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OAS Split On Cuban Sanctions

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Members of the Organization of American States are locked in a dispute over the question of new hemispheric sanctions on Cuba for its role in trying to overthrow the Venezuelan government recently.

Most OAS countries, including the United States, favor passage of a resolution making it mandatory under the Rio Treaty for all members to break diplomatic and trade relations with Cuba.

But three countries—Mexico, Chile and Brazil—are holding out for a resolution that will make such penalties optional.

The conflict could produce a bitter split within the OAS that would seriously damage its effectiveness as a peace-making organization. Currently, only Uruguay and Bolivia, in addition to Mexico and Chile, retain diplomatic ties with Cuba.

Brazil appears to be in a pivotal position. For while Mexico and Chile are determined to thwart the mandatory provision, Brazil is only loosely supporting their position. If it can be won over to the tougher posture, it is believed that the switch probably would influence enough on-the-fence nations to assure the necessary two-thirds majority vote needed for approval.

Election Near

U.S. officials are currently holding conversations with Mexican and other Latin diplomats, hoping to achieve a satisfactory consensus. Concessions thus may be made to the minority group.

Mexico and Chile desperately are trying to avoid the dilemma which would force them to choose between acceding to an OAS order for

penalties against Cuba at great domestic political risk or defying such an order and thereby virtually ruling themselves out of the OAS.

The situation is complicated by the approach of national elections in both countries. It is believed that if this mandatory approach is approved, the present governments in these two key nations will stall off a decision whether to obey until the incoming regimes take power late in the year.

Nevertheless, Mexicans and Chileans feel, the extreme leftists in their countries inevitably would profit from a tough resolution, which they would exploit as a U.S.-imposed measure.

Three-Point Plan

Venezuela in particular, however, is forcefully pushing for such a resolution, arguing that anything weaker than a mandatory provision would render new sanctions much less meaningful.

The Venezuelans plan to make a formal request to the OAS Council next week that it determine immediately the site and date for a foreign ministers conference to render final judgment on the matter. The conference, it is believed, may be called next month, discreetly following the Mexican election on July 3.

The Venezuelan resolution now under consideration contains three main points:

1. Condemnation of Cuba for aggressive acts committed against Venezuela; a recommendation of means for preventing such further acts in the hemisphere, including the use of force against Cuba if necessary, and the rupture of diplomatic relations, trade and transportation links with Cuba.

2. An interpretation of subversion as constituting aggression.

3. A plea to non-hemispheric nations to cooperate in cutting off trade with Cuba.

Differences within the OAS appear to have boiled down to the question whether the proposed sanctions covered by the first point should be mandatory.

The new anti-Communist government of Brazil recently broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba but is reluctant to take a tough anti-Cuba stand in the OAS because of the traditional Brazilian devotion to sovereignty, and apparently because it does not want to give the impression that it is being influenced by the United States.