

CUBA:

By Sea, by Air

In his desperate fight for economic survival, Fidel Castro last week lost two rounds and won one:

- With machine guns blazing, two speed-boats made a midnight attack on the Spanish freighter Sierra Aranzazu off the eastern tip of Cuba. The "mystery raiders" killed the Sierra Aranzazu's captain and two sailors and set the freighter afire, destroying the precious cargo of coal, textiles, garlic, and toys it was carrying to Havana. Castro immediately charged that the attackers were "CIA-financed pirates" and indeed, before the casualties were known, Cuban exiles in Panama had reported an anti-Castro commando raid on a ship. In Washington, however, Secretary of State Dean Rusk assured Spain's angry Ambassador Marquis de Merry del Val that there was "no evidence" that the attackers came from U.S. waters.

- Regretfully, Castro himself announced that because world sugar prices have plummeted from 13 cents a pound last October to 3.6 cents last week, Cuba would have to curtail its orders of machinery, buses, and food in Western Europe, and make "less ambitious" economic plans.

- But just as Washington was again urging its allies to halt trade with Castro, Cubana Airlines, whose only previous foreign ports of call were Mexico and Czechoslovakia, announced that it will begin weekly flights to Nassau this week. Back in 1948, Britain and Cuba signed a reciprocal landing rights agreement which London does not choose to abrogate now. To console Washington for this new breach in the U.S. blockade of Cuba, however, British officials hastened to point out that Cubana's flights are not likely to be very profitable.

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