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**Latin America
Review** [Redacted]

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The Soviet Foreign Minister's visit to Mexico in early October apparently was initiated for the primary purpose of laying the groundwork for a visit by General Secretary Gorbachev next year, but the trip has major diplomatic value in its own right.

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The Castro regime reportedly is offering a number of material incentives to military reservists to entice them to volunteer for one-year tours of duty with the national police force. The recruitment program appears to be a direct response to the dramatic increase in crime in Cuba.

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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,

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**Latin America
Review** [Redacted]

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Articles

**Nicaragua's National Assembly:
Following the Sandinista Script** [Redacted]

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The Sandinistas are using the National Assembly—Nicaragua's legislative body—as a rubberstamp for regime legislative initiatives and to maintain a facade of political pluralism. The Assembly has drafted a new constitution that, while honoring civil liberties in the abstract, will provide a legal basis for the restriction of opposition activities, increased state intervention in the economy, and the consolidation of power by the Sandinista National Liberation Front, the ruling party. The regime tolerates only limited opposition in the Assembly, and, despite growing frustration with Sandinista steamroller tactics, the nominally independent parties lack the leverage to force fundamental changes. [Redacted]



*National Assembly President
Nunez* [Redacted]

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Camera Press ©

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The regime is in firm control of the Assembly. Delegates from the ruling party hold a clear majority of the legislature's 96 seats and control major committees as well as the influential seven-member directorate, according to press and US Embassy reports. The Assembly president, Carlos Nunez, is a member of the Sandinista National Directorate, the key policymaking group in Nicaragua. Moreover, the major democratic parties are excluded from the Assembly because they boycotted elections in 1984. The six non-Sandinista parties that participate hold a total of only 35 seats and, in any event, are generally docile, according to US Embassy reporting. [Redacted]

- Moreover, President Ortega commands broad veto power over Assembly initiatives and can assume all legislative functions during a recess or a state of emergency. [Redacted]

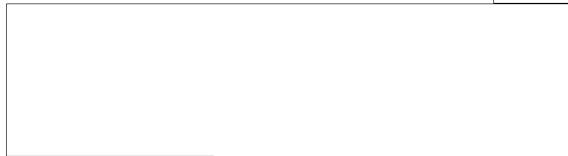
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Sandinista Priorities

The Sandinistas have used the Assembly, and particularly the process of drafting a new constitution, as part of their public diplomacy campaign. [Redacted]

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As extra insurance, regime tacticians have rigged the Assembly's rules of order in favor of the Sandinistas. For example:

- A low quorum requirement—60 percent of the delegates—has negated the possibility of a stalemate caused by opposition walkouts.

[Redacted] US Embassy reports indicate that Assembly members made highly publicized trips to Western Europe, Latin America, and the Soviet Bloc throughout 1985 to consult with constitutional experts. The Sandinista-controlled press gave wide coverage to Assembly-sponsored "open town

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Nicaraguan National Assembly

The National Assembly replaced the Council of State in 1985 as Nicaragua's legislative body.

Representation in the Assembly is determined, in part, by a complex formula on the basis of votes received in the 1984 elections; in addition, each party participating in the election was allotted one seat. Delegates serve six-year terms, and the next legislative election is scheduled for 1990.

Opposition parties in the Assembly, the so-called legal opposition, are ideologically left of center. Several, including the Independent Liberal Party and the Popular Social Christian Party, are democratic, but the opposition also includes several leftwing extremist groups—particularly the Popular Action Movement-Marxist Leninist—that criticize the regime for moving too slowly toward Communism. According to US Embassy officials, most of these parties are badly factionalized, and the regime is able to keep them divided:

Party (Seats Held)	Comments
Sandinista National Liberation Front (61)	Delegates vote as bloc. Speeches reportedly pre-approved by Assembly President Nunez.
Democratic Conservative Party (14)	Despite collaborationist credentials, highly critical of constitutional process.
Independent Liberal Party (9)	Most visible and critical opposition party. Currently under heavy pressure from the regime.
Popular Social Christian Party (6)	Left-of-center democratic party broadly supportive of the regime but critical of some domestic policies.
Nicaraguan Socialist Party (2)	US Embassy says party constantly fluctuates between pro-Sandinista and marginally anti-Sandinista positions.
Popular Action Movement-Marxist Leninist (2)	Small, ultraleftist party.
Communist Party of Nicaragua (2)	Small, ultraleftist party.

[Redacted]

meetings" held to canvas popular opinion. Underscoring Sandinista recognition of the importance of winning international applause, several meetings were held in the United States. [Redacted]

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The Assembly provides the regime with the means to demonstrate national consensus and further the revolutionary process. The US Embassy reports that key laws and decrees approved by the Assembly coincide with the executive branch's desires. For example, a controversial presidential decree suspending civil and political rights last year was ratified without modification. Press reports say that 20 of the 33 laws and decrees passed during the Assembly's initial session last year were presidential initiatives. [Redacted]

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The regime also uses the Assembly to enhance its legitimacy, especially in international circles. The Assembly hosts visits by parliamentary delegations from around the world and provides Nicaragua with entree into the International Parliamentary Union and the Latin American Parliament. Last year, Nunez used his participation at the Conference of the Presidents of Spanish-speaking Parliaments to explain Managua's Contadora and regional policies, according to press reports. [Redacted]

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A Rigged Game: The New Constitution

Drafting a new constitution that will cement Sandinista dominance has absorbed the Assembly's attention for the past year, and completion by early 1987 is a key objective, according to US Embassy reports. Although regime spokesmen repeatedly have billed the constitution as Nicaragua's "Magna Carta," early drafts point to a preponderance of power in the hands of the President and a continuation of the opposition's second-class status. Echoing President Ortega's comment that the revolution is irreversible, [Redacted]

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[Redacted] The US Embassy estimates that the constitution will be finished by year's end. [Redacted]

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The New Nicaraguan Constitution

The broad parameters of the constitution, scheduled to be promulgated in early 1987, have become increasingly clear in recent months. Preliminary drafts provide tremendous power to the President, emasculate the National Assembly as a check on the executive, provide for greater state control of the economy, and, while paying lipservice to political pluralism, clearly link Nicaragua's future to that of the Sandinista National Liberation Front. Unless the current round of debate in the Assembly leads to significant changes, a development we consider unlikely, important provisions will include:

	<i>Provision</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<i>Political pluralism</i>	<i>Exists without ideological restrictions except for those that seek a return to the conditions under former President Somoza or advocate a similar system.</i>	<i>Provision is so broad that any political opposition group advocating changes in the political system could be illegal.</i>
<i>Mixed economy</i>	<i>An economic model where diverse types of property (state-owned, private, and mixed) must serve the nation's higher interest and meet the needs of its inhabitants.</i>	<i>Allows broad limitations on private property and profits by assigning a public purpose to private property.</i>
<i>Direction for planning of the economy</i>	<i>The direction of the economy is a duty of the state.</i>	<i>Makes the state the manager of every aspect of the national economy.</i>
<i>Political parties</i>	<i>All citizens shall have the right to organize political parties with the object of, among others, aspiring to political power as long as those parties do not have as their goal a return to the conditions under Somoza.</i>	<i>Qualifies the right to organize by stipulating that the purpose of such parties must be to carry out a program that responds to the necessities of national development, as defined by the regime.</i>
<i>Responsibilities of the National Assembly</i>	<i>Grant and cancel the legal personality of civil and religious entities.</i>	<i>We believe these provisions will be abused to suppress political parties and perhaps the Catholic Church.</i>
<i>Presidential prerogatives</i>	<i>Appoints mayor of Managua. Assumes legislative power when Assembly in recess. Can declare state of emergency. Directs public administration.</i>	<i>Confirms preeminence of President.</i>
<i>Constitutional reform</i>	<i>The Assembly can reform the constitution at the request of the President, the president of the Assembly, at least 35 representatives, or by a petition with 10,000 signatures.</i>	<i>Opposition parties highly critical of this provision, which ensures that only the Sandinistas will be able to make changes in the constitution.</i>

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The Sandinistas have stacked the drafting process in their favor. A variety of reporting from the US Embassy [redacted] indicates:

- The Sandinistas and their allies among the opposition parties dominate the Assembly commissions charged with drafting the constitution.
- The "open town meetings" sponsored by the Assembly to foster "debate" on the constitution were a triumph of rhetoric over substance; comments and questions were subject to prior review and participation was limited to regime backers. [redacted]

Even so, there are signs that the constitution has caused concern among regime hardliners. [redacted]

[redacted] some ideologues believe the document will cause the ruling party to lose control of the revolution and provide an opening for the political enemies of the Sandinistas to divide the country and destabilize the government. [redacted]

[redacted] Sandinista militants see the constitution as a departure from the radical line of the revolution. Likewise, Interior Minister Borge reportedly is pushing for a constitutional provision to ban religious groups

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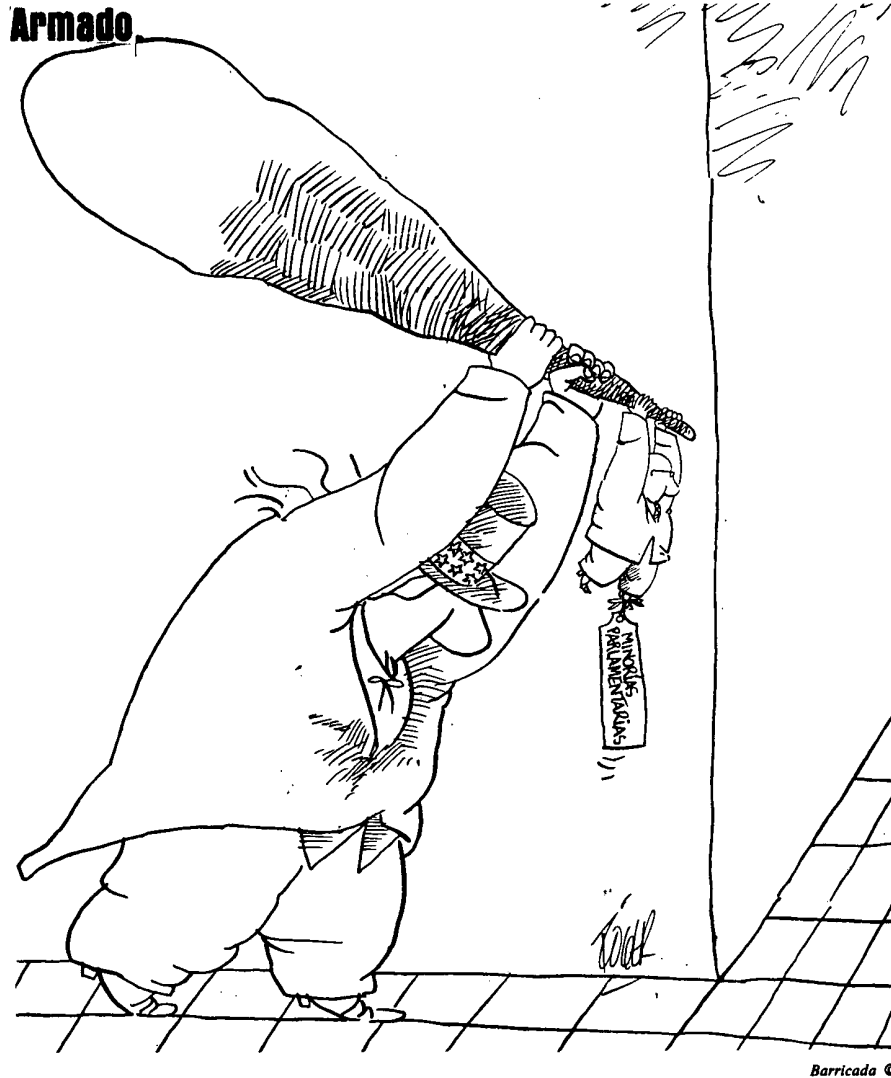
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Sandinista newspaper, Barricada, portrays the minority parties as supporters of US efforts to undermine the constitution.



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involved in politics.
 Borge believes the constitution should be based on a socialist model.

Opposition Ups and Downs

Minority parties, despite Sandinista restraints, have had some success in using the Assembly as a forum to publicize regime shortcomings. Press and US Embassy reporting indicates they strongly criticized the military draft decree and a minimum wage law last year. Short-lived walkouts frequently have

accompanied verbal blasts against the regime. According to the Embassy, the Independent Liberal Party has been in the forefront of opposition activity, especially in recent months. Party chieftains, for example, led the boycott of a special session called by the Sandinistas in July to pass a resolution condemning the vote by the US House of Representatives to resume aid to the insurgents.

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More recently, frustration over the pro-Sandinista bias of the constitution has spurred a new wave of opposition activity. In early September, five of the Assembly's six minority parties publicly demanded that the regime hold a national dialogue including the opposition parties not represented in the legislature, halt work on the constitution during the talks, and incorporate the results into the charter. The US Embassy says this was the first time the regime's loyal opposition—the Socialists and the Communists—joined with the increasingly antagonistic Independent Liberals and other opposition parties against a major Sandinista goal. [redacted]

From a broader perspective, internal Assembly machinations might provide an indicator of future Sandinista moves. A crackdown on opposition delegates, for example, could presage tougher tactics against the independent parties and other non-Sandinista groups. In addition, monitoring the affiliation of Assembly delegates with the different Sandinista factions over time could provide insights into shifts in the relative power of key leaders. [redacted]

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Opposition unity, however, quickly crumbled under Sandinista pressure. Following a conciliatory initial response, including a promise of free access to the media, the regime attacked the Independent Liberals by claiming the party had close links to the insurgents, according to Embassy and press reports. Independent Liberal Vice President Bayardo Guzman was temporarily detained by security forces. The Sandinistas have turned protests into grist for their propaganda mill by labeling the opposition groups obstructionists and dupes of the US Government. We agree with the Embassy's judgment that enough opposition representatives will attend Assembly debates on the constitution to preserve the image of pluralism. [redacted]

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What Lies Ahead

Largely because of its propaganda value, the Assembly will continue to have a high profile on the Nicaraguan political stage. We envisage membership in the Assembly as an increasingly important avenue for regime leaders to reward Sandinista loyalists. For their part, opposition groups, plagued by ideological and personal divisions, are unlikely to be able to exert enough leverage on the Sandinistas to force significant shifts in policy. Indeed, because of their small size and lack of popular backing, they will remain highly susceptible to Sandinista pressure.

[redacted]

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USSR-Mexico: Shevardnadze's Visit

The increased Soviet diplomatic activity in Mexico over the past two years will accelerate with Foreign Minister Shevardnadze's trip to Mexico City in early October. His visit apparently was initiated by Moscow for the primary purpose of laying the groundwork for a visit by General Secretary Gorbachev to Mexico next year. It has, however, a major diplomatic value in its own right. Besides possibly leading to the signing of cultural and diplomatic protocols, Shevardnadze's visit is aimed at bolstering some major Soviet objectives in bilateral relations with Mexico, including:

- Stimulating Mexico to increase flagging diplomatic support for Nicaragua and other regional revolutionary movements.
- Encouraging Mexico's participation in the international "peace" movement, especially the Group of Six. One result of the visit could be a joint statement endorsing peace and disarmament.
- Maintaining strong bilateral ties in hopes of continuing a valuable indirect benefit—the use of Mexico as a base for conducting intelligence activities against the Western hemisphere, primarily the United States. Shevardnadze may, for example, press a longstanding Soviet request for a new consulate on the US-Mexican border. []

Although Moscow seeks progress in these areas, it probably does not believe the visit will result in any breakthroughs. Mexico's heavy economic dependence on the United States is likely to limit Soviet ability to influence Mexico's regional policy and discourage Mexico from blatant anti-US behavior. Mexico probably will also still balk at establishing a Soviet consulate along the border. []

Shevardnadze's Objectives

Shevardnadze's trip will be his only announced stop in Latin America, and his delegation will be the highest ranking Soviet group to visit Mexico since 1959. The

visit clearly signals the priority Moscow assigns to strengthening the relationship and will follow an increasingly well-worn path. Over the past four years, the frequency of parliamentary delegation exchanges has roughly tripled and has included visits by the Soviet Ministers of Culture and Trade, ambassadors at large, and other high-ranking officials. In January and February 1986, the chief of the Foreign Ministry's First Latin American Department made two closely spaced visits, delivering a letter from Gorbachev to Mexican President de la Madrid and, according to press reports, discussing various international issues, including the situation in Central America. Moscow sent a Supreme Soviet delegation in April to discuss Mexico's role as an organizer of the Five Continent Peace Initiative—the Group of Six, which includes Mexico, Tanzania, Argentina, Greece, Sweden, and India—and followed that with a second such delegation in July. While the principal rationale for the trip probably is to firm up a Gorbachev visit next year, we expect the Soviet Foreign Minister to focus on several themes. []

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Support for Contadora. Support for Mexican involvement in the Contadora process has been a major theme in Moscow's propaganda, and we expect Shevardnadze may work the subject into his public and private discussions. The Soviets since 1983 have been eager to have Mexico play a larger regional role in Central America, hoping this would build up regional pressure against the United States to force it into a less "interventionist" stance in the area, []

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[] Moscow came to its position of supporting the Contadora process somewhat slowly. Despite the Mexican Ambassador's repeated requests in 1983 and early 1984 for more public Soviet support of the Contadora peace initiative, the Soviets at first demurred. Moscow declared that overt Soviet backing might sabotage Contadora's legitimacy as a regional initiative, []

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according to Embassy reporting. By mid-1984, however, a visiting Soviet delegation issued a joint communique with the Mexican Government generally endorsing the Contadora process as a route to peace in Central America. The delegation was featured prominently in *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*, and Soviet academic journals began to publish articles supporting Contadora. As US criticism of Nicaragua increased, the Soviet press increasingly praised Mexico's role as a regional peacemaker while disparaging what it termed US efforts to pressure Mexico into distancing itself from the Sandinistas.

[redacted]

The upturn in Soviet enthusiasm for Mexican involvement in regional affairs took place, however, at a time when Mexico's support for it was waning. A disintegrating economy increasingly dependent on US financial support, and de la Madrid's more conservative bent, caused Mexico to begin backing away from its support of Nicaragua in 1982, and, more recently, to cool toward, although not abandon, Contadora as well.

Plugging Arms Control. Another standard line in Soviet propaganda in Latin America—one we expect Shevardnadze to press—is the need for countries in the region to be active in supporting arms control issues. As a member of the Group of Six that is urging the superpowers to pursue nuclear disarmament, Mexico is likely to provide a receptive audience. Both Soviet and Mexican media have devoted extensive coverage to Mexico's participation in the Group's disarmament initiative. Moscow has used the issue to play to Mexico's aspirations as a Third World leader, to tout its own nuclear test ban, and to portray the United States as a nuclear superpower bent on sustaining hegemony over the Western hemisphere.

[redacted]

Boosting Moscow at Washington's Expense. We assume Shevardnadze will attempt to discredit the United States by playing up what Moscow characterizes as traditional Soviet-Mexican affinities—a common revolutionary heritage and mutual opposition to US "interventionist" policies. Soviet-Mexican diplomatic relations were established in 1924 in part because of Mexico's determination to

demonstrate its independence from the United States and Moscow's desire to extend its influence in the Western hemisphere. The same impulse, in our judgment, continues at least partially to guide Mexico's relations with the Soviet Union today;

[redacted]

asserted in 1983 that good relations with the USSR serve to counterbalance US pressures. In reaction to a perceived US press "attack" on Mexico's Central American policy in early 1985,

[redacted]

Last year, however, de la Madrid denied a Soviet request for a port visit by two Soviet warships, apparently to avoid aggravating the United States.

Working the Mexican Media

In pushing these lines, Shevardnadze will be working against a backdrop of stepped-up Soviet Bloc activity in recent years to increase Moscow's influence on the Mexican media and among Mexican elites in general.

[redacted]

International Department of the CPSU Central Committee had formed a special task force on Mexico—the largest working group in the department's Latin American section—to devise sophisticated campaigns on Central American issues.

[redacted]

The Soviet press corps in Mexico has nearly doubled this year, increasing from eight to 15,

[redacted] and Soviet influence on the

Mexican media is apparently extensive. Soviet wire services routinely place about 10 articles a day in Mexican newspapers, including the official government paper, *El Nacional*, and the most influential daily, *Excelsior*. Both papers reach a wide spectrum of Mexican elites.

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The Soviets have also increased their efforts to discredit the United States by playing up US-Mexican discord in Soviet media, through placements in Mexican media, and through diplomatic channels. The Soviet Ambassador, who is widely quoted by the Mexican press, has frequently criticized Washington—in particular charging that it has used the drug problem to interfere in Mexico's internal political affairs. More recently, Soviet media have portrayed the United States Senate hearings on Mexico as an attempt to punish Mexico for its independent foreign policy. According to the US Embassy in Mexico City, the Soviets are also behind recent stories in the Mexican press alleging that US nuclear testing was responsible for the earthquakes Mexico experienced in September 1985. [redacted]

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Cuba: Military Reservists To Fight Crime [redacted]

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The Castro regime reportedly is offering a number of material incentives to military reservists to entice them to volunteer for one-year tours of duty with the national police force. The recruitment program appears to be a direct response to the dramatic increase in crime in Cuba that began in the mid-to-late 1970s and so far has defied the regime's efforts to reverse it. While the program may result in more arrests—thus worsening conditions in Cuba's already overcrowded prisons—it also may cause frictions with professional police officers, who reportedly have a much lower pay scale for the same duties. [redacted]

The Crime Trend

Crime has become so bad in recent years that even the tightly controlled media are acknowledging it. *Moncada*, the monthly journal of the Interior Ministry, has carried a number of articles describing criminal activities that seem to be particularly audacious in a police state. *Moncada's* June issue, for example, admitted that a 27-year-old supervisor in a refrigeration plant had tunneled through the wall of a bank in Matanzas last January and made off with some \$30,000 in Cuban currency. Other articles in *Moncada* have chronicled robberies of supermarkets, groceries, and cafeterias in Havana, the armed robbery of a 75-year-old woman in her apartment in the Vedado district of Havana, and a number of similar street crimes. [redacted]

The rise in crime was confirmed by a former high-level Cuban official who defected last December. In an article written by the defector for a Madrid publication, he commented on "the sustained growth of so-called common crime, which has reached quite alarming levels." The foreign community in Havana—diplomats and Western businessmen—appears to be a special target of thieves and burglars, presumably because consumer goods are more readily available to this group. The robbers are apolitical; they hit the residences of Western and Communist officials alike. [redacted]

Red Berets

The Interior Ministry's National Revolutionary Police (PNR) have been unable to stem the increase in crime, which may have been one of the reasons for the dismissal last December of Interior Minister Ramiro Valdes. His replacement, Division Gen. Jose Abrahantes, has added military reservists—dubbed Red Berets—to the PNR to bolster its ranks [redacted] some 5,000 reservists are to be called up for police duty—half in the Havana area and the rest scattered throughout the island. [redacted]

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[redacted] participation was voluntary. Reservists who have been vetted for political reliability are asked to volunteer for one-year tours in the police force. As an enticement, they reportedly are offered a monthly salary of 250 pesos—substantially higher than the 150 to 175 pesos per month paid to a police officer—and are promised access to special stores for purchasing clothing at prices much lower than those paid by the average Cuban. They also are given passes entitling them to free public transportation. After three months of special training, the volunteers join a police unit and, if they so wish, can extend their service following the one-year tour. [redacted]

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Prospects

The granting of special privileges and extraordinary financial benefits to military reservists who volunteer for service with the police not only underscores the seriousness with which the leadership views the crime problem, but also contradicts the regime's current political opposition to material incentives, which are under heavy fire from the party's chief ideologue, Fidel Castro. In effect, only the politically pure—members in good standing in the party or its youth

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arm—can become Red Berets, but ideologically unacceptable material incentives are used to attract and reward them.

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Moreover, the disparity in pay scales is not likely to be ignored by the professional police officers, and resentment and suspicion are almost certain to develop between the Red Berets and their PNR counterparts. This does not auger well for the fight against crime, especially with prospects so poor for an upturn in the economy. The Red Beret program may temporarily bring about an increase in arrests but is not likely to have a long-term impact on the upward trend in crime.

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Latin America Briefs

Cuba

Bolstering the Media

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Recent improvements to radio and television facilities in eastern Cuba will help the Castro regime compete with foreign broadcasters for the Cuban audience and enhance the potential for propaganda broadcasts to Haiti. On 17 September, the Cuban Ministry of Communications announced that Guantanamo Province's radiobroadcasting network, "CMKS—The Anti-Imperialist Trench," would inaugurate a new mediumwave transmitter next month in Maisi on the eastern tip of Cuba. The Ministry also said that the power of another transmitter in Baracoa would be increased. Other plans call for the installation of five relay towers next year that will improve television reception in the mountainous areas around the city of Guantanamo. Guantanamo also will get two new radio transmitters to relay broadcasts from national networks in Havana to eastern Cuba, while the provincial radio network will open a relay transmitter in the town of San Antonio del Sur.

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In its announcement, the ministry explained that the improvements were intended to provide better reception in the densely populated mountainous region because the geography makes it "extremely vulnerable to foreign station interference, especially from the Caribbean." Havana's investment in developing these facilities, essentially for entertainment purposes, during a period of economic stress suggests the Castro regime is concerned that foreign broadcasts—including the radio and television broadcasts from the US Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay—may be having a negative political impact in a region historically known as the birthplace of Cuba's revolutions. President Castro probably remembers that, in 1958, during his guerrilla war against Batista, his 26 July Movement made propaganda broadcasts from Venezuela to eastern Cuba on both shortwave and mediumwave radios with great effect. He also may have in mind the use of the transmitters in Maisi and Baracoa for broadcasting propaganda in Creole to Haiti, which is located just across the Windward Passage.

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Conjunctivitis Outbreak

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A recent outbreak of hemorrhagic conjunctivitis¹ in Cuba raises the possibility that Havana once again will blame the United States for its own public health deficiencies. A Public Health Ministry announcement in early September said "several cases" of the disease had been reported on the Isle of Youth as well

¹ This viral infection, which produces an inflammation of the membrane of the eye that subsides in about a week, rarely causes complications but is highly contagious, especially in crowded conditions.

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as in Havana and Las Tunas Provinces. Recent Ministry statistics, however, put the total of documented cases at over 9,000, of which some two thirds were on the Isle of Youth.

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The epidemic could cause Havana considerable international embarrassment. The Isle of Youth has a population of about 85,000, of which 15,000 are high school students from a dozen countries in Africa and Latin America. Some of the foreign students almost certainly will contract the disease if they have not done so already. The Castro regime's attempt to minimize the seriousness of the outbreak reflects its concern over the possibility that Third World countries may be discouraged from taking part in the foreign scholarship program. To avert such consequences, Havana may try to manufacture a scapegoat and blame the United States for introducing the disease through bacteriological warfare.

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