

Intense OAS Fight Looms on Question Of Cuba Sanctions

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An intense struggle is shaping up within the Organization of American States as hemispheric Foreign Ministers trickled into town for a conference called to impose collective sanctions on Communist Cuba.

The historic meeting, which will start Tuesday, will crown an eight-month effort by Venezuela to prod the OAS into punishing Cuba for trying to subvert and overthrow the Venezuelan government late last year. An OAS investigating committee recently confirmed Venezuelan charges.

Some punishment is almost certain to be meted out. But the question of how tough the penalties should be could produce the fiercest OAS battle since Cuba was ousted from the Organization in 1961. Such a battle, many hemispheric officials fear, might split the OAS and seriously reduce its effectiveness as a peace-making instrument.

Rusk to Attend

Secretary of State Dean Rusk and 18 Latin-American Foreign Ministers will attend the conference. Mexico will be represented by its ambassador to the OAS, a pointed slap at the meeting.

Three views are likely to clash. Venezuela, backed by Costa Rica, insists that resolutions be passed requiring that all OAS members that have not already done so sever diplomatic and trade relations as well as all transport and communications links with Cuba.

Mexico and Chile argue that no compulsory sanctions should be called for, and they are supported in varying degrees by Uruguay and Argentina.

A third group of nations that includes the United States is pushing for a compromise

whereby some sanctions, especially a ban on trade and on sea communications, would be compulsory, and others, principally the severance of diplomatic and airline ties, would be recommended only.

Bitterness Possible

The U. S.-supported middle group probably has the required two-thirds majority vote necessary for passage of its compromise proposals. But the discontent, even bitter-

ness, of some minority members at the prospect of steamroller majority tactics could bode ill for the organization in the future.

The situation is particularly grave in view of the fact that the dissenting nations are among the largest and most important in Latin America. Brazil, the largest and most important of all, is expected to go along with the middle course, but with considerable misgivings.

Actually, the pro-sanctions group can be certain of only 12 affirmative votes, less than the required two-thirds majority. Aside from Mexico, Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay, two countries, in addition to Brazil, are on the doubtful list—Bolivia and Haiti.

Dispute May Arise

An affirmative vote by exactly 13 countries, a distinct possibility, could plunge the OAS into a complex juridical dispute. For there is some question whether 13 countries would constitute a two-thirds majority.

The Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty), under which sanctions would be imposed, specifies that a two-thirds vote of the signatory

nations is required for passage of a resolution. But the Treaty also says that parties to a dispute under consideration could not vote for any resolutions related to that dispute.

The countries opposed to sanctions argue that since 21 countries signed the Rio Treaty, 14 votes, or two thirds of the signatories, are needed for passage regardless of the inability of the parties to the dispute—Venezuela and Cuba in this case (Cuba is suspended anyway)—to vote.

OAS members favoring sanctions maintain, on the other hand, that the affirmative votes of only 13 countries, or two thirds of those actually voting, are needed.

Venezuela's Viewpoint

Venezuela interprets the Rio Treaty as requiring all OAS members to abide by resolutions passed by a necessary majority. That country, Fidel Castro's prime target in Latin America, feels that any action short of compulsory sanctions would be meaningless as a source of pressure on Cuba to halt its subversion.

Mexico and Chile think such pressure would be useless and, in any event, deplore the prospect of gearing their foreign policies to the will of other nations, particularly since they have strong leftist minorities that would gain politically from such action.

Chile, unlike Mexico, is sending its Foreign Minister here, but only as the result of a parliamentary meeting which approved his attendance on the understanding that he would fight sanctions. The democratic left and the far left—the two leading groups in the elections scheduled for September—joined in exacting this commitment.

If obligatory sanctions are voted, the question will arise whether, under such circumstances, dissident nations will obey the OAS. If they do not, many observers believe, the Organization may have a hard time surviving.