

[REDACTED]

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6. Venezuelan-Cuban Rift May Widen: The already cool relations between Venezuela and Cuba are likely to worsen as a result of two recent developments which may intensify President Betancourt's disenchantment with Cuban Prime Minister Castro and his authoritarian policies.

Venezuelan Foreign Minister Arcaya, who is pro-Castro, announced on 5 May that Cuban President Dorticos and Foreign Minister Roa had apologized for some of the recent articles critical of Betancourt in the controlled Cuban press.

[REDACTED] However, Roa subsequently denied at a press conference that such an apology had been made, alleging that his government was not responsible for press opinion. This exchange could revive the explosive issue of Venezuelan policy toward Castro--an issue which has become a potentially divisive force within Betancourt's three-party coalition and within his own Democratic Action party.

The second incident which may arouse Betancourt is the treatment of his close Cuban friend, Aureliano Sanchez Arango, who was recently in Venezuela to attend a Venezuelan-backed international conference. A reception crowd of Sanchez' supporters was attacked by student "goon squads" on his return to Havana, and he was the target of semi-official Cuban press diatribes during his stay in Venezuela.

Both Dorticos and Roa are scheduled to make an official visit to Caracas shortly.

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