

16Jun94 CUBA: ASYLUM-SEEKERS IN EMBASSIES IN CUBA GROW TO 149.

By **Lionel Martin**

HAVANA, June 16 (Reuters) - A total of 149 Cuban men, women and children remained inside Belgian, German and Chilean diplomatic missions Thursday as Cuba's foreign ministry called in ambassadors to restate its position on the asylum-seekers. Deputy Foreign Minister Isabel Allende met separately with Asian, European and Latin American ambassadors Wednesday evening and government spokesman Miguel Alfonso said: "We told them that we are ready to help to solve this problem by allowing the asylum-seekers to leave their safe havens and return home without taking any reprisals against them."

Cuba has said it will allow the asylum-seekers to leave the island if they receive visas from another country and apply in the normal way. Alfonso criticised the U.S. policy of issuing visas to only a small number of those Cubans who apply and said if the United States opened its doors to the would-be emigres there would be no embassy break-ins.

Meanwhile Cuban police bolstered their presence at a number of foreign embassies in the Vedado and Miramar sections of Havana. The Belgian, German and Chilean embassies are in Miramar, a well-to-do district before the victory of the Cuban revolution in 1959. Argentine ambassador Susana Sara Grase said after the meeting at the foreign ministry that "Cuba's position is well defined" and added: "The fear on both sides is that there is no quick solution and that this asylum thing can be a long drawn-out affair."

The latest spate of embassy break-ins began on May 28 when 124 men, women and children went over and through a gate into the Belgian embassy. Five of them subsequently returned home.

On June 13, 18 men and 3 women crashed a truck through the gate of the German embassy, and Wednesday, 9 Cubans including a 12-year-old boy went over the fence at the Chilean consulate.

(c) Reuters Limited 1994

REUTERS NEWS SERVICE