

## WHAT'S BEHIND THE SUGAR AMENDMENT

The Cuban sugar amendment is backed forcefully by Elliott Abrams, who has made a crusade of going after Cuba. Making the amendment discretionary for the President was easily agreed to by Abrams, because he believes that he can force the Administration to implement the authority anyway.

- During House Foreign Affairs Committee debate on the amendment, while the State Department was opposing it, Abrams strongly supported it. He pushed State into accepting the compromise version.

Egypt is one country the amendment will affect. The case of Egypt proves the amendment is a bad idea.

- Since this issue came up, Egypt, the main importer of Cuban sugar among ESF recipients, has reduced imports of Cuban sugar from 138,000 metric tons in 1986 to 78,000 metric tons in 1987, a 44 percent reduction. That reduction came after discussions with the Egyptians when the amendment wasn't even law. This amendment isn't needed; Egypt has gotten the message.
- In addition, Egypt's trade and economic situations are lousy. Egypt trades with the Communist bloc because the West won't import Egyptian goods. Egypt is forced to trade with whoever it can. Restrictions like this are only going to make Egypt's economic situations worse.

At the very least, the amendment needs to include some exceptions. Exceptions should include countries which:

- have terminated, or has given assurances that it will terminate, imports of Cuban sugar;
- have taken significant steps to reduce its imports of Cuban sugar
- makes such purchases from Cuba on the basis of long-term barter or countertrade agreements; or
- imports Cuban sugar under an agreement with a third country which has refined that sugar.

Exceptions like these would allow the policy to go forward, over time, and yet not allow the State Department (in the person of Elliott Abrams) to force through policy decisions harmful to U.S. interests because of a hatred for Cuba and Castro.

One last but critical point. In Committee debate on this amendment, Larry Smith said that the State Department could find other, democratic countries to sell sugar to Egypt at as good a deal as Cuba provides. The State Department sent out one cable to all sugar producing countries pointing out that this business opportunity exists, but the cable got lost in the bureaucracy. No country has come forward to propose such a deal to Egypt.