Cuba's Oil Refineries 'Off Limits'

By Jack Anderson

Those Cuban commandos who have been striking at Castro with hit-and-run raids have received strange but strict orders from the Central Intelligence Agency not to attack Havana's three oil refineries, which supply the fuel for the dictator's war machine. Destruction of the Esso, Texaco, and Shell refineries would bring Castro's tanks, trucks and planes to a grinding halt.

An aide to Cuban exile leader Manuel Artime lamely explained to this column: "We don't want to damage foreign property."

Of course, the CIA will deny issuing any such order or, for that matter, having anything to do with the commando raids. This satisfies protocol, but fools no one.

A year ago, Artime complained to this column that the CIA had cut the allowance for his freedom fighters down to a token $1000 a month.

"The Company"

He hasn't been complaining lately. He now has fast boats, plenty of arms, and pay checks for anyone willing to fight.

His aides have admitted frankly to this column that everything is supplied by the CIA, or "The Company" as they call it.

The policy forbidding strikes against the refineries has been felt earlier in the Cuban struggle. During the Bay of Pigs fiasco, a free-Cuba plane, loaded with bombs, radioed that it was over the Esso refinery in Havana. It requested permission to bomb it along with the nearby Texaco and Shell plants.

But CIA headquarters ordered the plane to ignore the refineries and look for a gun emplacement to bomb.

Later, Mike McLaney, an American gambler who ran a casino in Havana and stayed on for 18 months after Castro's take-over, sent the CIA a detailed plan for knocking out the three refineries. But instead of getting his plan approved, McLaney got an urgent phone call warning him not to attempt such a thing under any circumstances.

Faubus Supports LBJ

President Johnson invited two contrasting Arkansans to the White House the other day for a quiet conference: Gov. Orval Faubus, the arch-segregationist, and Rep. Wilbur Mills, the potent House Ways and Means chairman.

Except for the civil rights question, Faubus spoke out enthusiastically for every phase of the President's domestic program, from the war on poverty to medical care for the elderly.

In contrast, Mills was polite but noncommittal on the same subjects. Yet Mills is supposed to be one of Johnson's leaders in the House.

He holds the key, for example, to whether several million elderly people will receive Federal help with their staggering hospital bills.

He has assured the President privately that he will vote for the Medicare bill if the rest of his committee should become deadlocked by a tie vote. But insiders agree it will take Mills's active support to push the bill through Congress.

Political Prescription

Aware of this, the American Medical Association is working through a Camden, Ark., doctor to persuade Mills to keep the bill bottled up in the Ways and Means Committee. This AMA agent, Dr. R. B. Robins, happens to be one of Mills's closest friends and political cronies.

The AMA is willing to let the Government pay the medical expenses of poverty cases, whom the doctors otherwise would be obliged to treat free of charge. But the AMA does not want the Government to help anyone who can possibly scrape up the money to pay his own doctor bills.

What worries the AMA is that the Government, since it would be putting up part of the money, might also try to regulate the doctors' fees.

NOTE—The insurance companies, which don't want the Government to get into the medical insurance business, are also working behind the scenes to block the Medicare bill. Cocking an ear to their whisperings, Mills has hinted privately that maybe Congress should simply increase Social Security benefits for old folks so they can buy their own health insurance. This would be a boon for the insurance companies.

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Jack Anderson, substituting for Drew Pearson, will report GOP speculation on Goldwater and the convention, over WTOP radio at 6:40 tonight...