

U.S. Cuba Stand Brings Angry Reaction in Spain

The Manchester Guardian

MADRID—At the root of current anti-American agitation here is the prickly question of Spanish trade with Cuba. The United States has sought, without success, to prevail on Spain to curb its expanding commercial ties with Fidel Castro.

This country now rates as one of the substantial Western "leaks" in the economic blockade which the United States has tried to establish around Cuba.

The incident on Sept. 15 in which the Spanish cargo ship Sierra Aranzazu was attacked off Cuba provided the spark igniting latent resentment

over American disapproval of the developing Spanish trade. Three members of the crew were killed and eight wounded.

Blame Cast on U.S.

Although the attack is assumed to have been made by an anti-Castro unit, Spain blames the United States because, it is argued, the attack could not have been carried out without the knowledge, not to say connivance, of the United States.

A demonstration mounted outside the American Embassy here a few days ago was brief but gleefully hostile. Fewer than 200 people took part, and throughout it was perfectly controlled by the police.

Besides shouts of "Assassins!" one slogan vociferously dominating all others was "Cuba Si, Yanquis No!" There were also shouts against the bases agreements negotiated by the Franco regime with the United States in 1953 and renewed a year ago.

Expressions of approval for Castro's Communist Cuba and hostility toward the United States was allowed free rein, within the bounds of orderliness, for 20 minutes.

1898 Conflict Revived

Undercurrents of animosity toward the U.S. have broken surface before, but this is the first time in Spain that Cuba under Castro has been hailed publicly under the benevolent eyes of General Franco's highly efficient police.

The press campaign blaming the United States for the Sierra Aranzazu incident was ignited three days after the event, and at its height editorial writers were harking back to the bitter days of the Spanish-American War of 1898.

Trade with Cuba is justified by the press in these terms: "If the United States maintains relations with the Communist states, how can they ask us to suspend our

ties with Cuba? Moreover, our trade with Cuba is probably superior today to our total with all of Hispanic America. We are not disposed to let Cuba die of hunger."

Extent of Trade

Spain's principal imports from Cuba are sugar and tobacco. Spain has contracted to build a first batch of 20 cargo vessels for Cuba. Two of them, 9500 tons and 650 tons, were launched this month.

Cuba gets from Spain boilers, electrical equipment, farm implements, trucks and spare parts, and a variety of lesser items. According to press accounts here the cargo of the Sierra Aranzazu consisted of olives, cork, boned ham, brandy, textiles, chicken coops, 64 sacks of bay leaves, 30,000 crates of garlic, 4000 sacks of almonds and toys, including dolls.

Apart from trade, the United States takes a dim view of the air links between Havana, Madrid, and points

east. Spain's Iberia Airlines has a weekly service to Havana. A Cuban plane arrives here every fortnight.

Refugee Clearing House

Spain is a clearing house and asylum for refugees from Cuba. Those Cubans who get exit visas from Castro's police easily obtain a visa to Spain. Last week 93 refugees took a Czechoslovakian plane from Havana to Prague, an Air France plane from Prague to Paris, and from Paris, to here. There are about 11,700 Cuban refugees in Spain.

American objection to the constant flow of refugees is based on the theory that the exodus of Cubans considered by Castro to be undesirable simplifies his security problems and reduces the possibility of building an opposition inside the country.

The Foreign Assistance Act of 1963 states that no economic aid shall be given "to any country which has failed to take appropriate steps . . . to prevent ships or aircraft under its registry from transporting to Cuba . . . any items of economic assistance."

In March the United States concluded that Spain had taken "appropriate steps" to cut its trade shipments to Cuba and said it would continue its military aid (at the rate of nearly \$31 million).

The United States was interested at the time in setting up a Polaris submarine base in Spain, which is now in operation.