

Welcoming Cubans Post 1/15/65

The Administration is wise to hold Premier Castro to his offer to let Cuban refugees come to the United States irrespective of technicalities. Whether or not Castro misunderstood President Johnson's suggestion that the International Red Cross assist with preparations, this country's expressed willingness to negotiate reasonable arrangements will serve the double purpose of reaffirming the traditional American haven for those in distress and of dramatizing any Castro attempt to renege. Federal help in resettling Cubans with relatives already here as well as political refugees should prevent too great a burden from falling on Florida.

At the same time the Administration's position would be even more impressive if it could take Castro up on his additional proposals—that Americans be allowed to travel to Cuba, that Cubans in this country be permitted to visit relatives in Cuba and return, and that Cubans in Cuba be permitted to visit relatives here and return. Such procedures are impossible now because Latin American countries have agreed to discourage travel to and from Cuba as a curb on subversion. The State Department has allowed journalists to visit Cuba but not others, and American passports are endorsed with a prohibition.

Although restrictions of this sort cannot easily be ended, they still are of dubious principle. Restrictions on travel are basically a totalitarian device. Even with the acknowledged security dangers and possibility of propaganda facades, there is nothing like seeing for yourself to bring out essential truths and encourage open societies. If there are to be barriers to free travel, let them come from the Communists.