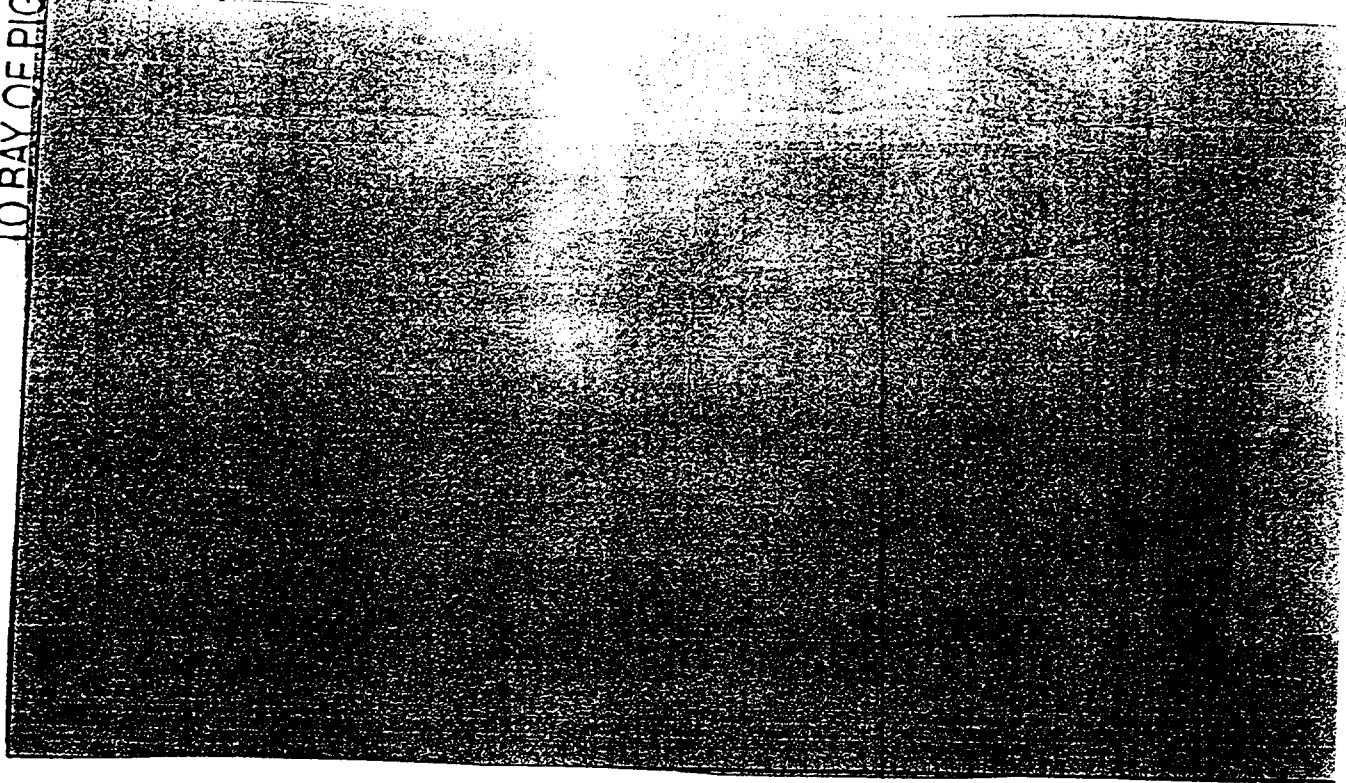


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LATIN AMERICA

7. Cuban-Czech Exchange of Ambassadors Evidently Imminent:
The Castro regime evidently is preparing its first exchange of ambassadors with a Sino-Soviet bloc country. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] a demarche asking agreement for Dr. Vladimir Pavlicek as Czech ambassador in Havana. On 7 April the secretary general of the Cuban Communist party, in Prague en route to Moscow, told Czech newsmen that he hoped "the Cuban ambassador would soon arrive in Prague on the basis of an agreement to establish diplomatic relations."

The Czechoslovak Government has been a leader in bloc penetration of underdeveloped areas and was the first Communist country to establish a permanent commercial representation in Cuba. Although the two countries have not yet signed a formal trade agreement, there has been increasing economic, cultural, and military contact between them since Castro's assumption of power. There are numerous unconfirmed reports that Cuba has tried to buy jet fighters from Czechoslovakia, either directly or by means of a third-country arrangement.

Pavlicek, a career diplomat in his forties, is a Latin American specialist who has served as Czech minister to Mexico,

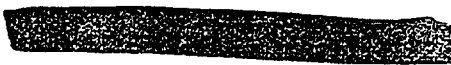
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1997



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Argentina, Bolivia, and Guatemala. While in Mexico he arranged the clandestine Czech arms shipment to the Arbenz government in Guatemala in 1954. In the past two years Pavlicek has served as chief of the American Affairs Division of the Czech Foreign Ministry.

In recent months Cuba has signed trade agreements with the USSR, Poland, and East Germany and accepted a \$100,000,000 Soviet credit. Castro undoubtedly plans to establish diplomatic relations soon with other satellite countries and probably Communist China. There is no evidence that the USSR has taken any action to follow up the reference--in the communiqué at the close of Mikoyan's visit to Cuba--to a resumption of Soviet-Cuban diplomatic relations "at a convenient time." Mikoyan stated in Cuba on 13 February that this is merely "a technical question" and implied Cuba would take the initiative. Moscow may wish to assess reaction to the Czech move and may prefer to wait until after the summit conference in May. Mikoyan stated that he had invited Castro to the Soviet Union. Such a visit could provide the occasion for an announcement of the resumption of relations.

[REDACTED]