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Dissension in Ecuador Over Policy Toward Cuba

Former Minister of Government Manuel Araujo, a close friend of Velasco, is reportedly organizing a clandestine group composed of Communists and leftists to promote a Castro-style revolution in Ecuador. As the principal spearhead of the pro-Castro forces, he may have coordinated his plans with top leaders in Cuba, where he recently spent three weeks. Araujo has also made a concerted effort to force the resignation of Chiriboga since late February.

Velasco has not only publicly praised Araujo but has apparently cultivated the good will of Cuban diplomats in Ecuador. He has recently made various public statements tending to favor the Castro regime, which is supporting Ecuador in its boundary dispute with Peru.

The anti-Castro forces, aroused by the leftist drift in Ecuadorean foreign policy, have petitioned for a break in relations with Cuba. Some moderates, under the leadership of former President Ponce, have been considering plans for the ouster of Velasco, which might receive some support from both retired and active officers of the predominantly anti-Castro armed forces. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED], some key officers exerted pressure on Velasco last December to obtain the resignation of Araujo. Although the government adopted a cordial attitude toward Soviet Ambassador to Mexico Bazykin during his unofficial visit to Ecuador from 7 to 12 March, the public was hostile and anti-Communist groups managed to launch some anti-Soviet demonstrations despite an official ban on such activities.

Other threats to the success of the 11th Inter-American Conference are the prospect that Castro will attend and that Ecuador will insist on discussing its boundary dispute with Peru. This issue may touch off violent demonstrations. [REDACTED]

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