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15. Cuban Developments: There seems little doubt that Cuba's moderate finance minister, Rufo Lopez Fresquet, will soon be ousted. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, a top Cuban Communist party official and editor of the party's leading daily, may replace him. Another possible replacement is fellow-traveling Oscar Pino Santos, at present an economic adviser in Castro's powerful agrarian reform institute, although he is not considered a competent economist. It is also reported that Raul Castro, Communist-oriented minister of defense, may assume the finance post to avoid appointment of a known Communist.

The recent naming of pro-Communist "Che" Guevara as president of the National Bank with effective control over foreign trade transactions has followed by the resignation of several economists in secondary positions, and others are expected soon. With the Finance Ministry in the hands of extremists, Economy Minister Regino Boti and possibly Communications Minister Enrique Oltuski would remain the only moderating influences against a group, led by Raul Castro and Guevara, which has made little secret of its plans for a state-controlled economy.

It is also reported from Havana that the Castro government will probably buy 15 former Italian Air Force Vampire jets from the Macchi factory in Italy. Ambassador Bonsal expects the purchase to be made soon unless the Italian Government withholds approval. In discussing arms sales to the Caribbean, an Italian official recently said that in the absence of an agreement among the allies on this subject, his government did not feel bound to prevent such sales.

[REDACTED] said that the Castro government would discuss an offer of Mystere jets from a Swiss firm and that MIG-17s previously considered had not been bought. The British refusal, announced on 2 December, to sell Cuba jets to replace conventional fighters will probably accelerate Castro's determination to buy jets wherever he can get them most quickly. The widely held belief that US pressure was responsible for the British decision has caused unfavorable reactions among even anti-Castro Cubans and in other Latin American countries.

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