero, Minister of Labor Maria Elena de Crovo, and Minister of Public Works Humberto Salcedo Collantes--two Liberals and a Conservative--are rumored to be on the way out. 

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Status of Brazil-Soviet Hydroelectric Projects

Moscow is expanding its participation in Brazil's power development program. On July 4, Brazil and the USSR signed a \$52 million contract for the Sobradinho hydroelectric power projects. Beginning in 1977, the Soviets will supply five 175-megawatt turbines under long-term credits. The Soviets also are providing turbines for the Capivara Plant scheduled for completion in 1976. Recently a Soviet bank co-managed a \$140 million loan for construction of the Capivara Plant and other power-related projects. Negotiations for Soviet participation through Western consortia in the massive Itaipu hydroelectric project are continuing.



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