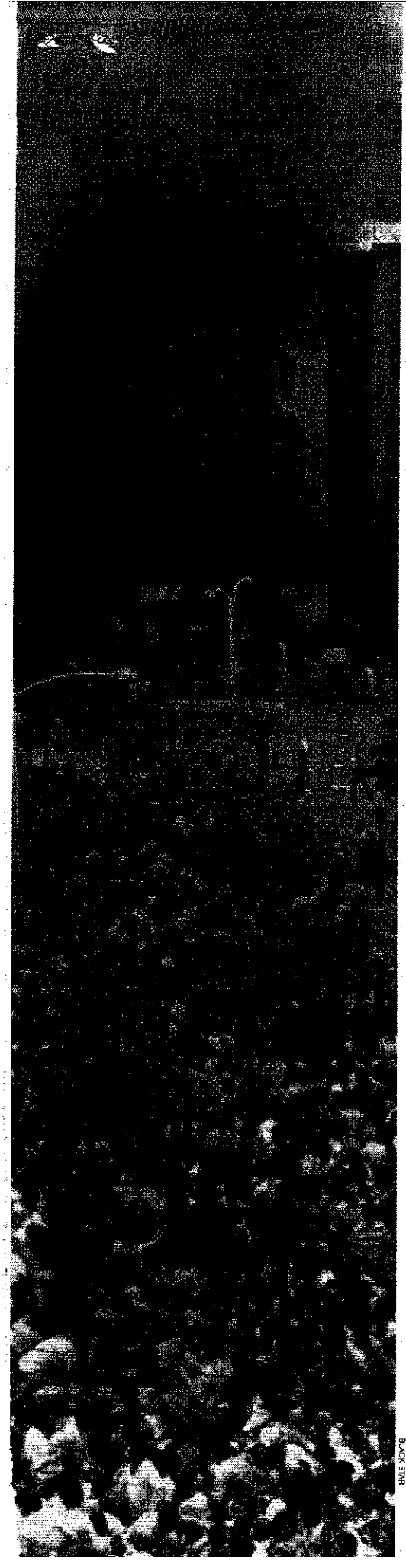


U.S.NEWS
& WORLD REPORT

Powder Keg At Our Doorstep

Fanned by Fidel Castro and exploited by Moscow, a tide of Marxist violence is endangering vital American interests close to home.

The flood of Cuban refugees pouring into the United States is focusing new attention on a region in America's own back yard gripped by a potentially explosive crisis.

With Fidel Castro and his Soviet patrons stirring up leftist revolutionaries, a wave of anti-American, pro-Cuban ferment is spreading across Central America and the Caribbean.

In the five countries of Central America, Cuba is creating and exploiting political violence that poses long-term danger for Mexico on the southern border of the U.S. and for the strategically important Panama Canal.

In the Caribbean, Cuba is propping up Marxist governments in two island nations and maneuvering elsewhere to install anti-American, leftist regimes. The fear is that what traditionally has been an American lake may be converted into a Marxist sea.

Danger for U.S. Top planners in Washington are deeply worried about the spread of Cuban influence and the threat of Soviet adventurism in a region that is too crucial to U.S. interests to permit it to fall into hostile hands.

Underscoring the acute concern is the realization that Russia already has turned Cuba itself into a Communist military base that places Soviet combat ships, planes and troops just 90 miles from the U.S. mainland.

Danger of Havana's drive for influence has been overshadowed by the flight to the U.S. of thousands of Cubans seeking to escape the hardships of Castro's police state. By mid-May, more than 27,000 refugees had sought sanctuary, most by way of a massive sealift from Cuba to Florida.

But even the surge of refugees, which includes common criminals from Havana's jails, is viewed by experts as a Castro ploy to embarrass the President by deluging the U.S. with unsought and unwanted exiles. With the rest of the world waiting to see how he would meet the challenge, Carter felt obliged to pledge on May 5 that the U.S. would "provide an open heart and open arms" for Cubans seeking haven.

For all the drama of the Cuban exodus, American strategists stress that this is a sideshow. The real danger for the U.S. stems from Castro's new drive for influence in the Caribbean and Central America. This region, the analysts point out, is vital to the United States and its well-being.

More than half of America's oil imports travel the sea-lanes running past Caribbean islands. Domination of the Caribbean basin holds the key to access to the Panama Canal, still the Western Hemisphere's most important economic and military lifeline. Political instability in the region endangers the energy riches of Mexico and Venezuela.

Source of goods. From nations lapped by the Caribbean, the U.S. imports oil, bauxite for aluminum, iron ore, copper, sugar, meat, coffee, cotton and bananas. Direct U.S. investment in the area, home to 145 million people in 20 countries and seven dependencies, totals 13.7 billion dollars.

The increasing level of American concern was underscored by Carter in early April when he accused Cuba—"supported by and encouraged by, [and] financed by the Soviet Union"—of exploiting dissatisfaction in a region of "extreme strategic importance."

And in a hands-off signal to Havana and Moscow, the Pentagon ordered its annual Solid Shield 80 military exercises in May to be staged in the Caribbean instead of off the U.S. East Coast. The maneuvers later were scaled down so that U.S. ships could aid the exodus of Cuban refugees.

Cuba itself remains the prime source of U.S. apprehension. Officials have watched with unease as the Soviets militarize Castro's island.

Intelligence experts have monitored Soviet reconnaissance bombers using Cuban airfields. The Russians are building naval facilities at Cienfuegos on the southwest coast that some officials believe are designed to service submarines armed with nuclear mis-

Red Clouds Over the Caribbean

CUBA Exports revolution, arms, advisers to rest of Caribbean.

JAMAICA Headed for showdown over trend toward Marxism.

GRENADA May be site of anti-U.S. military base.

MEXICO Could be affected by revolutionary ferment from the south.

PANAMA Unhappy with strong-man rule, lack of economic progress.

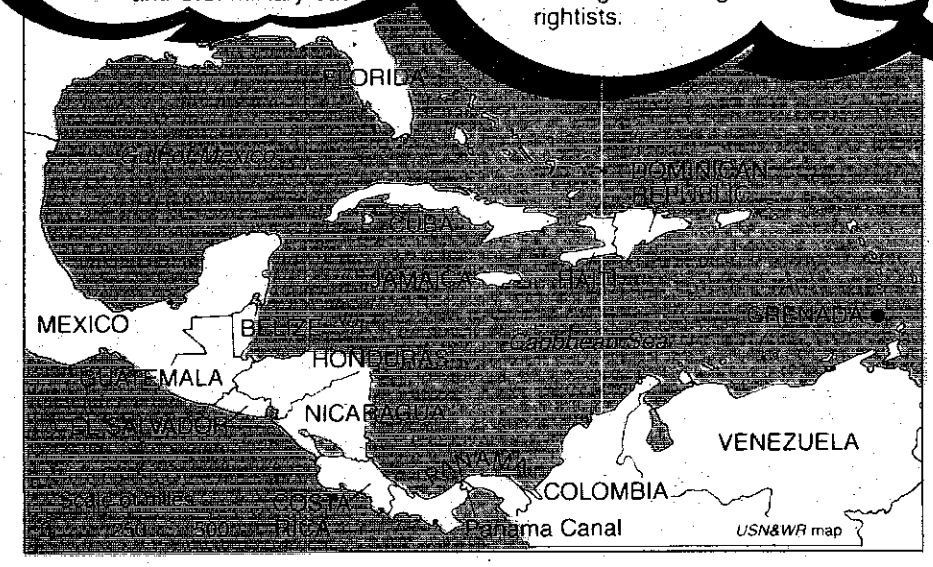
EL SALVADOR Battleground for guerrillas, rightists.

GUATEMALA Vulnerable to events in El Salvador.

NICARAGUA Moves closer to Soviets, Cuba.

COSTA RICA Its stability endangered by unrest in neighboring lands.

HONDURAS Entry point for Cuban arms bound for El Salvador.



siles. About 5,000 Soviet troops are based in Cuba, including a combat brigade of nearly 3,000 men. Carter disclosed the presence of the brigade last September, but Moscow claims the unit has been based in Cuba for years.

American analysts also estimate that about 30 Soviet pilots are flying patrols over Cuba. On the ground, sophisticated Russian listening equipment is zeroed in on the U.S.

From his Soviet-armed and subsidized nation, Castro is trying, as he did in the early 1960s, to export revolution to the Caribbean and Central America.

Cuban advisers are playing major roles in development programs of the socialist-run islands of Jamaica and Grenada. Castro also is encouraging leftists on other Caribbean islands to follow Havana's lead, not Washington's, in coping with economic and social challenges.

Tactics used. In Central America, Cubans, Russians and homegrown Marxists are attempting—sometimes covertly, sometimes openly—to exploit strife and economic malaise.

More than 2,000 Cuban advisers are operating in Nicaragua, where the leftist Sandinista government is consolidating power after overthrowing the longtime U.S.-backed Somoza dictatorship.

Marxist guerrillas in war-weary El Salvador are vying for power in a battle with right-wing fanatics and with U.S.-supported government reformers. Other leftists, some with Cuban aid, are fomenting trouble in Honduras, Guatemala and democratic Costa Rica.

Behind the anti-U.S., pro-left surge: Limited resources and rising populations have created massive economic problems. Grinding poverty has led to criticism that the rich U.S. giant to the north is neglecting its less fortunate neighbors in the hemisphere.

Many new leaders in the region studied in the U.S. during the 1960s. Some returned home as dedicated anti-Americans, indoctrinated by the civil-rights struggle and by the opposition movement against the Vietnam War.

In Central America, the U.S. is attacked as a defender of the status quo and repressive regimes. Bitter memories of past American military interventions in Mexico, Nicaragua, Haiti and the Dominican Republic fuel suspicion of U.S. aims.

Paradoxically, Castro still is respected in many countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. They ignore the confessions by Havana officials that hundreds of thousands of Cubans are unhappy enough with the Communist system to give up jobs, friends and country to abandon it.

One expert on Cuba explains it this way: "Most Latin Americans and people of the Caribbean never kidded themselves into believing that Cuba had become a workers' paradise. They know that the economy is a disaster—Soviet subsidies and all. But many rationalize and contend that Cuba still is in a revolutionary transition and that years of deprivation and antigovernment mutterings are to be expected."

Washington's response to the Cuban-inspired turbulence takes two tacks:

1. Carter is flexing American military muscle to demonstrate U.S. ability and will to defend its interests. Even before the Solid Shield exercise, the U.S. had formed a Caribbean Contingency Joint Task Force, headquartered at Key West, and had begun joint naval patrols with Canadian and British warships. The *Nassau*, a new amphibious-assault vessel the size of an aircraft carrier, recently paid show-the-flag visits to ports in the Caribbean and Panama.

2. The White House is attempting to step up economic and military aid to friendly countries in the area and at the same time is urging them to make social and economic reforms so as to dilute the appeal of their leftists.

But Washington and its friends worry that help may be too little, too late.

Latins' fear. Many Central Americans are convinced that Carter will withdraw his support for human rights and reforms if leftist governments take over their lands. This would leave the fledgling regimes with nowhere to turn but to Castro.

Others point to Carter's inability to deliver aid even when promised.

The result is a persistent wariness of American intentions. In the words of one U.S. official: "In a region still extraordinarily suspicious of American power, it's tough to build trust."

Thus, the U.S. faces the prospect of mounting turmoil on its doorstep—turmoil that is opening the door to Russian and other hostile power. □

Carl J. Migdail, who covers Latin American affairs for the magazine, has just returned from an extensive fact-finding trip through the Caribbean and Central America in connection with this seven-page Special Report.

SPECIAL REPORT
POWDER KEG

Central America: Why Such a Hotbed

It's a race between peaceful change and sudden, violent upheaval. With Castro roiling the waters, odds now favor the terrorists' side.

Convulsed by one spasm of political violence after another, Central America never has been so worrisome to the United States as it is now.

Boiling unrest in the region threatens not only oil-rich Mexico on America's southern border but the Republic of Panama with the canal that links the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

Cuban-supported leftists are piling up gains throughout the troubled area, with the result that Fidel Castro and his Soviet allies may one day have a larger say than Washington about the destiny of a region that is of immense strategic importance to the U.S.

The United States wants change in Central America. But it seeks a gradual process in which military dictatorships would evolve peacefully into moderate, non-Marxist regimes allowing economic and social justice for all people.

The flow of events suggests strongly, however, that the U.S. scenario has scant chance of becoming reality. People in Central America are weary of waiting. They are hungry, and leftist guerrillas are promising quick action.

Each day seems to confront U.S. officials with a new Latin crisis. Of immediate concern are developments in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala. What happens there could profoundly affect the other two Central American nations, Honduras and Costa Rica, as well as Panama and Mexico.

Following is a closer look at a region of critical importance to the U.S.

SAN SALVADOR

The outcome of El Salvador's bloody civil war may hold the key to the future of all Central America.

Leftist guerrillas are battling the paramilitary forces of the country's right-wing planters as well as government troops loyal to a new junta.

Armed and trained by Castro, the guerrillas are seeking a socialist El Salvador along the lines of modern-day Cuba. The coffee growers are just as intent on retaining their positions of privilege in the country.

Caught in the middle is the ruling junta of military officers and civilians, created less than a year ago after a coup by young Army officers.

ETIENNE MONTES—GAMMA

Guerrilla soldiers on patrol in El Salvador. War between leftist rebels and forces of the nation's ruling junta could determine future of all Central America.

A. KELER—SYGMA

Painting in San Salvador of Cuba's late Ché Guevara points up revolutionary fervor.

If the guerrillas succeed, El Salvador could be expected to become a Communist staging area for other offensives in Central America. And should this occur, the U.S. will have lost another important toehold in the region.

Washington is backing the moderate junta, which is trying to get a program of agrarian, banking and social reforms off the ground. The plan is ambitious. But the vast majority of people here do not yet believe it will give them the fast relief they demand. Most people in El Salvador are extremely poor and, until lately, their affairs have been badly managed by their governments.

Moreover, the junta is being squeezed from both the right and the left. The guerrillas say that the reforms are no more than a trick calculated to perpetuate the past. The right wants a return to the pre-junta days when the planters all but ran El Salvador.

Casualties have been heavy on both sides—1,000 persons have been killed in the past four months—and the guerrillas are threatening to escalate fighting still further. U.S. officials concede that the struggle to hold back the political extremists here is a tough one that could well be lost.

GUATEMALA CITY

In Guatemala these days, Washington is an ugly word.

Right-wing Army officers, businessmen and politicians who run the country believe that a group in the U.S. State Department wants a Communist regime next door in El Salvador.

They are convinced that El Salvador's adoption of a reform package designed by U.S. officials inevitably will result in a Marxist takeover there.

When that happens, Guatemala's

leaders fear the leftist victory will give impetus to the many bands of Marxist guerrillas who are stepping up operations in Guatemala. This concern has led the government to secretly ship arms across the border to the paramilitary bands in El Salvador.

A daily war also is being waged in Guatemala between guerrillas and right-wing death squads. Gun battles, abductions and assassinations are increasingly an accepted part of life.

Tensions are worsening, too, between the government and the peasant class. One reason: Army patrols in the backcountry kill any Indians they suspect of supporting leftists.

MANAGUA

Nicaragua's Marxist-trained leaders, in power less than a year, already have turned the war-ravaged country far to the left toward Cuba and Russia.

The ruling Sandinista junta, which ousted the Somoza regime last July, now has driven its only two moderate members from the government.

Sandinista leaders also are strengthening ties with Russia because, Nicaraguan officials say, Washington is not giving enough help. They point out that after the U.S. Congress delayed a 75-million-dollar aid package for Nicaragua, the junta wrapped up a cooperation agreement with Moscow.

As part of the agreement, Soviet technicians are expected to arrive shortly to work in many fields, including agriculture and mining. They will join about 2,000 Cuban doctors, nurses, teachers and military advisers who already are in the country.

Even while occupied with rebuilding Nicaragua, the Sandinistas are carefully watching events in nearby El Salvador. They have much to gain there—and much to lose. A rightist victory would pose a serious threat to the security of their own revolution. A leftist victory would help solidify the Marxist position in Nicaragua.

SAN JOSE

For President Rodrigo Carazo of Costa Rica, the Cuban-refugee crisis has been a godsend.

His offer to accept all Cubans who sought asylum at the Peruvian Embassy in Havana in early April rekindled support for him at home at a time when his popularity was at low ebb.

Costa Ricans see his proposal as an anti-Communist challenge to Castro and a surprising turnaround from his policy that last year made the country a base for Nicaraguan guerrillas.

Carazo's acceptance of the rebels at that time not only brought Cubans and other Latin leftists into the country, but encouraged Costa Rica's Marxists.

The leftist presence plunged the democratic nation into turmoil, with Communist-controlled unions disrupting the economy with strikes. In retaliation, Carazo expelled Soviet diplomats involved in the labor unrest.

But the President's new firmness toward the Communists does not spell an end to his troubles. Costa Ricans not only worry over the impact of the Marxist regime in Nicaragua, but fear that even more trouble could be stirred up by Panamanians who would like to use Costa Rica as a military base for a rebellion in Panama City.

TEGUCIGALPA

After eight years of military rule, elections for an assembly to write a new constitution for the nation have put Honduras back on the road to civilian government—but one that could yet turn out to be Marxist.

Honduras is the weakest of all Central American nations. Political analysts are convinced that the country will follow whatever political force eventually dominates the region, be it the rightists in Guatemala or the leftist Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

The U.S. hopes that Honduras may one day become a prosperous, civilian-ruled nation that would be a stable influence in the area. But that is a long shot at best. Says one U.S. official: "If Central American stability depends on Honduras, we're all in trouble."

MEXICO CITY

Mexico is not part of Central America, but when officials here in the capital cast their eyes toward the south, they find cause for deep brooding.

Many of the woes plaguing Mexico's southern neighbors are in abundant supply here, and there is worry that Central America's revolutionary ferment could seep northward.

Mexico's oil-and-gas boom, which some believe may rival Saudi Arabia's, has yet to shower riches upon the vast majority of its citizens. Social unrest is a serious problem. Four of every 10 Mexicans either have no jobs at all or work below their level of skills.

A jittery Mexican government has done what it could to appease leftists, even adopting political reforms that gave the Communist Party representation in the Chamber of Deputies.

The government also broke with the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua in 1979 and recognized the rebels before their victory. Now leftists demand the same for Marxist rebels in El Salvador.

PANAMA CITY

A good life was predicted for Panama when the canal was signed over to the Panamanians.

But the predicted economic boom has not panned out, which imposes further strains on the political fabric of this small and vulnerable country.

One third of Panama's citizens still live in poverty, for which they blame the government of Aristides Royo, who is viewed by many as no more than a puppet with strings that are yanked by the nation's strong man, Brig. Gen. Omar Torrijos Herrera. Businessmen remain reluctant to invest in new enterprises.

Torrijos, with Castro, played a major role in helping leftists reach power in Nicaragua, and a number of Panamanian Communists moved into government positions during the joint effort.

One year later, some of the Communists are said to still be in their official jobs. Torrijos is confident, however, that he can control both the domestic Communists and those in the large Cuban Embassy in Panama City. But whether he can rein in Marxist-inspired tensions still is open to doubt. □

Success of Sandinista revolutionaries in Nicaragua is serving as inspiration for Marxist rebels trying to take over governments in other Central American nations.

Partners in tension: Prime Minister Bishop of Grenada, center, and Sandinista leader Ortega of Nicaragua on reviewing stand with Cuba's Castro at May Day rally in Havana.

Serpent in Caribbean's Island Paradises

Tiny tropical nations are in bitter revolt against poverty. But with trust in America fading fast, Cuba is moving in to fill the vacuum.

For fun-seeking tourists who flock to the Caribbean islands, the sparkling beaches and posh resorts are a fantasy come true.

But beneath this tropical beauty lies the cruel reality of poverty and social unrest that has made some of the islands easy targets for Fidel Castro's brand of Communism. Nowhere is this more glaring than on sun-drenched Jamaica and Grenada.

In Grenada, pictures of Castro are everywhere. Government officials call one another "comrade" and pattern their country on the Cuban model. Young men tote submachine guns, and schoolchildren learn to hate the U.S.

In Jamaica, just 90 miles from Cuba, the government is dominated by a tightly knit group of radical Marxists whose hero is Castro. Roving gangs of their supporters, reputedly trained in Cuba, may attempt to subdue political opposition as elections near.

As in the rest of the Caribbean, the people of these picture-postcard islands are in revolt against a colonial past and an impoverished present. Says one expert: "They believe yesterday's slogans about Yankee superiority are as outdated as a 17th-century buccaneer's treasure map. They hanker after jobs, education and a decent life. If Castro can deliver, they will accept."

What follows is a detailed look at the situations in Jamaica and Grenada.

KINGSTON

Jamaica today is at a political crossroads. One road leads to Havana, the other to Washington.

More and more Jamaicans want their nation to move closer to the United States. Yet this may not happen.

Elections later this year will pit the pro-Castro government of Michael Manley, Prime Minister since March, 1972, against former Finance Minister Edward Seaga, who favors stronger economic ties with the United States.

The betting is that Manley would be defeated in a fair election. But if this happens, Manley may well refuse to step down, setting the stage for widespread violence, if not civil war.

Radical Marxists, members of Manley's People's National Party, dominate his government, and, with Castro's help, they could try to keep him in. Given Castro's ideological investment in Jamaica—and the presence of 450 Cubans—this is a possibility.

The fact that Manley's defeat is even considered is one measure of how badly the charismatic Prime Minister has slipped in popularity. Source of much of his trouble: The sagging economy.

Business leaders, a formidable force in Jamaica, say Manley has adopted conflicting policies that hurt the economy. For instance, they say he called for more private investment; then, almost in the next breath, imposed crippling trade measures.

As a result, businessmen are delaying investments at home and, among other things, are putting their money into Florida real estate—at least 600 million dollars' worth by one estimate.

Even worse, 40 percent of Jamaica's professionals have abandoned the island since 1972, creating a critical lack of doctors, nurses, teachers and managers.

Per capita income has fallen 40 percent during the Manley years. Inflation exceeds 20 percent, after one period in which it soared nearly 50 percent. Workers in Kingston earn an average of only $30 a week, far below the poverty line. The unemployment rate in most areas is more than 30 percent and runs twice that in the crime-ridden slums of Kingston.

Jamaica's financial standing is deteriorating rapidly. It owes other nations 1.7 billion dollars, and a 400-million-dollar deficit is expected this year in foreign-exchange earnings.

The country depends heavily on foreign credit to supply its factories with raw materials and to obtain food for its 2.2 million people. Yet Manley has refused to impose austerity conditions demanded by the International Monetary Fund as the price for new credit.

No more cash. As a result, U.S. and European bankers refused to make new loans and are waiting for a fiscally responsible government to be elected before resuming the flow of money.

Each day, factories close for lack of raw materials, and near riots occur at supermarkets as housewives battle for scarce food. "Jamaicans are patient, long-suffering," says one businessman. "In any other country, there would have been an explosion long ago."

While tourists sun themselves on Jamaica's lovely beaches, this capital of just under 1 million population continues to decay. Downtown Kingston is a disaster area. Streets are unpaved, gar-

bage is piled up and buildings are in disrepair. Gangs of young thugs commit muggings and robberies. Crime is so bad that the American Embassy has been moved to a safer neighborhood.

Politically inspired violence occurs with increasing frequency. A number of people have been killed in clashes between Manley and Seaga supporters.

Many Jamaicans are convinced that Manley deliberately provokes tension as a means of manipulating an election he otherwise seems certain to lose. The goal, say these Jamaicans, is to find an excuse to lock up his opponents.

Events now unfolding are similar to those that preceded the last general election in 1976 when, after a period of lawlessness and chaos, Manley proclaimed a state of emergency and arrested 596 members of the opposition. He then swept to victory at the polls.

One of the Prime Minister's longtime foes offers this scenario: "What Manley has in mind is to goad the opposition into violence by using Cuban-trained street gangs. Then he will declare his state of emergency. If insurrection follows, Manley could call on Castro to send him troops, and it would be up to the U.S. to decide whether it wants to save Jamaica."

ST. GEORGE'S

On the tiny island of Grenada deep in the southeast Caribbean, the tropical sunrise brings the sight of Cuban construction workers ripping up mango groves and hibiscus bushes.

The Cubans are helping to build a huge airport—one big enough for the largest jets. When finished, it could serve as a military base and as a stop for Cuban soldiers en route to Africa.

The airport is symbolic of the radical changes in Grenada since the ouster of Prime Minister Eric M. Gairy in a leftist coup in 1979, which was followed by the arrival of about 350 Cubans. Gairy's successor, a London-educated lawyer named Maurice Bishop, is swiftly transforming Grenada into what opponents call "Little Cuba."

Students are being indoctrinated in anti-Americanism. Cuban advisers help train Grenada's Army, a force of about 2,000. In the United Nations, Grenada has followed Cuba's lead on important votes, including a refusal to censure Russia for the invasion of Afghanistan.

Most of the gentle, conservative and religious people of Grenada were relieved to see the end of the 29-year Gairy regime, which was marked by brutality, repression and corruption.

They did not, however, expect what Bishop has given them—a Cuban-style government under which he has jailed at least 70 political opponents, suspended the Constitution, refused to hold elections and shut down the island's only independent newspaper.

Grenada nowadays greatly resembles Cuba in the early days after the 1959 triumph of the Castro revolution.

Roadside billboards dot the island and call for the building of socialism, the unity of workers and farmers and steps "toward the Caribbean revolution." Carrying Cuban weapons, young Grenadians in combat uniforms patrol roads and guard public buildings.

Hidden in the hills are a number of military zones, each marked "restricted area" and guarded by troops. It is here that Cuban military advisers are said to conduct training exercises.

Most Grenadians are bewildered by the changes occurring on their island. They are intimidated by and resentful of the guns around them. And they are hostile to the Cubans, whom they accuse of behaving like "new masters."

People are cautious about criticizing the new government. But a young Grenadian who participated in the revolution comments bitterly: "I didn't expect Bishop to sell us to Cuba."

American residents are uneasy over the sustained propaganda against the U.S. now heard in Grenada, and many are trying to sell their homes.

Despite exports of bananas, nutmeg and cocoa, Grenada is desperately poor. Most Grenadians live in dilapidated shacks without running water or plumbing. Per capita income is just over $400 a year.

Unemployment remains high—close to 35 percent—although Bishop claims to have reduced it substantially in the past year.

Many Grenadians suffer from malnutrition. The Prime Minister has initiated a program of distributing dry skimmed milk to pregnant women and children in impoverished families.

Efficiently run. Bishop also is credited with other positive steps. His government, as far as anyone can tell, is relatively free of corruption. Even his critics concede that he is running Grenada in a more businesslike fashion.

The government has begun to build the first public roads in many years, is improving education and, with Cuban help, is modernizing the fishing industry. To help finance his programs, Bishop is seeking financial help from radical Middle Eastern states. He recently returned from a tour of Libya, Algeria and Syria with promises of more than 10 million dollars in aid.

The impact of Grenada's revolution may be felt far beyond its own borders. Throughout the Caribbean, opposition movements have seen that the ballot box is not the only route to power.

Already, a coup in Surinam, less than 700 miles from Grenada, has toppled the government there. And young men from other island states are coming to Grenada for Cuban-designed military and political training. □

Downtown Kingston is like a disaster area with unpaved roads, dilapidated buildings and streets littered with garbage.

JASON LAURE—WOODFIN CAMP

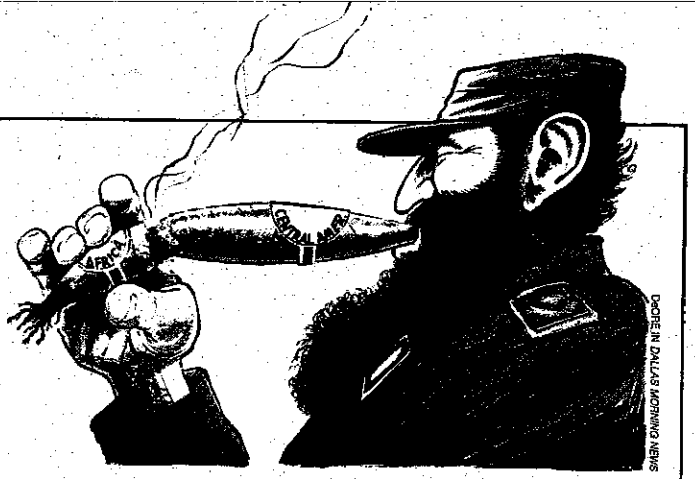
Despite quantities of fruit, most Grenadians are desperately poor and resent the presence of their Cuban "new masters."

URSULA MAHONEY—MONKMEYER

Analysis

Castro: Still Out To Get the U.S.

For years, the Cuban leader has schemed against his powerful neighbor. Now he sees Washington as a weakened force and is determined to make the most of it.



DeCOTE IN DALLAS MORNING NEWS

Behind Fidel Castro's revived effort to spread Communism throughout Latin America is a determined effort to inflict a major defeat on the U.S.—an ambition he has nurtured for 21 years.

The Cuban leader tried and failed in the 1960s to bring Central America and the Caribbean under Marxist domination. Now he is again challenging the U.S. in what once was Washington's undeniable political, economic and military fiefdom. He reckons that his chances of success this time are much better.

As Castro assesses it, the world power balance has changed sharply over the past 15 years. The U.S.—mainstay of the Western World—no longer is the No. 1 Goliath that forced Moscow to withdraw its missiles from Cuba in late 1962. Now it is seen as disoriented and indecisive.

But over the same period, the Soviet Union—Castro's ever watchful sponsor—has achieved at least nuclear equality with the U.S., overtaken the West in conventional military might and built a blue-water navy that cruises the Caribbean as if it were a Russian sea.

Focus on U.S. Ironically, Castro is trying to spread Cuban-style rule in Latin America at the same time that thousands of Cubans, fed up with repression and economic hardships, are fleeing to the United States.

Also ironic is his effort to turn the flight to his own ends. By permitting, even encouraging, some Cubans to leave, he has turned the spotlight away from Cuba and the conditions within the nation that sparked the exodus and focused it on the U.S.

Opening the doors serves two Castro purposes: He has put Jimmy Carter on the spot, forcing the President to publicly offer to accept all Cubans who wish to flee their homeland. That could prove politically embarrassing in an election year. At the same time, Castro is easing unrest at home by getting rid of people he calls misfits.

Latin America was Castro's first major target for the export of revolution after he seized power in 1959. He trained and armed guerrilla bands from Central America, Colombia, Venezuela and Bolivia and, at times, sent his own military advisers to fight with them.

But success eluded Castro, and the death in Bolivia in 1967 of his close comrade, Ernesto "Ché" Guevara, convinced him that Latin America was not ready for Cuban-supported revolts.

Frustrated close to home, Castro shifted his Communist crusade to Africa. Today, with the support—if not at the urging—of Moscow, an estimated 45,000 Cuban troops are on the continent, most in Angola and Ethiopia.

Now Castro is again supporting revolutionary movements in Latin American nations without reducing Cuba's military involvement in Africa. Growing instability in the region, as angry and frustrated people in poor countries show that they are willing to fight for a better life, has convinced him that the time is ripe to bring pro-Cuban governments to power.

Cuban involvement in the Caribbean-Central American region has expanded steadily over the past few months. About 3,000 Cuban military and civilian advisers are at work in island nations and on the mainland of Central America. The flow of arms from Havana to Marxist guerrillas has increased.

Despite the economic and political unrest sweeping his nation, Castro is a confident man. Since 1959, he has survived American efforts to destroy his revolution. He has seen the U.S. defeated in Vietnam, has sent Cuban troops to fight in Africa despite Washington's opposition and has witnessed his enemy's humiliation in Iran.

Castro has scored important victories, often at Washington's expense. He has broken through the international isolation that the U.S. was primarily responsible for imposing on the island, and he has renewed diplomatic and trade relations with most countries. Even Washington and Havana have exchanged missions. High point of his drive for respectability came last September when he was elected chairman of the 95-nation nonaligned movement.

But there have been setbacks. Castro's prestige dropped sharply when he failed to denounce the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which also is a member of the nonaligned group. That ended Cuba's bid for a seat on the United Nations Security Council. Castro initially disapproved of the invasion. But because he needs Russian economic, military and political support, he quickly returned to the Moscow fold.

How both profit. Moscow and Havana both profit from their partnership. Cuba gives Russia military bases close to the U.S. and supplies soldiers for joint operations with the Soviet Union in foreign lands. In return, the Russians subsidize Cuba's subsistence-level economy with more than 3 billion dollars a year, and have turned Castro's armed forces into one of the largest and best equipped in Latin America.

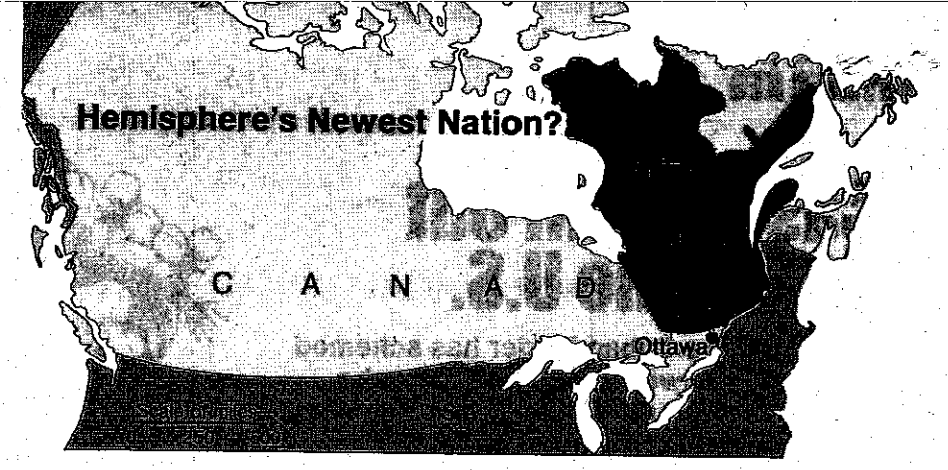
The stakes for Castro are high. If the U.S. reverses the trend toward left-of-center and pro-Communist changes in the Caribbean and Central America, Castro could once again be as isolated in the 1980s as he was in the 1960s. Yet he believes that history is on his side.

Pro-Cuban governments now exist in the Caribbean and Central America that can ask him for help—and do. Much of Latin America and the nonaligned world support political, social and economic change. The U.S., if it tries to oppose such changes, would be viewed as backing dictatorial regimes.

Additionally, the Kremlin, confident of its military strength and ignoring its invasion of Afghanistan, aggressively insists that Washington has no right to interfere in the internal political life of other nations. So Castro feels certain that he cannot lose.

To the North, Another Crisis In the Making

At issue is the future of Quebec. But outcome of bitter infighting could have lasting impact on all Canada—and on the United States as well.



QUEBEC

While Cuba stirs up trouble south of the U.S. border, America's northern neighbor is confronted with a crucial test that could determine whether Canada will survive as a single country or eventually split apart.

Voters of the huge, predominantly French-speaking province of Quebec will cast ballots on May 20 in a referendum that poses this question:

Should the separatist Quebec government, led by Premier René Lévesque, try to negotiate a new relationship with the rest of Canada that would be, in effect, a first step toward creation of an independent, French-speaking nation?

Lévesque insists that only sovereignty can insure the 6.3 million people of Quebec, four fifths of them French speaking, control over their own economic fortunes and preserve the French language and culture.

Leading the battle against Lévesque is Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, himself a French-speaking native of Montreal, who declares that Ottawa is prepared to negotiate Quebec's complaints, but only within the framework of the Canadian federation.

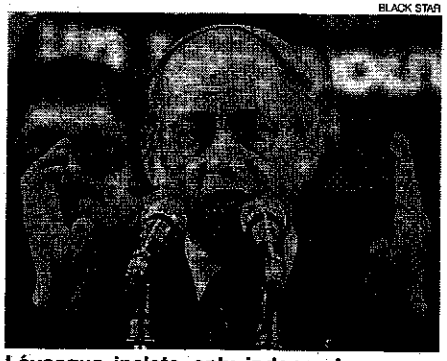
Tempers on edge. Bitter campaigning already has provoked violent clashes between the "Yes" and "No" camps at outdoor rallies. Worse, some Canadians fear that the current brawling may be just a prelude to more civil strife and turmoil over the secession issue.

Even more important than the future of Quebec, the largest in land area of Canada's 10 provinces, is the question of whether the rest of this country of 23 million will be able to hold together against the pressures of fragmentation.

As the Governor General of Canada, Edward Schreyer, asks: "Will Canada still exist at the end of this decade or will it have broken up by the tensions of our past and recent history?"

Claude Ryan, leader of Quebec's Liberal Party, which seeks increased powers for the province but opposes secession, adds this warning: "My prediction is that in the long run—two or three generations—most of what would remain of Canada would become attracted to the United States."

BLACK STAR



Lévesque insists only independence can preserve Quebec's French identity.

Washington, for its part, has kept hands off the unity controversy, although President Carter has made clear that he favors a united Canada. Independent Quebec would have major political, economic and security implications for Americans. Some 30 percent of provincial manufacturing, for instance, is controlled by U.S. companies. Canada's and Quebec's roles in the Western Alliance and continental air defense would have to be redrawn.

Outside Quebec, ominous signs of national disintegration produce reactions ranging from outright apathy to genuine worry. Indifference is greatest in the Western provinces which, like Quebec, resent a strong central government and are calling for more provincial rights of their own.

For the 57-year-old Lévesque and his Parti Québécois (PQ), the referendum marks the opening salvo of a campaign for independence aimed at redressing French grievances that predate even Canada's own independence in 1867.

Though guaranteed equality under the British North America Act, Canada's "constitution," French Canadians for generations have claimed to be getting a raw deal politically, economically and socially from the English-speaking majority. Disparities have lessened in recent years, but French Canadians still contend that an English-speaking elite wields too much power.

Swept into office in the 1976 provincial elections, the PQ quickly began charting a separatist course and turning Quebec into a Little France. Signs in stores and public buildings must be in French. Printed materials circulate in French. New laws order the increased use of French in business and require that newcomers to the province send their children to French-language schools.

At the same time, Lévesque has taken to the hustings to prove the viability of an independent Quebec. Rich in natural resources—asbestos, iron, copper and timber—the province also has a large industrial base. On the basis of its gross national product alone, about 50 billion dollars today, Quebec would rank as a wealthy country.

Despite his ultimate goal, Lévesque has steered shy of demanding immediate secession for fear Quebeckers may balk at so grave a step. Instead, he wants a mandate to negotiate what he calls "sovereignty-association"—political independence with economic and monetary links to Ottawa.

Opponents have cast a dubious eye on the PQ ploy, labeling sovereignty-association little more than a smoke screen for separation.

Tense road ahead? Whether Lévesque wins or loses the referendum—and latest polls indicate the voting will be close—Canada is headed into a period of national tension and stress.

If the separatists triumph, Trudeau and provincial premiers have vowed never to negotiate the sovereignty issue. The result is an impasse that some analysts feel will compel Lévesque to press for a second mandate calling for unilateral independence.

Should Lévesque lose, he is certain to gird for a future effort, perhaps after seeking endorsement of his policies in new provincial elections.

In the view of most Canadian experts, only a massive thumbs down will scuttle the secessionist threat. Yet even then, demands of Quebeckers for more provincial powers foreshadow a time of continuing strain for America's closest friend. □