

LOS ANGELES TIMES 23 SEPTEMBER 1979 Pg. 1E (25)

A Blunt Message for the Soviets: 'Remove Your Troops From Cuba'

BY GEORGE BUSH

Some years ago, the United States received advice on how to deal with Cuba from no less an authority than Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. With his special gift for metaphor, he told the United States to deal with Cuba as the proverbial Russian peasant did with his live-in goat. That is, get used to the smell, but don't bother to pretend liking it. There was, after all, no choice in the matter, he said.

So far, at least five Presidents in two decades have not accepted Mr. Khrushchev's quaint advice. I earnestly hope that President Carter will be the sixth.

The recent revelation that 2,000 to 3,000 Soviet combat troops are now resident in Cuba is the latest in a pattern of probes and thrusts that have come to characterize Soviet policy from the African Horn to the Isthmus of Panama.

The matter is serious, both in its practical implications for the SALT treaty and other U.S.-Soviet agreements, and in its symbolic implications for the so-called non-aligned nations and those that depend on American military strength.

The latest chapter in the long and tedious story of Cuba, the goat that won't go away, began in July when Americans were sharply reminded of the status of Soviet-Cuban relations. Ramon Sanchez Parodi, a senior Cuban diplomat in Washington, stated bluntly that Soviet-Cuban activities "will continue to increase in all fields, including military collaboration." When asked specifically if he meant at home or abroad, Sanchez Parodi replied, "across the board."

Yet, as specific as the Cubans are about their frank relations with the Soviets and their denunciation of the United States, the Administration has been anything but straightforward in its assessment of the Soviet combat presence in Cuba.

On July 27, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance solemnly assured Sen. Richard Stone (D-Fla.), "There is no evidence of any substantial increase of Soviet military presence in Cuba over the past several years."

On Aug. 31, the secretary entered a correction: "We have confirmed the presence of what appears to be a Soviet combat unit of 2,000 to 3,000 men."

Five days later, the State Department amended the correction and said it was "a Soviet combat brigade . . . and this force has been in Cuba since the mid-'70s," thus attempting to shift the blame to previous administrations.

Eight days later, the imbroglia worsened. After a storm of criticism, the Administration modified the amendment to its correction: Everything is okay; the Soviets are not combat troops, but troops training Cuban soldiers. Apparently the Carter Administration is not bothered by the idea of Soviets training Cuban troops who can then be sent to Central America or to Africa to join their 40,000 brethren who have, over the past decade, dedicated themselves to overthrowing regimes friendly to the West. After all, as the Administration told us earlier, those troops are a "stabilizing influence" in Africa.

What is the average American to make of all of this?

I would suggest that the Soviet combat presence in Cuba is much more serious than the Administration suggests.

The combat brigade in Cuba is intimately connected with a series of provocations stretching back over four years. In 1976, the Soviets began rearming Cuban military units; in 1977, they installed an advanced electronic antenna in Cuba capable of eavesdropping on U.S. communications, and renewed construction of a naval port in Cienfuegos Bay (which President Nixon had forced them to halt in 1970).

In 1978, the Soviets shipped advanced MiG-23 fighter bombers to Cuba, and this year they have supplied one training submarine and one oceangoing submarine along with a fleet of 24 two-engine turboprop military transport

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planes. Further, just a few days ago in the midst of our discussions with the Soviets on the combat troop issue, they supplied a seventh guided-missile patrol boat to Cuba—making the Cuban Navy a prime force in the region.

These efforts should be recognized for what they are: a direct attempt by the Russians to establish a meaningful military presence in the Caribbean. Moreover, in addition to its strategic importance, the Caribbean area contains many of the refineries that turn foreign crude oil into gasoline and other fuels that keep America running.

The Carter Administration argues that, technically, the Soviet buildup in Cuba does not violate the promises that Khrushchev gave to President John F. Kennedy in 1962. But technical arguments notwithstanding, the Soviet initiative clearly violates the spirit of those promises. It is a provocation, and the Soviets know it is a provocation.

This message is not lost on the governments of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, who watched a Cuban-assisted revolution in Nicaragua replace military man Anastasio Somoza with the Sandinista National Liberation Front. The implications are clear: Soviet-trained Cubans trained important elements of the Sandinista coalition, which almost certainly will use Nicaragua as a staging area for quiet assistance to radical movements in surrounding Central American republics.

The Soviet objective is to pursue a policy that separates the United States from its friends, but doesn't provoke an open confrontation—and it's working. So far, Washington hasn't been able to define the problem properly, much less develop an adequate response. It is clear that Castro, backed by the Soviets, is stepping up the export of revolution in this hemisphere.

The Soviet provocation should also be seen within the broader context of international affairs. Over the past 15 years, the Soviet Union has engaged in the most massive accumulation of armaments that the world has ever known, catching up with the United States and even surpassing us in many critical areas. The Soviet Union, with an economy less than one-half as large as ours, is spending 40% more than we are on arms.

As their nuclear umbrella has spread and America has retreated, the Soviets have also become more aggressive in many parts of the globe. Since the fall of Saigon in 1975, at least six nations—Cambodia, Ethiopia, Angola, Afghanistan, Mozambique and South Yemen—have hoisted the red flag over their capitals and proclaimed their Marxist orientation.

The Soviet combat troops in Cuba only confirm the fact that the Soviet Union is now probing and pricking at every exposed point on the American flank, seeking both symbolic and geopolitical advantage. The Cuban issue has thus acquired a symbolic importance around the world that matches its strategic implication in our own hemisphere.

The Cuban missile crisis of 1962 offers a perfect example of the symbolic importance of such events. After the confrontation, Khrushchev revealed that his military advisors' greatest concern had not so much to do with Cuba's security, but rather with the question of "whether the Chinese or the Albanians would accuse the Soviets of appeasement or weakness." By the same token, American acquiescence to a Soviet challenge—only 90 miles from our shore—would make it absolutely clear that we have lost our nerve. We may have peace, as President Carter proclaims, but it will be a peace that echoes Neville Chamberlain's "peace in our time" four decades ago.

There is also a lesson about American intelligence to be learned from this Cuban fiasco. In recent years, a favorite sport of some of our politicians has been to bully the intelligence community, cutting away one intelligence effort after another. Not the least of those politicians has been Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho), who now seems bewildered that somehow the Soviets slipped into Cuba under our noses.

President Carter, to his credit, has never openly joined in the gleeful attack on American intelligence, though he continues to link the CIA with Watergate, thus demoraliza-

(See TROOPS, Pg. 6-F)

Ship repairs for Soviets**Greece puts strain on US links**

By Helen Mellas

Special to The Christian Science Monitor

Athens

Relations between Greece and the United States have taken a turn for the worse following the signing of an agreement between Greece's Neorion shipyards and the Soviet Union.

The agreement calls for repair of Soviet commercial ships as well as Red Navy fleet supply vessels. Neorion is located on the island of Syros, in the middle of the Aegean Sea.

Greek-American relations are regarded as having deteriorated during the last few months over Greece's inability to return to the military wing of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on its own terms.

On the shipyard deal, the government of Prime Minister Constantine Caramanlis has taken the position the agreement is nothing more than another commercial deal. But Caramanlis critics argue that the decision was primarily political, since the Neorion shipyards are essentially controlled by government banks, and the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs is understood to have monitored the negotiations closely for months.

The US Government already has expressed its concern to the Greek Government for what it has called a precedent-breaking agreement, while NATO also has asked for an explanation. The Neorion agreement and NATO are expected to be among the main topics of conversation during the meeting in New York this week between Greek Foreign Affairs Minister George Rallis and US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance.

Negotiations for Greece's reintegration into NATO's military wing are stalemated at present. One more team of NATO experts left Athens some 10 days ago without making any progress. Premier Caramanlis is adamant on returning to NATO on the basis of a special relationship with about the same status as existed prior to Greece's withdrawal following the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974.

Turkey, on the other hand, threatens to use its veto, a prerogative extended to all participating nations by the NATO charter, on

Greece's return unless Greece agrees to increased Turkish operational control over certain parts of the Aegean Sea.

With these developments in full swing, Mr. Caramanlis is preparing for his official visit to the Soviet Union from Oct. 1 to 5. It will mark the first visit to the Soviet Union by a Greek leader. Mr. Caramanlis is expected to sign a declaration of friendship with his Soviet counterpart in Moscow, along with a series of commercial agreements that have been negotiated by Greek Government officials and Soviet Union delegations.

Conservatives and some Western diplomats have expressed their apprehension over Greece's opening to the Soviet Union at a time when Greek-American relations are becoming progressively strained.

However, the Caramanlis government has not in any way slowed its tireless effort to tie Greece to the West. The Premier is known to have stated more than once "Greece belongs to the West, not only ideologically but also organizationally, through its accession to the European Community."

Still, political analysts here recognize that the country is going through a critical phase. Mr. Caramanlis's lifelong ambition of making Greece part of Europe, they argue, will remain in jeopardy so long as Greece is kept out of the military wing of NATO. And the Soviet Union is bound to exploit all circumstances in order to drive one more wedge into NATO.

September 18, 1979 (25) **Defense/Space Daily**

Page 65

ARMY CHIEF WARNS OF 'CRITICAL WINDOW' IN '82-'83

Gen. E. C. Meyer, Chief of Staff of the Army, yesterday warned of what he called a "critical window" in 1982-83 when the military balance will shift to a position of "opportunity" for the Soviet Union.

Meyer renewed his call for support of the requests for a 5 percent real annual increase in defense spending in FY 1981 and beyond to correct the deficiencies in the United States military force and to send a message to the Soviets that the U.S. intends to build up its forces to meet the threat.

He said there is a real need by the Army for the 5 percent increase in defense spending, "to fill in the voids" and purchase critical items necessary to redress the unfavorable trends favoring the Warsaw Pact forces in Europe.

Meyer identified the "voids" needing attention as command and control; the ability of the Army to fight in chemical, nuclear and bacteriological, as well as conventional environments, and the ability for rapid deployment -- "to go somewhere and do something." He said, "We need more airlift" in order to surge forward "the way we need to do."

The Army Chief said the Martin Marietta Pershing II is one of the important upgradings of the force required in Europe. The Pershing II, or some other follow-on long range ballistic missile system is needed as well as cruise missiles, he said. The Pershing II can be deployed by 1982-83 within those nations "willing to accept it," Meyer told his first meeting with reporters since taking over the command of the Army.

He also issued a plea for the funds being sought in the President's supplemental for FY 1980. It is essential that the funds in that amended request for the Army be supported, he said, or "\$700 million will have to be taken out of our hide" to pay for inflation and fuel.

TROOPS CONTINUED

ing a dedicated service. He has, however, taken several steps that have diminished our capabilities to monitor Soviet activities. Early in his administration, for example, he suspended overflights of Cuba that might well have picked up evidence of the Soviet troops much earlier. He also naively cut back on human intelligence, preferring to rely instead on more satellite technology.

One of the first steps that should be taken in response to the Cuban issue, then, is to make a thorough review of our intelligence capabilities. We can ensure that our citizens are protected from abuses of their rights while still strengthening our foreign intelligence capability. It would be especially reassuring if the President, the Senate and

House committees would promptly move to do just that.

Furthermore, it is urgently necessary that the Administration join forces with some of its critics--Sens. Henry Jackson (D-Wash.) and Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), for example --to conduct an overall review of Soviet expansion in the world and the strategic interest of the Western democracies.

Finally, the President should send a very blunt message to the Soviet Union: Remove your combat troops from Cuba.

The Soviets want many things from us--SALT, grain trade and technology. We don't need to threaten or resort to public bombast. We do need forceful, determined presidential leadership that results in action. The world is watching. □