

Peru sending aid to
S. L. Suman WR-87
embassy refugees

Peru said yesterday that she was sending emergency aid to almost 10,000 Cubans camping in appalling conditions in the garden of her Havana embassy.

The Peruvian Red Cross said they would send 20 tonnes of tinned milk as well as meat and medicine on the first available flight.

The Red Cross were trying also to recruit doctors and nurses to attend to the would-be emigrants, who invaded the Peruvian Embassy when the Cuban Government withdrew security forces guarding its gates last week.

The unexpected Cuban move, and a Havana statement accusing several Latin American nations of encouraging Cubans to seek asylum in foreign embassies, have plunged Peruvian-Cuban relations into a crisis.

The Peruvian Foreign Minister, Mr Arturo Garcia, told a Press conference on Sunday night that his country could not be expected

to cope alone with such a mass of refugees, and he appealed for international aid.

Mr Garcia said Peru could take a few exiles but she would have to rely for help on the International Red Cross and the Geneva-based UN Commission for Refugees.

Peru has called for an urgent ministerial meeting of the five-nation Andean Pact, whose members also include Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia and Bolivia, to deal with the crisis.

The Peruvian Government have blamed Cuba, saying that the decision to withdraw the police protection from the mission was contrary to the Vienna Convention.

Describing the situation inside the embassy compound on Sunday night, Mr Garcia said that 10,000 people were crammed into 2000 square metres (less than half an acre). He described the situation as "unmanageable."

In Havana it was learned that the Cuban Government had begun issuing special passes in an apparent attempt to relieve the suffering of the refugees.

At the same time, however, the official daily newspaper, "Granma," condemned the would-be emigrants as "bums, anti-social elements, delinquents and trash."

An estimated 2000 people were reported to have accepted the safe-conduct passes, which entitle them to leave the embassy and to return if the Peruvian Government grant them entry visas.

Most of the refugees were said to have rejected the offer because they are afraid the police would prevent them from returning to the embassy.

In Washington, the State Department said yesterday that they would be willing to consider applications for admission to the United States from Cubans who managed to get to Peru. *Reuter and AP.*