

NOV 1 1971

NYTimes

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19 CUBANS ABSENT FROM SUGAR TALK

They Remain Interned at a
Base Near New Orleans

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Special to The New York Times

NEW ORLEANS, Oct. 31—

Participants in the triennial congress of the International Society of Sugar Cane Technologists gathered today without the 19-man Cuban delegation, which is interned at a naval air station nine miles away across the Mississippi River.

The absent Cubans, who landed in New Orleans on Tuesday to attend the meeting despite the State Department's refusal to issue them visas, are awaiting an Immigration and Naturalization Service hearing on their expulsion. Delegates from 53 nations are attending the sugar congress.

Working session of the congress started today and will run until Friday.

"Most of the chaps seem to feel it's Uncle Sam's problem, not the International's," said John L. Clayton of Kenya, the general vice chairman of the society. "There's definitely been no antagonism expressed toward the Cubans, though I for one wish they had done a little bit more homework."

There is some thought at first that the arrival of the 19 Cuban sugar technicians and three crew members of their airplane might be some kind of signal that Premier Fidel Castro was interested in talking about a détente between the United States and Cuba, which severed diplomatic relations in 1961. Since the split, pro forma contacts have been kept up by Czechoslovakia, in behalf of Cuba, and by the Swiss, in behalf of the United States.

Questions Unanswered

However, speculation about a diplomatic motive for Tuesday's landing dissipated after Cuba refused to answer United States questions forwarded through the Swiss Embassy in Havana.

There is also little evidence that Mr. Castro has been moving in the direction of a dé-

tente. His last public utterance on the question, made in a speech on Sept. 28, was that Cuba had no intention or desire of resuming relations with "Yanqui imperialism."

"The only motive seems to be to create an awkward situation," said one official in Washington. "There's no logic in what the Cubans have done except harassment and nuisance."

The International Society of Sugar Cane Technologists meets every three years. This is its 14th congress. At the 1965 gathering in Puerto Rico, Cuba asked to attend but was turned down by the State Department. It did not try to send delegates to the 1968 congress in Taiwan, but did send a cable inviting the society to meet in Havana in 1971. The invitation was declined.

Visas Applied For

The society is a loosely knit organization of scientists and businessmen concerned with growing and processing cane. In effect, anyone who wishes can become a member and anyone who applies to come to the congresses is accepted.

This summer, the society received completed registration forms from 26 Cuban technicians together with a deposit for their hotel rooms. Forms had been included in trade journals and otherwise widely distributed. On Sept. 4, the Cubans applied to the State Department for visas and on Sept. 24 were turned down. Last Tuesday, 19 of those who had sent in forms turned up at New Orleans International Airport.

The meeting could be of great use to the Cuban technicians, since it is the place where new advances and trends in the trade become known. Such knowledge would be of particular benefit to Cuba because many of its top sugar scientists and managers have left since the revolution in 1959 and a substantial number now work in the industry in Louisiana and Florida.

Of the 19 Cubans under internment, it appeared that most were in their twenties or thirties. They are at the naval air station at Belle, Chasse, La.

The Cubans have requested the presence of a Czechoslovak representative at their exclusion hearing, and the Immigration Service is awaiting the representative's arrival before continuing.

The State Department said today that the Czechs had not yet applied for approval of a representative to travel to New Orleans. In any event, there appears to be no chance that the Cubans will be allowed to attend the congress.