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Cuba Prepares to Expand Trade with Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay

by LADB Staff
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As reported by Cuban news agency PRENSA LATINA on Oct. 21, the possibilities of Mexican-Cuban trade expansion are optimistic. An exhibition of export items by several Cuban firms was opened Oct. 20 at the headquarters of the National Chamber of Industrial Development in Mexico City. The current trade balance is clearly in Mexico's favor. In 1985, Cuba purchased Mexican goods valued at $88 million, while Mexican imports totaled about $6 million.

Vice president of the Cuban Chamber of Commerce, Jose Antonio Garcia Lara, said that if certain obstacles are removed, Cuban sales to Mexico could double, or even triple. On Oct. 23, Cuban Foreign Trade Minister Ricardo Cabrisas described talks with Brazilian officials regarding bilateral trade expansion as sincere, positive and encouraging. The minister spoke with PRENSA LATINA while involved in discussions with officials in Sao Paulo and Brasilia. Cabrisas met with Foreign Minister Roberto Abreu Sodre, Finance Minister Dilson Funaro and ministers of science and technology and trade, Renato Archer and Jose Hugo Castello Branco, respectively.

During the talks the two sides analyzed prospects for a reciprocal agreement on credit facilities for the contracts being negotiated in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, and toward resolving technical difficulties related to currency exchange rates and budget programs. Estimates of bilateral trade are about $200 million in the initial stages. Among the first contracts to be concluded pertain to Cuban exports of oil, scrap iron, cement, clothing, cotton, canned foods, rum, tobacco, leather goods, interferon, and raw materials for medicines manufacture. Brazilian exports will likely include locomotives and railway equipment, fertilizers, agro-chemicals, pharmaceutical products, soya products, telecommunications equipment, spare parts and machinery for the sugar industry, paper products and construction equipment.

Before departing for Sao Paulo, Cabrisas announced that Brazilian Communications Minister, Antonio Carlos Magalhaes, will visit Cuba in January in response to an invitation by Cuban counterpart Manuel Castillo Rabasa. After discussions in Sao Paulo, the Cuban minister traveled to Montevideo, Buenos Aires and Mexico City for similar discussions. Minister Cabrisas arrived in Montevideo on Oct. 25 to participate in talks with Uruguayan officials toward the expansion of bilateral trade.

According to the daily newspaper EL DIA (10/22/86), Cabrisas was scheduled to meet with Economy Minister Ricardo Zerbino, acting Foreign Minister Ramiro Nunez and the Foreign Ministry's international affairs director, Carlos Perez del Castillo. In addition, the Cuban trade official was expected to meet with representatives of the executive committee of the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI), headquartered in Montevideo, and the local Chambers of Trade and Industry. Cuban Ambassador to Uruguay, Joaquin Mas Martinez, told PRENSA LATINA on Oct. 21 that since diplomatic relations between the two countries were reestablished last year, several cooperative
agreements have been established in the areas of trade, culture and science and technology. He mentioned that Cuba has purchased 1,200 tons of poultry from Uruguay, among other products, while Uruguayan firms have purchased large shipments of Cuban cigars. He added that additional purchases are currently under discussion.

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