

Effort Stepped Up on Cuba Relations

8/30/74

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A leading Latin American diplomat yesterday stepped up efforts to persuade the United States to cooperate in lifting diplomatic and economic sanctions against Cuba.

Mexican Foreign Minister Emilio O. Rabasa told reporters that he got a sympathetic hearing from Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger. Shortly afterward Rabasa met with President Ford, whose remarks at a press conference Wednesday signaled a softening of U.S. opposition to ending the hemispheric ostracism of the Fidel Castro regime.

Rabasa has played a major role in attempting to end the sanctions imposed a decade ago. He recently met with Castro and said he would return to Havana "if my presence is required there."

Asked whether he believed the United States would now use its influence to block the lifting of sanctions, Rabasa told reporters: "Dr. Kissinger did not say they would block action. He said the United States would study (proposals on) the lifting of sanctions."

Rabasa said Kissinger had also promised to study proposals to invite a Cuban representative to a hemispheric foreign minister's meeting scheduled for next March. Rabasa said he urged the United States to take a "positive attitude" toward both an invitation and the lifting of sanctions.

Kissinger, Rabasa said, told him he is studying these matters with President Ford. Rabasa said he spent almost an hour at the White House. A spokesman

been arranged before the meeting with Kissinger at the bass later met with the President State Department.

Rabasa told reporters that Mexico would vote for the lifting of sanctions against Cuba. He also said he believed Costa Rica, Panama, Argentina, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica would cast affirmative votes. A two-thirds vote—or 16—is required to lift the sanctions.

A meeting will be held of the permanent council of the Organization of American States "within a month's time," Rabasa said, to consider proposals to lift sanctions against Cuba.

Rabasa also told reporters that Kissinger had reaffirmed that he would be attending the foreign ministers meeting next March in Argentina. This was understood to mean the secretary would go whether or not a Cuban representative is invited.

State Department spokesman Robert Anderson said later that he had no reason to believe there was anything inaccurate in Rabasa's statement.

Rabasa had requested the meeting with Kissinger about a week ago, State Department officials said, to discuss the problem of migrant Mexican workers. But observers noted

that the timing of the visit, following the change of administrations in Washington, could not be coincidental.

President Nixon was known for a rigid opposition to a shift in Cuban policy, despite statements to the effect that the United States would abide by a decision of the Organization of American States.

Rabasa indicated that he was encouraged by Kissinger's response on the migrant labor problem as well. Mexico, he said, has requested an agreement that would permit a quota of laborers to enter the United States legally each year with the migrants having

the same rights as U.S. workers.

Kissinger promised Rabasa to discuss the matter with George Meany, head of the AFL-CIO, which has opposed such an agreement, saying it would increase American unemployment.

"I personally do not think this to be true," Rabasa said, "because the majority of Americans do not wish this hard work of grape picking and cotton picking."

Mexico is said to be seeking an annual quota of 300,000 to 500,000 laborers, who would return to their own country after the year's work.