

Castro Asks U.S. To Resume Trade

Havana

Premier Fidel Castro strongly urged the United States last night to lift partially its trade embargo against Cuba by resuming shipments of food and medicine to this island.

In a wide-ranging press conference sandwiched between private sessions with Senator George McGovern, Castro categorically denied any Cuban role in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy by Lee Harvey Oswald.

He asserted that any such association by Cuba in the slaying of a U.S. President would be "absurd, irresponsible, crazy and a very dangerous measure."

McGovern said earlier that Castro feels "inevitably a change will come" in U.S.-Cuban ties and that trade and diplomatic relations with the United States will be restored.

Reporting on a meeting he had until midnight Tuesday with Castro, Vice Premier Carlos Rafael Rodriques and Foreign Minister Raul Roa, McGovern said his primary interest is "to get on with" finding ways to remove the U.S. trade embargo imposed in 1962.

"In due course," McGovern said, the United States "will see that it would be in our own interest to remove the trade barrier."

Once the boycott is lifted, all other disputed issues — such as the release of U.S. prisoners and the complex question of compensation for expropriated U.S. property — can be negotiated, he said.

McGovern said he believes there are nine Americans who were involved in activities against the government and could be regarded as political prisoners.

Some other Americans, he said, are apparently being held on drug and other non-political charges.

McGovern, the third U.S. senator to visit Cuba since the United States broke off relations in 1961.

McGovern said he sensed that the Cuban leaders intended their agreement to cooperate with the United States in avoiding hijackings as "a clear signal" that Havana is moving toward normalization of relations with Washington.

He added Cuba seemed disappointed that the United States had not responded with concrete steps on the trade sanctions.

"The Cubans have no sanctions against us. It's a one-way street," the senator commented.

In his initial talks with Castro, McGovern said, the Cuban leader expressed interest in the 1972 presidential campaign that McGovern lost to Richard M. Nixon.

on. The senator reported with a smile that Castro commented he was "disappointed in the outcome."

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