

LBJ Raps Cuba Trade In Talks With Butler

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President Johnson sharply criticized Britain's trade with Cuba in a private meeting on Wednesday with British Foreign Secretary R. A. Butler.

The President reportedly told Butler the United States could not agree that the British government was unable to halt commercial sales to Cuba because Britain followed a policy of "nondiscrimination" in trade.

Butler was said to have repeated Britain's arguments that the trade could not have the political significance that the United States attached to it. Britain also has noted that its Cuban trade is only a very

small portion of its total world trade.

The relative smallness of the trade is all the more reason for halting it, the President reportedly said. The United States contends that Britain is seriously undercutting the American policy of denying to the regime of Premier Fidel Castro all material vital to the operation of the Cuban economy.

There is special preoccupation with Cuban problems in the Johnson Administration now.

Cuba has circulated in the United Nations an indignant protest against continuing "illegal" American reconnaissance flights over Cuba, an issue left over from the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. Cuba is likely to give the U.S. serious trouble in a U.N. debate. Castro yesterday also repeated his threat to shoot at overflying American planes.

The overflight dispute takes on added seriousness with the expected withdrawal of about 3000 remaining Soviet troops from Cuba.

Another coincidence of timing to aggravate American policy makers was Havana Radio's announcement yesterday that the first of 450 British-built buses would reach Cuba in June. They are part of an \$11.5-million sale of buses and spare parts to Cuba by Britain's Leyland Motors Corp.

Butler reportedly indicated British support for the United States on the overflight issue in the U.N., although Britain is quite concerned about any U.S.-Cuban shooting fight.

But there was no indication that President Johnson gained from Butler any indication of a change in Britain's trade policy.

Earlier this week, both Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Under Secretary of State George W. Ball raised the Cuban trade dispute with Butler. They were said to have forewarned him the President would do so, too, when Butler called at the White House Wednesday with other foreign

ministers attending the Central Treaty Organization conference here.

The President met with the ministers in a group, then spent a few minutes privately with each one.

Britain's Conservative government is in a difficult position for compliance with United States policy on Cuban trade, even if it wished to do so.

The government is heading into an election in the fall with the Labor Party widely favored to defeat the incumbent Tories. Every British voter knows Britain lives on its trade, and the government is committed to conduct all possible trade with all nations except trade in non strategic goods to Communist nations.

Last February, just after British Prime Minister Douglas-Home ended two days of conferences here, the British leader bluntly stated in a press conference that the policy would continue unchanged and that trade with Cuba might rise.

That pronouncement, on the heels of a White House conference irked the Johnson Administration.

In an April 23 speech, Under Secretary Ball criticized Britain's sale of buses to Cuba. He said that a potential sale of locomotive to Cuba would have "even greater impact" on U.S. policy.