

Mexico Stands Firm in Her Refusal To Apply Sanctions Against Cuba

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MEXICO CITY — No

amount of pressure from other Latin American nations or from the United States is likely to alter Mexico's refusal to apply diplomatic and economic sanctions against Cuba in the near future.

Venezuela and some other South and Central American countries bitterly resent Mexico's stand on Cuba, and there

has been talk of trying to coerce Mexico into changing her mind.

The truth is that they have nothing with which to coerce Mexico, Latin America's second largest country in population, third in area, and sole holdout against the sanctions adopted at the July meeting of the foreign ministers of the Organization of American States.

As many Latin observers

see it, even if the United States were inclined to bring pressure on Mexico, it would not in fairness resort to measures other than the largely ineffectual ones applied to Canada, Britain, France, Japan and other free-world nations still doing a brisk business with Cuba.

In Mexico's case, such measures would be largely meaningless. Mexico buys scarcely anything from Cuba. In the first five months of this year, Mexican exports to Cuba amounted to only \$1.2 million.

Cuban purchases here consist mostly of beans, cotton and books.

Currently, Cuban Ambassador Joaquin Hernandez de Amas has been making a lot of noise about his country's eagerness to buy more beans and cotton in the remaining months of 1964. But it turns out he is talking in terms of purchases totaling no more than \$3.2 million.

Mexico's Reasons

Mexico's position in the Cuban situation is a curious mixture of legalisms, domestic politics and certain personal elements that may be difficult for some U.S. citizens to understand but which are quite clear to Latin Americans.

First there can be little doubt that Mexican politi-

cal leaders, from President Adolfo Lopez Mateos on down, are convinced that the sanctions voted against Cuba violate the OAS charter and the Rio Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance.

Mexico has said that if the World Court were to rule that the sanctions are legal, it would immediately apply them against Cuba.

Beyond this legal argument is the question of domestic politics—the possibility that a rupture with Cuba might stir anti-U.S. violence among the small but noisy Castro-Communist and other leftist elements.

The last thing that the Mexican government wants is the outbreak of that sort of agitation, which could serve only to slow seriously the flow of U.S. tourist dollars into Mexico and halt or greatly impede new private investment in the country by U.S. firms.

There are some cynics in Mexico and elsewhere who

believe that such considerations may have motivated Mexico's legalistic opposition to sanctions against Cuba. But this is hotly denied by the Mexicans, who maintain that Mexico's legal position in this case is generally consistent with its traditional policy of nonintervention in the affairs of other nations.

Certainly there is some interrelation between the legal argument and the matter of domestic politics. The government was greatly relieved to find that it could with some consistency adhere to a legal position that would at the same time avert domestic strife.

And another, more personal element enters because of the peculiar relationship that exists between a relatively small and powerless nation and its big, powerful neighbor—such as the relationship between Mexico and the United States.

A Matter of Pride

The small neighbor almost invariably has a psychological urge to demonstrate a considerable degree of independence from the big neighbor. He may go along with the big neighbor in broad areas of policy, but differ with him strongly on details.

It is basically a matter of national pride. Thus, though Mexico is pro-Western and anti-Communist, it can nevertheless derive much satisfaction from differing openly with the United States on the question of Cuba.

Curiously, the only two Western Hemisphere nations maintaining relations with Cuba are also the only ones that share a common border with the United States. It may be simply that Canada and Mexico from time to time cannot resist the urge to put on a show of independence.