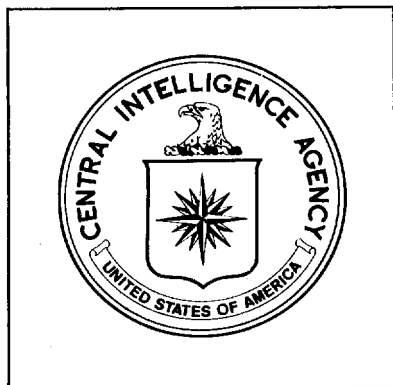


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Latin American Trends

STAFF NOTES

State Department review completed

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LATIN AMERICAN TRENDS

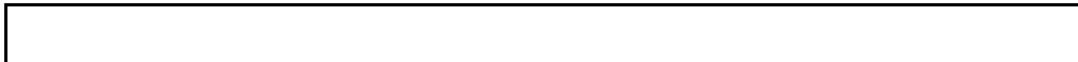


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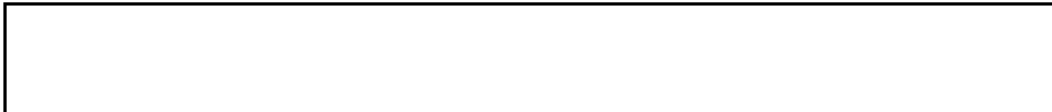
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Guyana May Aid Angola

Prime Minister Burnham may decide to send a token force of Guyanese Defense Force (GDF) personnel to Angola. According to Desmond Roberts, deputy director of the National Service program, the GDF, at the request of the government, has developed a contingency plan for a Guyanese military presence in Angola. The plan calls for the involvement of a token medical field unit, composed of no more than ten GDF personnel. The unit would be led by Lt. Col. Carl Morgan, a British-trained officer regarded as an apolitical professional supply specialist who would be based at MPLA headquarters in Luanda. The plan reportedly will be implemented if the Burnham government recognizes the MPLA as the government of Angola, and will be justified by citing the presence of South African forces in the conflict.

We have no indication when Burnham plans such a move. An MPLA delegation, now in Georgetown, has been given extensive publicity and red carpet treatment by Guyanese officials including a lengthy meeting with Prime Minister Burnham. A mass rally sponsored by the ruling People's National Congress will cap their visit and may be the beginning of a campaign to drum up support for Guyana's involvement in the conflict.



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Mexico: A Helping Hand

In a gesture aimed more at winning plaudits in the third world than making a meaningful contribution to rebuilding Vietnam, Mexico this week presented Hanoi with a varied assortment of reconstruction aid. Included were dump trucks, medicines, prefab houses, farm tools, and marine cables. The goods arrived December 30 on a Mexican navy ship that left Acapulco harbor October 28. A high-level delegation of Mexican officials, including an under secretary for foreign relations and one of President Echeverria's two brothers (Dr. Eduardo Echeverria, an adviser on health for the government), flew to Hanoi the same day to hand over the gifts.

The delegation also included specialists in foreign trade and investment, agriculture, and petroleum. The Mexicans intend to work out a package of cooperation agreements with the Vietnamese. A Vietnamese technical team is currently studying petroleum technology in southeastern Mexico, the site of last year's large oil finds.

Last May, when Mexico established diplomatic relations with North and South Vietnam, Foreign Secretary Rabasa said that President Echeverria conducts foreign policy the way he thinks is best for Mexico. Many would argue this theory and cite numerous diplomatic snafus to prove their point, but this move, coming eight months after the fall of the Saigon government, seems safe.

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Chile: Church-State Tensions Slacken

President Pinochet's decision to release a number of priests who were being detained for aiding fugitive terrorists has halted--at least for the moment--the steady decline in church-state relations over the past several months. Fundamental tensions remain, however, and the church is likely to remain an irritant to the regime.

In making the amnesty gesture, Pinochet tacitly admitted that members of the clergy charged with harboring "criminals" might have been inspired by altruistic motives and sentiments of mercy. The President warned, nevertheless, that the government would not treat future offenders quite so generously. The Catholic Church had earlier agreed to dismantle the interdenominational Committee for Peace, which the government had strongly criticized for being pro-Marxist.

Cardinal Silva met with Pinochet on December 22 to inform the President about his recent trip to the US and Europe and to reiterate how poor Chile's image was abroad. Silva again stressed the Church's concern over the impact of the government's austerity measures on the Chilean people--a view that is shared by some junta members, particularly the outspoken General Leigh.

In his Christmas message several days later, the Cardinal urged the government to grant a general amnesty on New Years to all persons jailed for their political opinions who have not committed criminal acts. According to press sources, Pinochet intends to release 50 additional prisoners soon.

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Church officials believe that Pinochet's interior minister, General Cesar Benavides, is a major obstacle to improving relations. The minister is said to be a doctrinaire, stubborn individual who refuses to compromise; his obstinacy, which is not out of step with the puritanical Pinochet, probably accounts for a large measure of the regime's rigidity on the human rights issue. The interior ministry's rulings on detentions have frequently contributed to the bad press that Chile has received abroad.

For instance, the two-month imprisonment of British national Dr. Sheila Cassidy for giving medical attention to an important terrorist leader is a glaring example of the government's shortsightedness. Dr. Cassidy, who claims to have been tortured, will no doubt see that her accusations are widely circulated in Western Europe, where public opinion is generally receptive to denunciations of Chilean human rights violations.

The US Embassy in Santiago believes that the church-state difficulties as manifested by these problems are deep-rooted and that little change is in sight unless there is a basic shift in government attitudes. As far as we can see, that is unlikely anytime soon.

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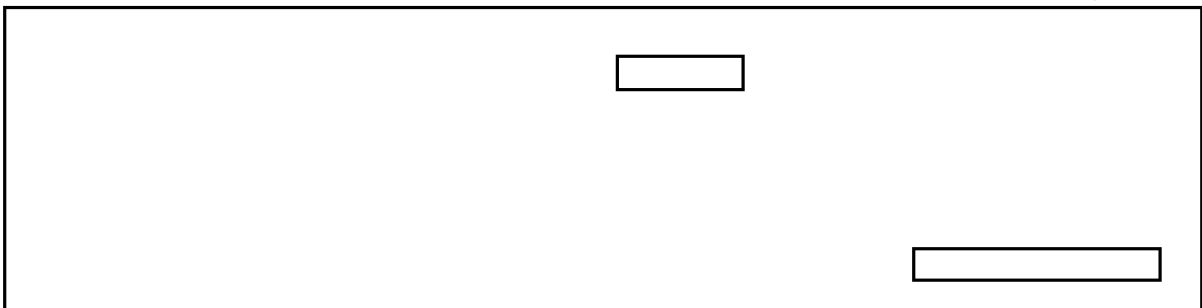
Uruguay: Communist Roundup

Recent arrests of two leaders and a number of activists of the Communist Party have been heavily publicized, giving rise to some speculation as to their significance. Some aspects of the anti-Communist propoganda campaign suggest that it may be a prelude to a rupture in relations with the USSR, although a similar campaign in late 1973 did not portend a break.

The military's anti-subversive arm staged an "informative conference" on December 29 for senior government officials, diplomats, foreign military attaches, and some press representatives. The major announcement was that acting party first secretary Jose Massera and propoganda secretary Vladimir Turiansky had been arrested and had provided information indicating the existence of an armed group of from 300 to 400 members.

The oral presentation was followed by a display of equipment--said to come from Communist caches--that included mortars, rocket launchers, grenades, rifles, and small arms, as well as supportive materiel.

There was frequent mention of the Soviet Union during the conference, particularly citing financial support and training of local party personnel. The military spokesman described the Uruguayan Communist Party as the most powerful threat facing the nation, because of its backing from the Soviet Union.



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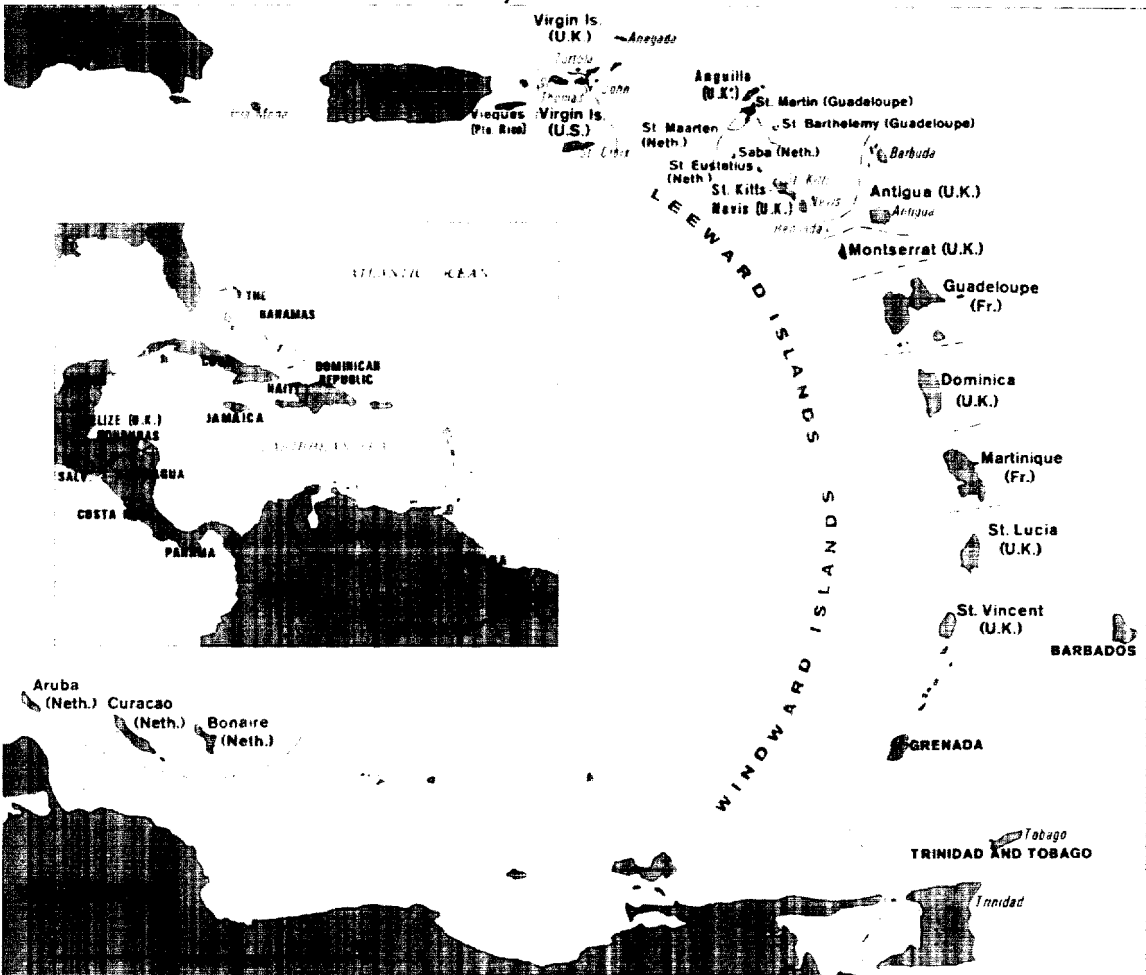
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The Caribbean Community (CARICOM)



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CARICOM Leaders Meet

Delegates reached accord on economic, political, and general measures for regional economic development at the conference of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) heads of government which met December 8-10 in St. Kitts.

Established in 1973 to promote regional economic integration, CARICOM embraces three broad areas of cooperation: a modified common market, a community economic treaty, and coordination of international issues. It is composed of five independent countries and seven territories still associated with Great Britain. Successor to the Caribbean Free Trade Association, CARICOM is more a free trade area than a common market. The economies of its members are basically competitive and its members continue to do much more business with outsiders than with each other. The larger members are dissatisfied with what the group has achieved. Jamaica, with a rising trade deficit, has urged better observance of the provisions of the agreement. Guyana has attacked treaty loopholes that facilitate a growing inter-Caribbean trade of commodities originating outside the region. Consequently, CARICOM has been slow in achieving its goals.

Major decisions were made at the summit to promote and expand intraregional trade, to establish a mechanism for balance-of-payment support, and to implement a regional food plan to reduce the massive food import bill, which now runs at one billion dollars annually. The food plan will be implemented through a Caribbean food cooperative, which has been created by the CARICOM Secretariat. The delegates also reached accord on the future of the University of the West Indies as an integral part of the region's institutions of higher education. A committee will be set up to prepare guidelines on the objectives and function of the university, which

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will be presented to a special heads of government meeting in Trinidad in March.

Participants at the conference emphasized CARICOM solidarity and agreed in principle to coordinate foreign policy objectives and tactics more closely. They view colonial power interests with some concern. CARICOM, in fact, issued the first categorical condemnation of French presence in America by denouncing French colonization plans for Guiana as an attack on the peace and security of the region. CARICOM also called on Britain to help its associated states obtain European economic aid. Another important agreement reached was resolute support for self-determination for Belize and a denunciation of the Guatemalan threat against it.

The CARICOM summit demonstrated cooperation and rational dialogue on practical issues. Careful planning and hard work have achieved a measure of organizational strength. The future, however, is difficult and uncertain. Divisiveness continues to plague the region. Its resource base is extremely narrow, and industry is too small in scale and too inefficient to compete effectively for outside markets. Nationalism, particularly as manifested in restrictions on trade, will continue to be a major barrier to integration. The adoption of other characteristics of a common market is a long way off.

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