

State Dept. Is Evaluating Castro Offer on Refugees

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The State Department said yesterday that it is "carefully studying" Prime Minister Castro's new offer to allow Cubans with relatives in the United States to leave his country.

Except for this guarded comment and a statement that U.S. policy generally is to admit refugees from Communist countries, the Department would not discuss the speech made by Castro in Havana on Tuesday night.

Privately, State Department sources said the speech was under close examination but it was too early to reach any conclusions about Castro's intentions.

Prompting the biggest headlines were Castro's offer on the refugees and his promise to clear up within a few days the mystery of what happened to Maj. Ernesto (Che) Guevara.

However, what seemed of greatest interest to Cuba experts in Washington were Castro's references to an impending "reorganization of the

heart of our party" to allow "more complete participation of the masses."

In talking of plans for party leaders to meet and form a central committee, he dwelt on the inadvisability of thinking about Cuba's future leadership in terms of one man or even a small group.

This caused considerable speculation that Castro may be moving toward a downgrading of the Cuban tendency to equate every facet of the revolution with his personality. If so, the speculation continued, events within the next few weeks might reveal the emerging next generation of Cuban leaders.

On the refugee question, observers noted that Castro has made similar offers in the past. However, they also pointed out, none has been spelled out so specifically as the offer he unfolded Tuesday night.

Any Cubans with relatives in the United States can leave after Oct. 10, he said, adding that boats would be provided to take them out of Cuba without any risk of reprisal

and that the fishing port of Camarioca would be opened for this purpose.

In addition, he said, anyone in the United States with relatives in Cuba "could come in a ship, no matter who it is, with all guarantees if they advise us ahead of time by correspondence."

Speculation on why Castro was making the offer again appeared to center on a feeling that Castro is smarting under the publicity attending the various refugee escapes from Cuba. At one point, he said the offer was being made to end "imperialist propaganda" that the regime prevents people from leaving the island.

There also was a feeling that Castro would like to get rid of the Cubans hostile to his regime and those who are a burden to the Cuban economy, such as the aged, the ill and the unemployable.

By allowing these groups to leave, this theory runs, Castro would benefit from the publicity of having made a humanitarian gesture while ridding himself of those Cubans who pose a political or eco-



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conomic threat to his government.

Since Castro came to power in 1959, more than 270,000 Cubans have fled to the United States. Most have entered on a temporary "parole" status, although 40,000 were admitted as immigrants.

Guevara, long the leading ideological spokesman of the Castro regime, dropped out of sight last spring and has since been the subject of considerable speculation regarding both his whereabouts and his status in the government.