

104

# Castro presses his case for repudiation of foreign debts

From Lionel Martin in Havana

President Fidel Castro begins a new stage today in his campaign to persuade Latin America and the Caribbean state to repudiate their \$400 billion debt, when he opens an international conference in Havana.

Few senior officials of the main debtor countries of the region will attend the meeting. The presidents of Brazil, Colombia, and Peru are not coming, but there will be a number of respected political figures, such as former presidents Luis Echeverria, of Mexico, Alfonso Lopez Michelson, of Colombia, and Juan Bosch, of the Dominican Republic.

Hundreds of sociologists, economists, writers, politicians, trade unionists, and others are expected from Spanish, English, and Portuguese-speaking countries of the southern hemisphere. A group of Chilean opponents of the Pinochet regime have announced that they will come to Havana.

The meeting is part of a

crusade by the Cuban President to bolster support for a unified battle that would lead to the cancellation of the foreign debts.

Dr Castro said recently: "We have been euphemistically called developing nations when in reality we are underdeveloped countries that are

---

**FOREIGN** ministers from Latin America's 11 biggest debtor countries met in Lima yesterday for talks in which they were expected to consider putting maximum limits on repayment of the region's \$400 billion debt. — **Reuter.**

---

becoming more and more underdeveloped."

Cuban sources say Dr Castro does not expect immediate results but he is certain that he has highlighted a strategic issue that, in the long run, could help to bring about the social changes he feels are needed.

Dr Castro has said that the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean presently have the advantage. Some years ago, in a speech to the United Nations, he asked the industrial countries to contribute \$300 billion for Third World development. "Now we are saying to the Third World: Don't be crazy, don't deliver those \$400 billion you owe them."

The Cuban leader has said that there can be unity among all Latin American countries regardless of social system.

Asked recently whether he would prefer unity about cancellation of the debt or revolutions in the hemisphere Dr Castro answered: "I believe that cancellation of this debt and the establishment of a new economic order are much more important than two, three, or four revolutions."

He said last week: "We are not promoting subversion. We are simply calling for the awakening of all Latin Americans, all the people of the Third World."