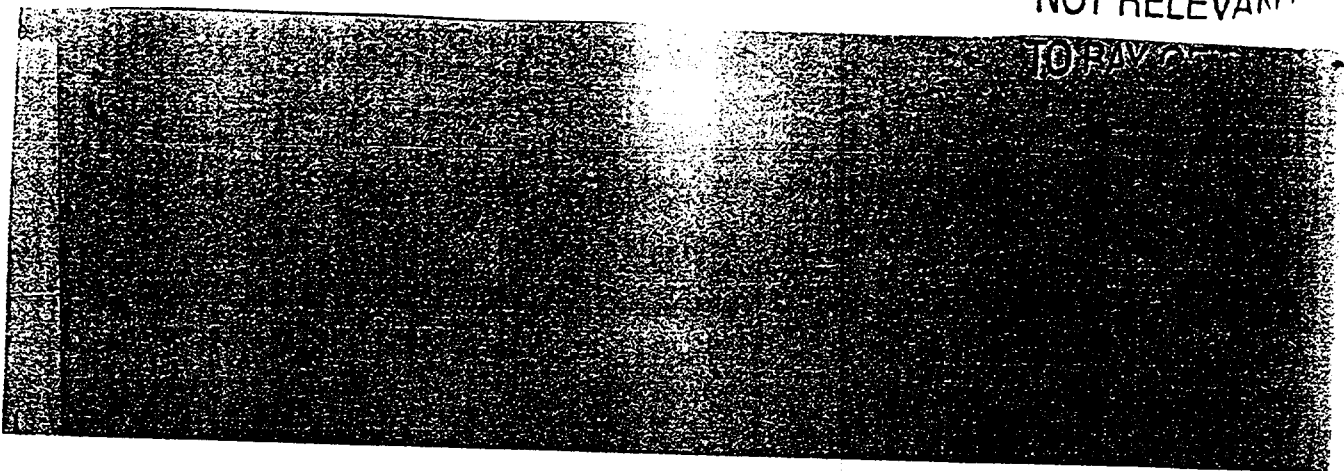


TOP SECRET



LATIN AMERICA

17. Castro's Growing Problems Impelling Him Toward More and Stronger Attacks on US: Cuba's increasingly complex domestic problems are impelling the Castro regime more and more to use the United States as a scapegoat. Ambassador Bonsal believes these internal tensions and Castro's reaction to them may mount to dangerous levels on May Day, when the regime plans to stage mass demonstrations of loyalty highlighted by parades of workers' and students' militias and addresses by Castro and other top officials. Workers in five of Cuba's six provinces are being offered free transportation to Havana for the May Day events. In view of the bitterness against the United States which Castro, other top officials, and the progovernment press are attempting to promote, the atmosphere on 1 May could produce serious incidents against the lives and property of US citizens.

Castro, in a television appearance on 22 April, described United States policy toward Cuba as "fascist, Goebbels-like, and a betrayal of the principles for which thousands died in the past war against fascism." Ambassador Bonsal described this attack on the United States as Castro's strongest, most direct, and most insulting to date.

In Oriente Province, once Castro's stronghold, a competent American observer reports that support for Castro is declining among all classes. He says that government intervention in business and agriculture has cut off many sources of private income and has led to an economic recession. This observer reports that all attention is focused on the economic situation and that the Communist issue is not an important factor in the discontent.



CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE AS SANITIZED
1997