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# Latin America Review



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10 May 1985

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**Latin America  
Review** [Redacted]

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*Articles have been coordinated as appropriate with other offices within CIA. Comments and queries regarding this publication may be directed to the Chief, Production Staff, Office of African and Latin American Analysis, [Redacted]*

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**Cuba-Ecuador:  
President Febres-Cordero's  
Visit** [redacted]

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Cuban President Castro gained some political capital and regional legitimacy from the visit last month of Ecuadorean President Febres-Cordero, but little of substance came out of the three days of meetings. The Ecuadorean President apparently tried hard to minimize publicity surrounding his trip, and refused to issue a joint communique or attend a press conference with Castro at the conclusion of the visit. Febres-Cordero successfully avoided being drawn into statements that implicitly agreed with Cuban policy on Central America or Castro's prescriptions for Latin America's debt problem. Nonetheless, we believe the conservative Ecuadorean President's willingness to fraternize with Castro may ease the apprehensions of other Latin American leaders about expanding their ties to Cuba [redacted]

role in Latin America, the coverage of Febres-Cordero's activities were juxtaposed with stories on the Colombian Foreign Minister's recent visit to Havana and the renewal of trade ties between Cuba and Uruguay. [redacted]

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**Febres-Cordero's Response**

Febres-Cordero's refusal to issue a joint communique or to join Castro for a press conference at the end of the visit was largely responsible for Castro's failure to get broad coverage of the visit in the international media. Castro told the press conference that the two leaders fully supported the Contadora peace process, and he reiterated his advocacy of nonpayment of Latin America's debt. [redacted]

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**Castro's Approach**

As he has done with a host of recent European and South American delegations visiting Cuba, Castro tried hard to persuade Febres-Cordero of his sincerity in facilitating a peaceful solution to Central America's problems and to impress the Ecuadorean leader with his pragmatic approach to issues such as relations with the United States and regional economic issues. Ecuadorean Foreign Minister Teran told US Embassy officials in Quito that he was impressed by Castro's soft-sell and moderate tone, as well as by the warm welcome accorded Febres-Cordero in Havana, which included a 21-gun salute and a lavish reception at the Palace of the Revolution. The Ecuadoreans apparently were even more impressed with the turnout of some 70,000 Cubans to welcome them to a provincial capital, where they visited an oil refinery and the Soviet-built nuclear power plant under construction. [redacted]

Castro's statement to the press that the two leaders "exchanged views" on Central America and his refusal to comment on President Reagan's peace proposal for Nicaragua indicate that Febres-Cordero strongly challenged the Cuban leader's views and resisted any statements that Castro could publicly construe as agreement with his Central America policy. The Ecuadorean Foreign Minister publicly reiterated Febres-Cordero's support for dialogue between the Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan opposition soon after returning from Cuba. Moreover, Castro's admission at the press conference that considerable disagreement exists over measures to address Latin America's debt problem suggests that the Ecuadorean President found little merit in Castro's formulas. [redacted]

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**Castro's Gains Are Symbolic**

Castro made few gains in terms of substantive agreements pointing toward increased Cuban-Ecuadorean ties. Febres-Cordero signed a reciprocal trade agreement and discussed possible areas of limited trade in agricultural goods, such as sugar, cattle, and health, where exchanges of aid and

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The Cuban media made a concerted effort to dramatize the importance of the Febres-Cordero visit to Cuba, with front page, red-boxed coverage and photos in the daily newspaper each day of the visit. In an obvious attempt to demonstrate Cuba's growing

technical expertise might be pursued. [redacted]

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[redacted] Ecuadorean officials have told US Embassy personnel that nearly all of Ecuador's petroleum production is already committed to long-term contracts. [redacted]

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Nonetheless, despite Febres-Cordero's efforts to play down the visit, the lack of substantive bilateral agreements, and the apparent deep differences of opinion between the two leaders on many issues, Castro's standing in Latin America probably was boosted by the visit. Moreover, Febres-Cordero's trip may improve Castro's chances of increasing Cuba's ties to several Latin American countries in the coming months. The US Embassy in Bolivia, for example, has noted that the Febres-Cordero visit did not go unnoticed in Bolivia. Embassy officials believe that leftists in President Siles's government may be able to push the lameduck President into closer ties to Cuba before a new administration takes over in La Paz.

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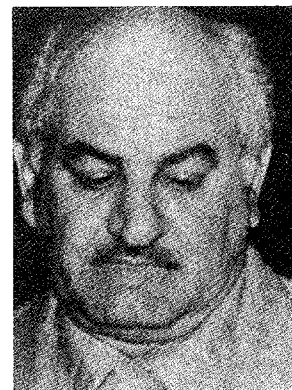


### Venezuela: Leading Leftist Party Struggling To Regroup

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In the wake of a major setback in the 1983 national elections, Venezuela's largest leftwing party—Movement Toward Socialism (MAS)—is struggling for political survival. The party's presidential candidate remains discredited by his poor electoral showing, and MAS has been without formal leadership since the party's directorate resigned in early 1984. The leader of the main radical faction is seeking the position of secretary general at the long-overdue party convention now scheduled for June, but new delegate selection rules and a deep schism between radical and moderate wings will complicate efforts to choose a unified leadership. Barring a major economic crisis, the party's prospects for becoming a more credible political force over the next few years are dim, but MAS probably will avoid the kind of open split that would relegate it to the radical fringe with the other far-left parties.

Pompeyo Marquez (top) and Theodoro Petkoff, founders of Movement Toward Socialism.

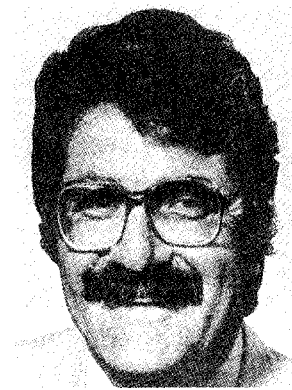


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Bohemia

#### The MAS Legacy

MAS was founded in January 1971 by Teodoro and Luben Petkoff and Pompeyo Marquez, former members of the Venezuelan Communist Party (PCV) who had participated in the Castro-inspired armed struggle of the 1960s. Like many other Venezuelan leftists, the Petkoff brothers and Marquez came out of political hiding following President Caldera's amnesty decree in 1969. By that time, however, the failed insurrection, the demise of the PCV as a credible political party, and the fallout from the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia set the stage for a breakaway movement. Although still committed to radical socialism, the leaders of MAS now advocated independence from Moscow and peaceful social reform rather than violent revolution.



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Marquez prevailed, but the party's decision to back Rangel, who had never formally joined MAS, backfired when Rangel received even fewer votes than MAS that year. Rangel's poor showing was a blow to Marquez and helped pave the way for another Petkoff run in 1983—this time with the party's imprimatur.

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Marquez and Teodoro Petkoff, although in basic ideological agreement, were personally at odds almost from the beginning. Marquez became party Secretary General, a position he held continuously until early last year. When Petkoff sought party approval to make his own presidential bid in 1978, Marquez opposed him, favoring Jose Vicente Rangel instead.

#### The Impact of the 1983 Election

With economic conditions in 1983 seemingly ripe for a protest vote against the two major parties, MAS expected to break out of the leftist ghetto by outpolling the discredited incumbent Social

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Christians (COPEI). Petkoff confidently predicted that MAS would no longer be confined to "the shoulder of a huge highway" previously monopolized by COPEI and Democratic Action (AD). The US Embassy—echoing survey results—expected MAS at least to double its 1978 vote of 6 percent and emerge with a solid block of congressional seats. [redacted]

The election was a test not only of the charismatic Petkoff's appeal as candidate but also of his thesis that by remaining aloof from coalitions with other far-left parties MAS could finally escape the stigma of leftwing extremism and establish itself as an attractive socialist alternative. The election results, however, were devastating. MAS obtained only 5 percent of the vote and Petkoff lost considerable prestige within the party. His defeat left the door open for a new party leadership as the entire MAS executive committee took the unprecedented step of resigning en masse in late January 1984. Since then, factional chieftains have struggled for control in a battle that involves ideology, policy, and personalities as well as strategy and tactics. [redacted]

**Factional Strife**

The differences between the party's two main factions reflect a basic disagreement over the nature and functions of MAS as a political organization. Many radicals, intent on preserving their ideological purity at all costs, are apparently content to have MAS function more as a pressure group than a party. The fact that MAS has traditionally not run its own presidential candidate reinforces this impression. In contrast, moderates want MAS to become a mainstream Venezuelan party—broad based, center leaning, reformist, and, above all, electorally successful. [redacted]

Freddy Munoz currently heads the largest hardline faction, known as the *halcones* (falcons), but other hardliners owe allegiance to either Pompeyo Marquez or Rafael Thielen. All of the radicals—including Petkoff—agree fundamentally that Venezuela's economy should be brought under state control. In foreign policy, they support the Sandinista revolution, sympathize with the Salvadoran insurgents, and favor normalization of relations with Cuba. [redacted]

Freddy Munoz, leader of MAS hardline faction. [redacted]



Bohemia

MAS moderates, known as *tucanes* (toucans), are headed by Bayardo Sardi, Juvencio Pulgar, and Carlos Raul Hernandez. This group, which reportedly comprises slightly less than one-third of party members, embraces social democratic principles, strongly distrusts Moscow and Havana, and criticizes the Sandinistas for being irretrievably committed to Cuban and Soviet models. They supported Petkoff's presidential bid in 1983 because their desire to move the party toward the center dovetailed with his efforts to heal internal divisions and establish MAS as Venezuela's populist party of the future. As Petkoff's campaign manager, Sardi was blamed—notably by Munoz—for the 1983 electoral reversal. Recently, Pulgar, the chief of MAS's parliamentary faction, called for an end to postelection recriminations by the radicals, but it remains to be seen whether they will heed his appeal. [redacted]

[redacted] a large bloc of party members rejects affiliation with either the radical or moderate factions. This nonaligned "center" reportedly is an amalgam of Marxists and reformists whose principal goal is the survival of the party. In our view, however, these so-called independents lack both cohesion and direction and do not constitute a distinct faction. [redacted]

**The Coming Party Showdown**

The absence of formal party leadership for more than a year attests to MAS's deep internal divisions. A party convention scheduled for the fall of 1984 was quietly postponed, presumably in an effort to avert an open split. [redacted]

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Recently, as if to acknowledge the crisis MAS is facing, party leaders agreed to a new formula for selecting delegates to the national convention now set for June. For the first time in its history, MAS will choose more than 1,000 delegates in open primary elections. At the convention, these representatives will select—by an absolute majority—a general secretary and president. The new rules appear to throw the internal election process wide open and give rise to a variety of intriguing possibilities. [redacted]

The radicals reportedly have gained the upper hand within the party and it is probable that Munoz will be elected general secretary, although perhaps not on the first ballot. Marquez is also a candidate, but his support has eroded considerably. [redacted] Nevertheless, his stature as founder and party leader make him a good bet to become MAS's new president—an ill-defined, largely ceremonial post created in 1980 and originally occupied by Petkoff. [redacted]

Because of the innovative nature of the delegate selection process, however, predictions regarding the convention's outcome are hazardous. For example, it is possible that Munoz will be forced to cut a deal with the moderates in order to gain their support on a second or subsequent ballot. If so, he may agree to support Bayardo Sardi for president as his part of a trade-off. Whatever the outcome, the June gathering will be an excellent barometer of the rank-and-file mood and current power balance within MAS. [redacted]

It seems likely that the desire of most factional leaders to hold the party together will triumph and that the radicals will avoid pushing their advantage to the limit. A complete victory for the radicals on party offices and platform would probably further marginalize the party. Too vigorously advocating friendly ties with Castro, for example, would rekindle memories of Cuban subversion in the 1960s. Also, the moderates might bolt the party if the radicals refuse to compromise. [redacted]

#### Outlook

Even if the divisions are papered over at the convention, agreeing on party strategy for the presidential campaign in 1988 will remain a potential

time bomb. Petkoff, at 53, remains energetic and ambitious and likely will seek a second chance to run as MAS's presidential candidate. In pursuing this goal, however, he is apparently swimming against the tide of party opinion. We believe the unrealistic expectations and dashed hopes associated with Petkoff's effort in 1983 militates against a replay of his candidacy. [redacted]

[redacted] all factions reportedly agree that, if MAS is to make a comeback in 1988, it must support one of the major-party candidates. But the agreement ends here. The radicals, reportedly with Castro's blessings, favor former president Carlos Andres Perez—who heads Democratic Action's populist wing. They believe that Perez's election would provide the best opportunity to strengthen the radical left and reduce Venezuela's support of US policies in Central America. The moderates, however, reject Perez as corrupt and too sympathetic to Cuba. They prefer COPEI Secretary General Eduardo Fernandez, arguing that the historic trend of alternating AD and COPEI administrations favors Fernandez and that his election with MAS support would enhance public trust in the left and move the party toward the political mainstream. [redacted]

There is ample precedent for MAS support of a non-MAS presidential candidate—indeed, the 1983 election was the first time MAS had ever run a candidate of its own. If the party can unite behind a winning major-party candidate in 1988—which in itself would be a first—it might at last get on the road to becoming a viable force. [redacted]

Another possibility would be for MAS and other leftist parties to merge with the left wing of Democratic Action in a new populist coalition. Carlos Andres Perez, who already is actively seeking the AD nomination for a second presidential term, has wide voter appeal, but powerful forces within the party—including President Jaime Lusinchi and other orthodox faction leaders—strongly oppose him. If the former President were to be denied the nomination, he might join forces with MAS to form a new leftist electoral coalition that would back his candidacy.

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Such a party realignment appears unlikely at this juncture, but steadily deteriorating social and economic conditions over the next few years would make it more plausible. Under those conditions, a radicalized electorate might well cast about for an alternative to the two major parties, and with Perez to give it respectability a leftist coalition might become a formidable political instrument.

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## Colombia and the Caribbean Basin Initiative

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Since the 1970s, Bogota has placed increasing importance on expanding commercial and political ties to the Caribbean Basin countries. President Betancur, committed to supporting stability in the region, has drawn up bold plans to provide aid to the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) beneficiaries. While Bogota is moving to implement trade and assistance agreements, we believe Betancur will lack the financial resources and domestic political support to increase direct aid to the CBI in the year and a half remaining in his term in office. Despite Betancur's interest in contributing to regional stability, we believe Colombian businesses will increasingly seek to use the CBI to facilitate entry into the US market.

### Colombia Turns to the Caribbean

Bogota's historical identification of Colombia as an Andean nation began to change during the 1970s, when the political leadership rediscovered its forgotten Atlantic coast. The renewed interest was spurred by the rapid growth in illegal economic activities—such as cattle smuggling to Venezuela and marijuana growing and trafficking—and the exploration and discovery of sizable natural gas, coal, and nickel deposits. The region's potential as a source of economic riches and political dispute kept Bogota's interest in the Caribbean Basin high. Former Foreign Minister Lemos in July 1982 affirmed that Colombia's more activist policy in the Caribbean was a natural consequence of the dynamic growth of its Atlantic region.

After reviewing US Embassy reports, we conclude Colombia was motivated by four basic considerations in developing a Caribbean policy: the political need to assert itself as a regional power; the economic need to penetrate new markets for noncoffee exports, given poor sales prospects in traditional OECD markets; the need to develop allies in the event of territorial disputes with Venezuela and Nicaragua; and the desire to promote stability to counter a growth of leftist movements in the Caribbean.

Colombia's commercial relations with the Caribbean expanded greatly during 1978-82 under the administration of former President Turbay Ayala. With the saturation of markets for Colombian products in Europe, the Andean Group, the United States, and Japan, Bogota increasingly viewed the Caribbean Basin as an attractive alternative. With 38 million inhabitants, the Caribbean countries buy \$25 billion in goods. Colombian trade with Central America and the Caribbean rose from \$245 million in 1978 to \$559 million in 1980. In 1982, Turbay announced Colombia would increase by \$5 million its contribution to the special fund of the Caribbean Development Bank, to raise its total contribution to \$21 million.

### Joining the CBI

Neither rich enough to be included as a donor nation nor poor enough to be considered a potential recipient, Colombia was left out of the original plans for the Caribbean Basin Initiative in 1981. Unhappy with this exclusion, the Turbay government feared a preferential treatment given to Caribbean and Central American competitors in the US market would undermine Colombia's nontraditional exports. The government also resented its exclusion from the meeting of regional political powers convened in Nassau in July 1981 to coordinate aid programs in the Caribbean. After several months of dogged complaints and behind-the-scenes maneuvering, Colombia was admitted to the coordinating group in March 1982.

The Turbay government responded with a major development assistance program for the Caribbean Basin. Bogota offered \$50 million in direct aid, a small amount compared to \$2.3 billion pledged by the United States, Canada, Venezuela, and Mexico, but an unprecedented financial commitment by a Colombian government to project its influence into

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the region. Colombia's \$50 million would help finance technical programs, workers' training, and cooperative development in the region. Bogota also made available \$240 million in trade credit. Central American and Caribbean nations would each have a standing \$10 million line of credit to finance Colombian imports, according to US Embassy reports.

#### **Policies Under Betancur**

**Bold Plans.** President Betancur took office in August 1982 with plans to continue Turbay's policy of promoting relations with the Caribbean. [redacted]

[redacted] he endorsed an ambitious program to expand Colombia's contribution to the CBI multilateral development effort. The program included export credits, central bank deposits, and new technical assistance programs, particularly in agriculture. Over the past two years, Betancur has favored the expansion of maritime transport to various Caribbean countries and has given serious consideration to creating cultural institutions and universities that would act as focal points for strengthening cooperation with the Caribbean. For example, Betancur advocated the creation, with UN support, of a "University of the Caribbean" at Cartagena.

Bogota has proposed the creation of a regional finance corporation, aimed at helping Colombian businesses extend their activities into Central America and the Caribbean area. The corporation would assist business interests in the region in making purchases in Colombia; aid Colombian exporters of goods and services; help Colombian builders expand into the Caribbean area; and facilitate the purchasing of property in the region by Colombians. It would also provide leasing and factoring services to assist trade and help Colombian direct investors expand in the Basin.

**Signs of Progress.** Betancur has been unable to achieve most of his goals largely because of domestic economic priorities, such as the ailing economy and the faltering peace truce, that demand his attention. Bogota nevertheless has begun to implement some initiatives. Between 1981 and 1983 Colombia doubled its commercial credit and financial investment in

several Caribbean Basin countries. Proexpo, the export promotion agency, has approved new subsidies for exporters that sell goods to Caribbean countries. Some Central American countries have benefited from Colombian trade credit lines. El Salvador, for example, has imported agricultural goods and machinery and construction material and equipment from Colombia, according to the US Embassy. Other countries, however, have encountered difficulties using these credit lines because commercial bankers are reluctant to do the necessary paperwork for small transactions of meager profitability.

Bogota currently is working on several commercial deals with CBI beneficiaries, according to press and Embassy reports. A \$5 million line of credit is being extended to Jamaica to finance Colombian exports, and similar agreements are being studied for Barbados, Guyana, Suriname, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Coal sales to Jamaica and the Dominican Republic are being negotiated. In addition, press reports indicate that Colombia will help construct a proposed center for the performing arts, promote two-way investment projects, and assist technical training in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The US Embassy says that last November Panama and Colombia signed a memorandum of understanding that would permit planning for an electrical transmission line between the Urra II hydroelectric project in Panama City by the early 1990s.

#### **Constraints**

Although Bogota views the economic development of the Caribbean Basin as desirable, external financial difficulties will probably continue to restrict its ability to increase aid flows to the CBI beneficiaries. Colombia's payments position will remain under stress because of export revenue fluctuations for its key legal revenue earners—coffee, sugar, and bananas. Moreover, new foreign credit has been reduced to a trickle because of Betancur's resistance to sign a formal agreement with the IMF, which has heightened bankers' reluctance to increase their exposure in Colombia without IMF monitoring. Over

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the past year, foreign exchange reserves—including gold—dropped 40 percent to about \$1.8 billion, and they continue to drop, according to US Embassy reports. As Bogota battles a cash-flow crisis with self-imposed austerity, we doubt that Betancur will be in a position to increase direct aid to the CBI.

Domestic criticism of government assistance to Caribbean countries could intensify during Betancur's remaining year and a half in office. Colombian businessmen are publicly expressing concern that many US businesses prefer to invest in the Caribbean Basin rather than Colombia. Instead of providing economic assistance and trade preferences to their competitors, these businessmen may press the government to redirect financial support to Colombia to revitalize their own industries. For example, some Colombian businessmen want assistance in developing San Andres as a window to increase sales of Colombian products to Central America. They also want the government to bolster incentives to exporters.

#### **Implications for the United States**

Despite Betancur's interest in promoting regional stability, we believe Colombia's private sector will increasingly seek to use the CBI to facilitate entry into the US market, especially to avoid US quotas, tariffs, and restrictions. Colombian trade officials, whose support for the CBI has been, at best, lukewarm during the Betancur administration, may tacitly encourage businesses to explore this option as Colombia's own economic predicament worsens. With growing numbers of countervailing duty cases against Colombian exports, Colombian products could offset some competitive disadvantages by rerouting shipments through the CBI countries.



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## Suriname: The Labor Challenge to Bouterse

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After five years of relying on force, coercion, and intimidation to eliminate political opposition in Suriname, only organized labor remains a potential challenger to the regime of Army Commander Desire Bouterse. The leaders of the country's four labor federations have been the most vocal advocates of democratization, but their ability to influence military policies has been uncertain over the past two years. Bouterse had been willing to give organized labor—which represents more than half of the country's work force—a voice in the government in exchange for its support because he fears that Suriname's deteriorating economy would provoke widespread labor unrest. Last month, however, labor's refusal to accept needed belt-tightening and the opposition of the leaders of the C-47, Moederbond, and Civil Servant Organization (CLO) to Bouterse's Minister of Labor led to the expulsion of their representatives from the coalition government.

We believe—based on Embassy  reporting—that the country's economic decline and Bouterse's toughening posture toward the unions are likely to further erode labor's leverage with the military. The US Embassy reports that military leaders view labor's opposition, and particularly the recalcitrant stance of C-47 leader Fred Derby, as a direct challenge to their authority. The military's decisive response reiterates Bouterse's refusal to share power and his willingness to permit only those groups to participate in government that play by his rules.

### Labor's Initial Leverage

The regime's hardened position toward the unions contrasts with its reluctance to crack down on labor last year. A six-week wildcat strike in the country's vital bauxite sector in early 1984 demonstrated labor's ability to challenge the regime. Unaccustomed to the economic deterioration that has beset the country since the Dutch suspended aid in 1982, Surinamese workers took an unprecedented stand against the military in December 1983 by refusing to accept proposed tax increases. Fearful that the strike

would escalate into political protests, Bouterse compromised to avoid a military confrontation with the workers. The regime suspended the proposed taxes, discharged the civilian Prime Minister and his Cabinet, and offered labor and business a voice in government to help solve the country's growing financial problems. In February 1984, a coalition government of military, labor, and business representatives was formed and mandated to propose a new political and economic structure for the country.  25X1

A number of factors contributed to the military's restrained response and also helped to embolden the workers to oppose the military-backed government. According to US officials in Paramaribo, the US-led intervention in Grenada in October 1983 encouraged many Surinamers to believe that Bouterse would not dare to use force against the strikers. For their part, Suriname's military rulers reportedly worried that violence against the workers would provide Washington with a pretext to invade the country. In addition, US officials have commented that Bouterse was unprepared for the high political costs the regime paid for executing 15 democratic opponents in 1982. The military's brutal tactics alienated the Surinamese people and isolated the country internationally. Unable to force a solution to the labor crisis, the military was dependent on bauxite union leader Fred Derby to rein in workers. Embassy  reporting suggested that Bouterse had come to realize that he needed the cooperation of the unions and businesses to ensure the survival of his regime.  25X1

The growth of labor's leverage with the military was based on two factors—Bouterse's fear that labor unrest could pose a serious threat to his regime and the desire of the military to co-opt labor support. Within this atmosphere, labor leaders have been able to wield considerable influence in forestalling a decline in workers' standards of living and in

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**Surinamese Labor Federations**

Name	Leadership	Estimated Membership, 1984 <sup>a</sup>	International Affiliation	Comments
Central-47 (C-47)	Fred Derby	13,000 members, 21 unions <sup>b</sup>	No foreign affiliation, but unofficial contacts with foreign trade unions; US Embassy reports frequent contacts between union officials and Soviet diplomats in Paramaribo.	Proleftist and most politically active; allied with the left-leaning Nationalistic Republic Party, which was outlawed in 1980; represents influential bauxite and agricultural workers; 3,500 bauxite workers are the best organized group of Surinamese workers.
Federation of Civil Servant Organizations (CLO)	Hendrik Sylvester	13,000 members, 15 unions	None	Mainly civil servants and teachers; generally pro-West and democratic.
Confederation of Trade Unions in Suriname ("De Moederbond")	Fred Van Russel	9,000 members, 34 unions	AIFLD; Caribbean Congress of Labor; International Confederation of Free Trade Unions	Close ties with Dutch labor unions; apolitical; traditional democratic structure; leader Cyrill Daal executed along with 14 others by the military in December 1982; prefers to work cautiously with regime to establish democratic framework.
Progressive Workers Organization (PWO)	Ramon Cruden	5,000 members, 11 unions	Confederation of Latin American Trade Unions (CLAT); World Confederation of Labor (WCL)	Represents retail, office, hotel, and light industry workers; no political affiliation, but leader willing to work with Bouterse.

<sup>a</sup> The US Embassy reports that more than half of Suriname's labor force of approximately 120,000 is represented by a union and about 30 percent—some 40,000 workers—are members of 81 individual unions and at least nine independent unions.

<sup>b</sup> Number of affiliated unions based on 1977 data from the US Embassy.

[redacted]

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moderating many of the regime's policies. The US Embassy reports that, for most of the past year, the regime protected the workers' interests, often to the detriment of businessmen and the country's economic health. Labor peace apparently was more important to Bouterse than solving Suriname's economic problems. [redacted]

regime is establishing a democratic framework. In addition, [redacted] Bouterse views the establishment of democratic structures as the way to expand the regime's narrow base of support and to quiet domestic and international critics. In their recent confrontation with the military over the Minister of Labor and a planned wage freeze, however, we believe union leaders may have overestimated Bouterse's commitment to democratization and the extent of their influence with him. Reporting from the Embassy [redacted] [redacted] indicates that the military's

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In the regime's search for Western aid, labor has been a linchpin in the military's efforts to create a democratic image, according to Embassy [redacted] sources. US officials in Paramaribo report that Bouterse frequently has pointed to labor and business participation in government as evidence that his

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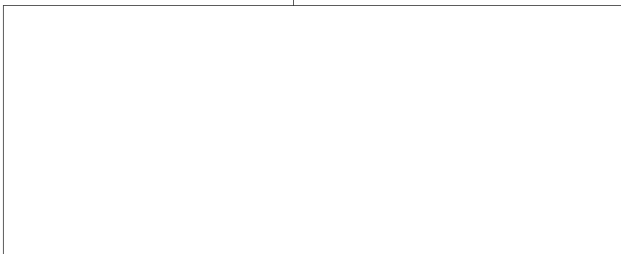
primary concern had become the growing political challenge posed by the antagonistic and unpredictable Derby. [redacted]

**The Military's Hardening Tactics**

Embassy reports indicate that in recent months the country's weakening economy, the regime's failure to procure substantial foreign funds, and the dim outlook for recovery have combined to harden the military's stance against the labor unions. We believe—based on US Embassy [redacted]—that the temporary closure of ALCOA's alumina refinery in Jamaica earlier this year heightened Bouterse's concerns about the future of ALCOA's SURALCO subsidiary in Suriname. [redacted]

[redacted] new wage demands by workers during ongoing contract renegotiations might prompt SURALCO to close its operation, which provides nearly half of Suriname's foreign exchange earnings. According to Embassy officials, SURALCO has warned the Surinamese Government that another prolonged strike would cause the firm to close. [redacted]

US Embassy [redacted] indicates that Suriname's military rulers are taking steps to gain control over the unions. [redacted]



[redacted] By placing reliable supporters [redacted] in key government ministries, Bouterse probably hopes to weaken labor's ability to mount another challenge to his regime. [redacted]

Internal problems also have limited the effectiveness of the unions in lobbying for political change. The four federations occasionally have cooperated on economic issues but rarely on political matters. Fearing retaliation by Bouterse's security forces, most unionists have hesitated to adopt a political agenda. According to the US Embassy, only C-47 leader

Derby has openly opposed the regime's economic and political policies. Embassy [redacted] reports indicate, for example, that Derby became obsessed with trying to oust the Labor Minister after the minister fired an employee who had been serving as an informant for Derby. In our judgment, Derby may have reacted desperately to what he perceived as the military's efforts to displace his influence in the government. [redacted]

[redacted] Bouterse's expulsion of labor from the government was designed to isolate Derby. [redacted] Bouterse has since invited the leaders of the CLO and Moederbond to rejoin the government. Embassy officials comment that Derby's actions have played into Bouterse's hands by affording him an opportunity to split the labor movement. The Embassy indicates that CLO and Moederbond leaders generally appear to have concluded that some influence with the military is better than none and are willing to work under Bouterse's ground rules. In addition, many of the rank-and-file members of Derby's unions, concerned about losing their jobs should SURALCO close, probably are beginning to recognize that they will have to make some concessions. [redacted]

**Outlook**

Although tensions between workers and the regime are likely to grow as the government tightens austerity, the military appears to have neutralized the labor movement as a potential opponent, at least for the near term. By isolating Derby and co-opting the support of other labor leaders, Bouterse has succeeded in dividing the unions. Although union leaders appear to have little leverage to use to continue opposing government policies, they probably will try to cushion the fall in living standards by lobbying for wage concessions. [redacted]

[redacted] Bouterse probably wants to avoid an estrangement with workers that would undercut his efforts to broaden support. Bouterse's willingness to compromise, however, is changeable. Unless the regime secures adequate foreign assistance to alleviate the country's fiscal problems, the regime is likely to

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face renewed labor unrest over the longer term. Surinamese workers have shown a propensity to react spontaneously and, as Bouterse's options for peaceful solutions narrow, the possibilities for violence are likely to grow.

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**Trinidad and Tobago:  
Fragile Labor-Government  
Relations** [redacted]

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Trinidad and Tobago's deepening economic troubles and efforts by the ruling People's National Movement (PNM) to restrain wage increases are setting the stage for more fractious relations between the government and the country's influential trade unions. The outcome of wage negotiations between the government and the important Oilfield Workers' Trade Union (OWTU) will be a key indicator of labor militancy in the coming months. Leftist elements have so far not had much success in obtaining support in the labor movement, particularly in the OWTU, for aggressive actions. This lack of progress in part reflects the unwillingness of rank-and-file unionists to risk losing their jobs in the face of rising unemployment. Nevertheless, we believe labor unrest is likely to grow next year because of the need by then for much tighter austerity measures. [redacted]

strikes and stage demonstrations to gain concessions in negotiations with the government and industry, and to frequently accuse foreign multinational firms of exploitation, according to the US Embassy. [redacted]

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The mainstay of the CPTU is the OWTU—founded in 1937 and the oldest and most powerful union in Trinidad. Although the union represents workers in a variety of industries, its membership is based in the oil industry and is largely composed of workers from the country's two government-owned refineries. George Weekes—who has dominated the union for 22 years—over most of his career has pursued a militantly antigovernment line, prompted by a strong personal animosity toward the late Prime Minister Williams. The election in 1982 of several leftists to leadership positions in the union further radicalized union policies. Because of the OWTU's activist leadership and the vital importance of the oil sector to the country's economy—its sales contribute 75 percent of export earnings and half of GDP—the OWTU was able to win generous wage increases, ranging between 80 and 130 percent, during the oil boom of the 1970s and early 1980s. [redacted]

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**Background**

Unlike most Eastern Caribbean political leaders, PNM founder Eric Williams, who headed the government from 1956 until his death in 1981, never held union office and led a party with no official trade union links. Nevertheless, until the early 1980s, the PNM enjoyed considerable support from, and control over, those unions that had predominantly black membership and feared any growth of East Indian influence in politics. To help maintain control and support of the country's labor movement, Williams made a practice of appointing labor leaders to the Senate. [redacted]

**Labor's Reactions to Austerity**

Over the past year, OWTU leaders have encountered little success in planning a strategy with other Trinidadian unions to deal with the country's deteriorating economic situation and industrial relations climate. [redacted]

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Most unions belong to one of two competing labor federations, the moderate Trinidad and Tobago Labor Congress (TTLC) or the smaller and more radical Council of Progressive Trade Unions (CPTU). Neither the TTLC nor its member unions endorse political candidates, but TTLC unionists traditionally have voted for the People's National Movement. The CPTU unions generally have been more politically active, and most of their members have voted for opposition political parties. In keeping with this opposition inclination, CPTU union leaders have been more prone than their TTLC counterparts to call

[redacted] A strike against several foreign firms last May quickly fizzled when 95 percent of the striking OWTU members returned to work voluntarily rather than risk losing their jobs. According to press reports, 2,000 public-sector workers demonstrated outside the Prime Minister's office in March until they were dispersed by police, but the demonstration leaders failed to get an appointment to discuss their grievances. In contrast, a similar demonstration staged last year resulted in the government acceding to workers' demands. [redacted]

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**Trinidad and Tobago Labor Organizations**

Union	Leader	Membership	International Affiliation
<b>Trinidad and Tobago Labor Congress</b>			
National Union of Government Federated Workers (NUGFW)	Nathaniel Crichlow	38,000	Public Services International
Seaman and Waterfront Workers' Trade Union (SWWTU)	Vernon Glean	8,000	International Transport Workers' Federation (London); International Confederation of Free Trade Unions; International Metal Workers' Federation
Public Services Association	Arnim Greaves	25,000	Caribbean Congress of Labor; Public Services International; International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
Trinidad and Tobago Teachers' Union (TTTU)	Frederick Powder	300	World Council of Teaching Profession; International Federation of Free Teachers' Union; Caribbean Union of Teachers
All Trinidad Sugar General Workers Trade Union (ATSGWTU)	Basdeo Panday	15,000	
Amalgamated Workers Union (AWU)	Cyril Lopez	6,000	International Union of Foods and Allied Workers Association; International Federation of Industrial Organization and General Workers Union; Caribbean Congress of Labor
The Brotherhood of Construction and Industrial Workers Union (BCIWU)	William Rampersad	5,000	None
Communications Workers Union (CWU)	Ian Clarke	3,000	Postal, Telephone, and Telegraph International
Contractors and General Workers Trade Union (CGWTU)	Owen C. Hinds	2,900	None
Federated Tourist Taxicab Union (FTTU)	Archie Daniel	300	None
Union of Commercial and Industrial Workers (UCIW)	Kelvin Gonzales	4,200	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions; International Federation of Commercial, Clerical, and Technical Employees
Bank and General Workers' Union (BGWU)	Michael Als	900	None
<b>Council of Progressive Trade Unions</b>			
Islandwide Cane Farmers Trade Union (ICFTU)	Raffique Shah	3,000	None
Transport and Industrial Workers' Union (TIWU)	Clive Nunez	7,000	None
Oilfield Workers' Trade Unions (OWTU)	George Weekes	17,000	International Federation of Chemical Energy and General Workers' Union
<b>Not affiliated with either federation</b>			
Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association (TTUTA)	Anthony Garcia	12,000	World Council of Teaching Profession

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Union leaders find themselves in an increasingly difficult position. With the economic downturn, employers are retrenching and targeting hardcore union members and agitators, [redacted]

[redacted] In response, OWTU leader Weekes—once considered the most radical labor leader in the country—has adopted a more conservative approach in recent years.

Nonetheless, his frequent absences from the country have left much of the day-to-day decisionmaking in the hands of leftist Errol McLeod, Weekes's deputy and head of the union's militant faction. McLeod expected to succeed Weekes as OWTU leader when the latter announced his plans to retire in January. Weekes reversed his decision, however, and in March was reelected for another three-year term. We believe that Weekes's rethinking probably was motivated in part by pressure from union moderates concerned by McLeod's radical policies. [redacted]

[redacted] former Minister of Labor Errol Mahabir reportedly urged Weekes to seek reelection, reflecting the government's view that Weekes is more amenable to negotiation than McLeod. Weekes reportedly agreed to discuss wage cuts with the government in exchange for its promise not to reduce the work force in the oil industry. [redacted]

[redacted]

In recent months, OWTU unionists have not actively pursued a new wage and benefit package because union leaders have been awaiting the outcome of the government's purchase of the Texaco refinery at Pointe a Pierre. The government signed an agreement in March to buy all of Texaco's land-based assets in Trinidad for \$189 million. The Texaco refinery and the government-owned Trintoc refinery have been overstaffed and underutilized since 1982; both refineries last year operated at less than 25 percent of capacity. [redacted]

[redacted] in an effort to centralize its refining operations and make the industry more viable, the government tentatively plans to close the Trintoc refinery, a move that would eliminate as many as 2,600 jobs. [redacted]

**Outlook**

We believe Prime Minister Chambers can keep the lid on labor dissidence through 1985. The popularity of the government's purchase of Texaco's assets probably will enable it to stall on wage and benefit negotiations while it prepares for elections, which, [redacted]

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[redacted] will be held in December. The government is aware that, assuming it wins the election, it will have to deal with a three-year accord with the OWTU that is likely to set the guidelines for other unions. Facing a serious challenge from an increasingly unified opposition, the Chambers government also is likely to stall on reducing jobs at the Trintoc refinery—it is located in a PNM stronghold—and elsewhere in the public sector. [redacted]

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[redacted] After the election period, we believe the potential for unrest will increase as austerity measures take full effect. [redacted] ruling party planners believe the 1986 budget will include a currency devaluation, increased taxes, and massive cuts in government subsidies and other expenditures needed to gain IMF support. We believe an IMF accord would require the government to try to cap wage increases. The closure of the Trintoc refinery would be a particularly volatile issue, which could prompt the OWTU to reconsider its pledge earlier this year not to strike should the government take over the Texaco refinery. The government is aware that these actions probably would trigger strikes or demonstrations by public-sector employees, the OWTU, and possibly other CPTU unions. The appointment in February of ruling party hardliner John Donaldson as Labor Minister after nine years as Minister of National Security, in our view, is a clear message from the government to the unions that it intends to take a tough position. As Labor Minister, Donaldson—considered a strong minister because of his long association with the security services and loyalty to the PNM—will be responsible for maintaining control over wage negotiations. [redacted]

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## Latin America Briefs

### Dominican Republic

#### Communist Paramilitary Training [redacted]

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Leftist groups in the Dominican Republic have been increasing efforts to improve their paramilitary capabilities. [redacted] about 350 leftists—mostly members of parties affiliated with the Communist-dominated Dominican Leftist Front—received military training in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Libya during 1983 and 1984. In addition, 20 to 30 members of the Dominican Communist Party have served with insurgent forces in El Salvador since 1983.

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[redacted] members of Juan Bosch's Dominican Liberation Party have received military instruction in Nicaragua since 1981. Communist leader Isa Conde also has reportedly obtained a training commitment—probably modest—from the Vietnamese. [redacted]

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Although we lack details on the location or duration of the military training, we believe that Cuba trains the largest number. Havana not only has traditionally close ties with Dominican leftists, but, more important, has the facilities to provide them with a broad range of instruction—including ideological and organizational training—tailored to their specific needs. Those training in Nicaragua almost certainly outnumber those receiving instruction in Libya, a relative newcomer on the Caribbean scene. [redacted]

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Despite the training, none of the principal Dominican leftist organizations is pushing for immediate revolutionary activity. US Embassy reports indicate that Juan Bosch—bolstered by recent public opinion polls showing an increase in popular support for his party—continues to emphasize the electoral path.

[redacted] there is strong opposition within the Communist Party to armed action. The existence of a well-trained cadre, however, provides leftist leaders with the means to take more aggressive steps should public discontent with falling standards of living dramatically increase in the coming months. [redacted]

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### Cuba-Zaire

#### Cautious Relations [redacted]

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Relations between Cuba and Zaire may be improved by a Zairian-proposed meeting in July of a joint commission to set up cooperation accords and by Havana's invitation to the Zairian Foreign Minister to visit Cuba. Recent Cuban efforts have helped keep the Zairian Embassy in Havana open. [redacted]

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[redacted] Havana offered Zairian personnel the chancery and residences free of charge. [redacted] the Cuban Embassy in Kinshasa is trying to foster commercial relations by offering to help Zaire exploit its natural resources, specifically timber and zinc. [redacted]

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Zairian President Mobutu may see improved relations with Cuba as a way to bring about a political solution in Angola which includes UNITA, and improve his regional image with radical black African states. Nonetheless, Kinshasa probably will continue to be cautious in its dealings with Havana. [redacted]

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[redacted] Mobutu has been wary of Cuban overtures. He recently closed a Cuban cultural exhibition because of the pressure tactics used by Cuban officials in obtaining authorization for the display. Mobutu, however, may permit Foreign Minister Mokolo to visit Cuba in the next few months to initiate dialogue on Angola and to discuss possible economic cooperation. Havana probably shares these goals, and through them hopes to curb Zairian support to UNITA. [redacted]

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**St. Lucia**

**Problems for the Left** [redacted]

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George Odum's difficulties in trying to salvage his leftist Progressive Labor Party are likely to strengthen the moderate political opposition in St. Lucia. US Embassy reports indicate that Michael "Mikey" Pilgrim, former interim Prime Minister and deputy leader of the party, intends to rejoin the moderate St. Lucia Labor Party, led by Julian Hunte. [redacted]

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Pilgrim's departure, on top of the recent exodus of other party leaders, could spell the collapse of the four-year-old Progressive Labor Party—a splinter group of the St. Lucia Labor Party. In an effort to retain the party's viability, Odum has shown interest in trying to forge an alliance with the Hunte's party. Both sides reportedly have held private talks since February. [redacted]

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[redacted] Hunte might string Odum along in negotiations until the 1987 elections in order to prevent him from concentrating on rebuilding the Progressive Labor Party. [redacted]

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**St. Vincent**

**Labor Party in Trouble** [redacted]

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The St. Vincent Labor Party, which was overwhelmingly defeated in the 1984 elections, has yet to show signs of making a comeback—ensuring relatively clear sailing for the 10-month-old government of Prime Minister Mitchell. Party members, aware that the dramatic loss resulted from voters' dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the country's economy, are still badly demoralized, [redacted]

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[redacted] Party leader Hudson Tannis reportedly has said that public support for the Labor Party continues to decline, noting that the party's defeat in a recent byelection caused the collapse of the organization's recovery plans. In addition, the loss of financial backing by businessmen has forced the shutdown of the party's newspaper. We believe the coming trial of former Labor Party Foreign Minister Arthur Williams on corruption charges will further damage the party's image. Although economic conditions have yet to improve under Mitchell's tutelage, the majority of the population blames the country's deterioration on the incompetence of the Labor Party administration. As a result, even if the Mitchell government loses popular support, the Labor Party probably will not profit anytime soon. [redacted]

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## Cuba Chronology

March 1985

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### *1 March*

The leader of the Uruguayan Broad Front, retired Gen. Liber Seregni, meets in Montevideo with Flavio Bravo.

Flavio Bravo tells Seregni of Castro's hope for the consolidation of the democratic process in Uruguay and other countries of the continent and of an effort to solve problems affecting Latin America.

In an interview at his reception in Havana, Mexican Foreign Secretary Sepulveda says the outlook for cooperation between Cuba and Mexico in all areas is vast.

### *2 March*

Fidel Castro meets with Ryoichi Kawai, president of the Japanese-Cuban economic conference. Castro underscores the economic measures adopted in Cuba in the agricultural, industrial, and service sectors.

### *4 March*

In a statement to Prensa Latina, Flavio Bravo says the inauguration of Uruguayan President Sanguinetti was a transcendental event because it is a reaffirmation of continental solidarity.

### *5 March*

*Granma* reports that Fidel Castro met with Oscar Alende, president of the Argentine Intransigent Party, who visited Cuba at the invitation of the Communist Party of Cuba.

The government issues a statement of support for the measures announced on 27 February by Nicaraguan authorities for a political solution to the Central American conflict.

The Fourth Federation of Cuban Women Congress STET opens in Havana. Fidel Castro, Jesus Montane, and others attend the opening ceremony.

The fifth session of the Yugoslavian-Cuban joint commission for economic, scientific-technical cooperation is held in Havana.

### *6 March*

Carlos Rafael Rodriguez and Isidoro Malmierca discuss bilateral relations with Mito Pejovski, member of the Yugoslav Federal Executive Council.

Spain's President Felipe Gonzalez says in Montevideo that his country's relations with Cuba are very good.

Soviet Construction Minister Georgiy A. Karavayev arrives in Cuba at the invitation of Jose Lopez Moreno, Minister of Construction. They will tour Cienfuegos and Santiago de Cuba.

**7 March**

The Ministry of Light Industry's union for refining and distributing petroleum plans to extract 800,000 tons of domestic crude oil this year.

**8 March**

Cuban Ambassador Carlos Lechuga condemns violations of basic human rights in El Salvador and Guatemala at the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva.

Fidel Castro presents awards to Vilma Espin, who is confirmed as president of the FMC, and others, and holds a reception for delegates to the Fourth FMC Congress.

Soviet Foreign Minister Andrey Gromyko holds talks in Moscow with government representatives from Cuba and Angola.

Levi Farah discusses bilateral relations and ways to promote cooperation in all fields with the Secretary of the People's Committee for the Foreign Liaison Bureau of Libya.

**9 March**

Yasir Arafat sends a message to Fidel Castro dealing with recent developments in the Middle East, particularly regarding the Palestine question and the Nonaligned Movement.

Fidel Castro and Spanish labor leader Nicolas Redondo discuss Spain's ties with NATO and Latin America's foreign debt during a meeting in Havana.

The Special Counselor of the Netherlands State Secretary of Foreign Trade, Dominique Dick, discusses developing trade relations with Foreign Trade Minister Ricardo Cabrizas in Havana.

A Cuban parliamentary delegation ends a visit to Colombia. The delegation met with government and political leaders, businessmen, and members of congress.

**10 March**

Foreign Trade Minister Cabrizas and Mito Pejovski sign a protocol and a draft agreement between the Cuban National Bank and the Yugoslav Bank for International Collaboration.

**11 March**

Foreign Trade Minister Cabrizas and Mexico's Secretary for Commerce and Industrial Development, Hector Hernandez Cervantes, sign a trade accord. More than 20 Cuban products will enter Mexico.

The Council of State issues a decree declaring official mourning until 13 March on the death of Konstantin Chernenko, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee of the Soviet Union.

Raul Castro, Jorge Risquet, and Lionel Soto depart for Moscow to attend the funeral of Konstantin Chernenko.

A condolence book on the death of Konstantin Chernenko is opened at the Soviet Embassy in Havana. Foreign Minister Malmierca, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, and Blas Roca sign the book.

The 13th Congress of the Postal Union of the Americas and Spain is held in Cuba. About 90 delegates and 21 countries will attend the first congress of this union to be held in Cuba.

**12 March**

Carlos Rafael Rodriguez receives the credentials of Manuel Araujo Hidalgo, the new Ecuadorean Ambassador to Cuba, and of Victor Bolojan, the new Romanian Ambassador.

Fidel Castro sends a message of condolence to Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, on the death of Konstantin Chernenko.

**14 March**

Raul Castro is received by Ethiopian Head of State Mengistu in Moscow. They discuss the international situation, especially the Horn of Africa, and bilateral relations.

Raul Castro and Angolan leader Jose dos Santos meet in Moscow to exchange views on current international issues, especially southern Africa and bilateral relations.

Politburo alternate member Jesus Montane receives Carlos Galliza, Secretary General of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, to discuss party relations.

In his interview with CBS correspondent Dan Rather, Fidel Castro strongly denies any involvement by his government in drug trafficking. He says there is neither consumption of drugs nor trafficking in Cuba.

Three members of the Cuban parliament make up the first parliamentary delegation to visit Bonn. They are received by Minister of State Moellemann to discuss bilateral relations.

Ecuador's special envoy Jaime Nebot Velasco arrives in Havana. Velasco and Acting Minister President of the State Committee for Economic Cooperation Melendez discuss developing trade relations.

**15 March**

In a CBS news interview, Fidel Castro does not rule out an effort to improve relations with Washington; he says he would not sacrifice his ties with other nations to please the United States.

Castro denies that souring diplomatic relations had kept him from attending the funeral of Soviet leader Chernenko.

Carlos Rafael Rodriguez meets in Havana with West German politician Wolf Brandendorf. They discuss ties between Latin America and Europe.

Raul Castro meets in Moscow with Sam Nujoma, president of the South-West Africa People's Organization. Raul reiterates Cuba's unconditional support for Namibia's independence.

**17 March**

Levi Farah, Minister Without Portfolio, arrives in Baghdad to discuss strengthening economic and trade cooperation with Iraqi officials.

Flavio Bravo meets in Tokyo with Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Shintaro Abe. Abe says his people are friendly toward Cuba because of its efforts in support of peace in Central America.

**20 March**

At a press conference in Havana, Ecuador's special envoy Velasco says the government of Leon Febres-Cordero is practicing a new philosophy in its cooperation with other countries.

General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee Mikhail Gorbachev and Konstantin Rusakov meet with Raul Castro, Jorge Risquet, and Lionel Soto to discuss deepening and perfecting relations.

Cuba and Ecuador sign a trade agreement in Havana. Ecuador's special envoy Velasco says the cooperation sets forth the relationship between the Bank of Ecuador and the National Bank of Cuba.

In Tokyo, Flavio Bravo denies speculation that relations between Cuba and the Soviet Union have deteriorated. He says Soviet-Cuban ties are at their best.

Cuba and Ecuador end one week of trade talks in Havana. Ecuador's special envoy Jaime Velasco, Isidoro Malmierca, and Ricardo Cabrizas discuss various economic issues.

**21 March**

Cuba and Sweden sign a note extending the trade agreement between the two countries. Ambassador Jan Stahl and Vice Minister of Culture Humberto Castello sign the agreement.

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The National Bank of Cuba reports that tougher Soviet trade demands will force Cuba to buy \$100 million in sugar on the world market. A similar purchase was made last year to meet commitments to Moscow.

**22 March**

At a meeting of the Association of Chiefs of Latin American Diplomatic missions in Japan, Flavio Bravo stresses the current difficult circumstances of Latin America's \$350 billion foreign debt.

Aleksey Antonov, Deputy Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Council of Ministers, receives Marcos Lage to discuss Soviet cooperation in the development of the machine-building industry in Cuba.

**23 March**

Politburo member Armando Hart arrives in Berlin on a stopover on his way to Budapest to attend the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party's 13th Congress.

**24 March**

In a *Paris Afrique-Asie* interview, Vice Foreign Minister Raul Viera says the USSR would support Cuba in case of open conflict with the United States.

**26 March**

The ninth meeting of public health coordinators from countries of the Nonaligned Movement begins in Havana. Minister of Public Health del Valle says health aid to Africa should be quick and free.

Havana officially announces the removal of Nivaldo Herrera from his position as president of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television and his replacement by Ismael Gonzalez.

A delegation from the Federation of Cuban Women, headed by Solia Herrera and Elena Perez, ends a visit to Western Sahara. They met with President 'Abd al-'Aziz.

**27 March**

Raul Castro and Vilma Espin pay homage to the heroes of the Battle of Stalingrad in a brief visit to Volgograd.

Politburo member Jorge Risquet meets with Congolese Minister of Forestry Henri Djombo, member of the Central Committee of the Congolese Labor Party.

**28 March**

Two technical banking agreements are signed in Havana regulating the lines of credit to the National Bank of Cuba by the Spanish Official Credit Institute.

Armando Hart meets in Budapest with Pak Song-chol, member of the Politburo of the Korean Workers' Party Central Committee and Maxime Grometz, member of the Secretariat of the French Communist Party.

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Prensa Latina reports in an interview with *Excelsior* that Fidel Castro said Latin America's foreign debt is an economic, political, and moral impossibility.

The Foreign Relations Committee of the Brazilian Congress unanimously approves a bill recommending that diplomatic relations be reestablished with Cuba.

**29 March**

At the Cuban Embassy in Moscow, Raul Castro presents The Orders of Anna Betancourt awards to leaders of women's organizations in Bulgaria, East Germany, the USSR, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan.

**30 March**

Fidel Castro receives delegation of the Argentine Communist Party headed by Secretary General Athos Fava.

**31 March**

In an interview in *Excelsior*, Fidel Castro says the Soviet Union cannot provide military protection for Nicaragua in case of direct intervention from the United States.



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