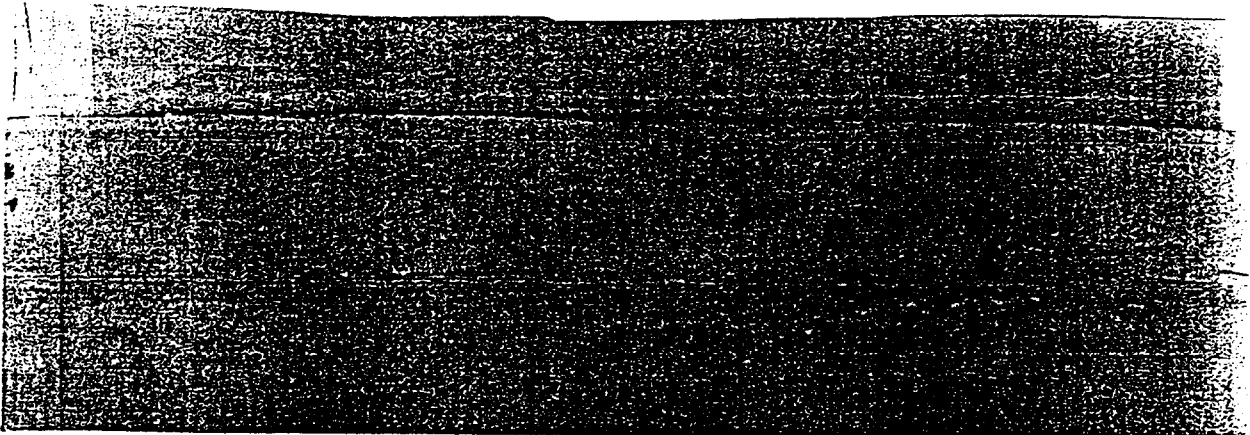


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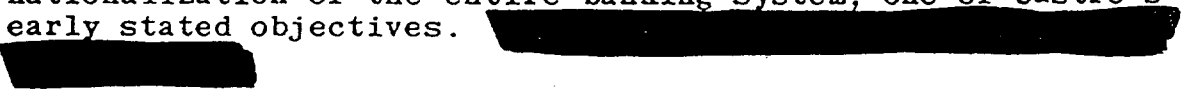
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1997



LATIN AMERICA

16. Cuban National Bank Forbids Rediscounting of Crop Loans By Foreign Banks: "Che" Guevara, the pro-Communist president of Cuba's National Bank, has told the manager of an American branch bank on the island that foreign banks--principally American--will no longer be permitted to rediscount with the National Bank their crop loans to either American- or Cuban-owned sugar companies. Guevara explained this policy as one means for Cuba to defend itself against the "hostile and aggressive" policy of the US Government.

While this action appears primarily one of discrimination against American banks, it could also be the prelude to depriving all private banks of the profitable and traditional short-term loans to sugar companies--a step toward nationalization of the entire banking system, one of Castro's early stated objectives.



17. Castro-Subsidized News Agency Host to Communist Bloc And Neutralist Journalists: Prensa Latina, the Latin American news agency set up by the Castro government, called a meeting in Havana from 12 to 19 January of news agency directors from the USSR, Communist China, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, the UAR, East Germany, Indonesia, and Japan. No American or Western European country was represented or invited. Jorge Ricardo Massetti, Prensa Latina's Argentine director who formerly worked in Peron's anti-US news agency, said he hoped the conference would lead to other informal exchanges and bring closer relations among the nations involved. The delegates were warmly received by Prime



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Minister Fidel Castro, Minister of Defense Raul Castro, and National Bank President "Che" Guevara, and their visits were widely publicized in the Cuban press.

Prensa Latina has been using some material from the news services of some of these countries in its rapidly expanding operations throughout Latin America. Agreements were probably reached which would increase this supply, much of it Communist propaganda. Contrary to usual publishing practice, Prensa Latina has been appending its own date and source line to stories originating from TASS and other agencies.

Prensa Latina's emphasis on Latin American affairs and on world news of interest to the hemisphere, plus its generous free services made possible by a Castro subsidy, has contributed to its growth. However, the recent meeting will help confirm suspicions already aroused in some Latin American countries by indications of Communist influence among Prensa Latina's personnel and in its news items.

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