

ECONOMIC SURVEY

Cuba's remarkable development

“To your experts, to plan means to plan latrines.... Why don't they give dollars for equipment, dollars for machinery, dollars so that all of our underdeveloped countries may become industrial-agricultural countries.... We are for competition here, sirs. Leave us in peace, let us develop, and within 20 years let us all come together to see if the sirens' song was the Cuban Revolution's or yours....

Ernesto “Che” Guevara, Cuban delegate, to Punta del Este Conference where John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress was launched Aug. 1961.

Little that happened in the post-World War II period still inspires such anger or passion in the United States as the establishment of the Socialist Republic of Cuba “just 90 miles off the coast of Florida,” an event triggered 20 years ago last January with the fall of the Batista government. The “Pearl of the Antilles” fell under “Soviet domination.” Political scientists and others almost unanimously rank this as one of the worst of America’s foreign policy failures in the 20th century.

Cuba is indeed one of the most outstanding examples of United States foreign policy failures—but not in the way most people understand. Cuba, under the leadership of Fidel Castro, is one of the few humanist republics in the world today. As the accompanying report documents, gigantic economic strides have been taken through policies premised on the advancement of the skill level of the country’s population. The U.S. “failure” is not found in Cuba’s present “socialist” status, but in the policy which forced Cuba to break with the U.S. in order to develop; and in the continuing U.S. policy which defines Cuba—and its republican conception of development—as hostile to U.S. interests.

It’s time America faced up to facts: the republican United States can live with socialist Cuba, and a principled basis for cooperation can and must be negotiated. What the U.S. could *not* live with was the drug-centered Cuba of before; neither could the Cubans. No more subversive and corrupt center of influence, no more serious threat to U.S. strategic interests existed in the Caribbean than Batista’s Havana—a center of the international drug-running networks known informally as “Dope, Incorporated.”

Today the United States is more threatened than ever by the portion of drug plague originating in the Caribbean, but its center is no longer Cuba. Now it is virtually every British colony and former colony in the area whose economies are increasingly falling under the domination of the International Monetary Fund and British-directed international drug traffic with the general corruption and degradation that accompany it.

The Castro government wiped Havana off the International Monetary Fund’s map—off “Dope, Inc.’s” map. The Cubans rapidly eradicated the drug problem with a relentless crackdown action which Dope Inc.’s British Board of Directors has not yet forgiven. One noted American journalist a few years back complained bitterly that the Cuban Revolution had destroyed the “old flavor” of Havana, reporting that after a lengthy search of Havana, he was unable to find any prostitutes at all!

The ‘Red Sea’ myth

For 20 years, U.S. policy toward the developments in Cuba has obsessively centered on the alleged red danger of Soviet-Cuban influence in the area. Three weeks ago, one of the most ludicrous red scares to date was generated around the March, 1979 coup in Grenada which replaced the ruling Pinochet-allied government of Charles Gairy (a practitioner of voodoo) with a government which has stated its friendliness toward Cuba. U.S. State Department officials have already expressed their “concern” following rumors in the press of arms shipments in “mysterious Cuban crates” marked “Cement” unloaded at a Grenada dock after the coup!

A strategic threat? Grenada is an island of 100,000 people, whose principal export is nutmeg. A spicy story, indeed!

Yet, this is the stuff out of which “missile crises” are made, with the source of each new red scare invariably traceable to one of the London-based strategic think-tanks or their state-side “clones.” For instance, Carter Administration policy toward Cuba has been based on the Latin American report of the Critical Choices Commission (CCC), written by two Kissinger colleagues formerly at Georgetown’s Center for Strategic and International Studies, Roger Fontaine and James Theberge. The report contains one scenario after another for drawing Soviet-allied Cuba into a confrontation with the U.S.

The CCC report asserts that the “ultimate aim of U.S. policy” is to “reintegrate a democratic Cuba into

the western hemispheric system. ... Cuba is a test case for the United States. ... Making Cuba the socialist camp's first true deserter is a good policy because it is a possibility." Renewing relations with the Castro-led government is considered only as it would aid in splitting Cuba from the Soviet Union, or foster internal factions against Castro.

The CCC strategy simply won't work. Over the past 20 years, a powerful national identity has been created in Cuba through what amounts to one of the most rapid transformations from backwardness to modern growth in recent history. Beginning in the mid-1970s, Cuba began institutionalizing her revolution in republican form, a process culminating with the adoption of the new constitution in 1976. Elections followed shortly thereafter—the presidency, executive bodies, the National Assembly, and regional and local representatives, are now all elected posts.

The active functioning of constitutional life completes a phase of Cuban development, providing the Cuban citizen with direct and permanent access to the planning process of nation-building. The present National Assembly discussions of the Twenty-Year Development Plan, debating the priorities for allocating the nation's resources into the next century, epitomize that process.

Cuba's challenge to the U.S.

Cuba's fundamental break with the U.S. occurred over one basic issue, which had nothing to do with communism or the Soviets: *development*.

In May, 1959, Fidel Castro headed a delegation from the "new Cuba"—not then avowedly communist—to a Washington, D.C. meeting of Latin American Foreign Ministers, the "Committee of 21." Castro's speech, which a Brazilian delegate described as expressing the aspirations of all Latin America, focused on the need for U.S. aid for real industrial development—specifically, a \$30 billion, 10-year investment plan. "What we are proposing," said Castro, "will not adversely affect the United States. It will benefit future generations, since with a developed Latin America, the

U.S. will have more commerce, just as it has more commerce with a developed Canada than with a backward Canada. Besides, if we solve the economic problems now, we will lay the base for a humanist democracy in the future." The U.S. flatly refused the proposal. Cuba was forced onto other paths for nation-building.

The famed August, 1961 conference of the Alliance for Progress in Punta del Este, Uruguay encapsulated the bitter U.S.-Cuban debate. The U.S., "in feverish competition with Cuba," as *New York Times* correspondent Juan de Onis later wrote, had convened the meeting in response to pressures throughout the continent for a serious development program. The U.S. was only offering promises of a debt bailout.

Ernesto "Che" Guevara, leading the Cuban delegation, issued a challenge the U.S. has yet to answer: present a serious aid package for the industrialization of the continent. Characterizing the Alliance's version of "appropriate technology" as a policy of massive "outhouse" building, Che dared the Conference to reconvene 20 years later—and compare the results of Cuba's industrialization policy with the nations of the Alliance and their latrines.

Now, nearly 20 years later, Cuba wins Guevara's challenge. While most of the continent is starving—and still without adequate latrines!—Cuba's economy has reached the industrial take-off stage with one of the most skilled labor pools in the Third World.

This is the real "secret" behind the enormous respect Cuba commands in the Third World today. Thousands of Cuban professionals, construction workers, and military advisors have been requested for construction projects throughout the Third World—Army Corps of Engineers-style. In addition, Cuba has taken an active leadership role in such international forums as the Non-Aligned Nations and the United Nations. Cuba will host the Summit of the Non-Aligned Nations in Havana this September, and President Castro, in his capacity as Chairman of the Conference, is considering personally delivering the report of the meeting to the UN General Secretariat.

The state directs the economy

The following excerpts were taken from Cuba's new socialist constitution, enacted in 1976, by the People's Power Assemblies and the Council of State, Cuba's ruling institutions.

Article XVI. The state organizes, directs and controls the economic life of the nation in accordance with the central plan of socio-economic development in whose elaboration and execution the workers of all the branches of the economy and the other spheres of social life have an active and conscious participation.

The development of the economy serves the purpose of strengthening the socialist system, of increasingly satisfying the material and cultural needs of the society and of the citizens and of promoting the flowering of the human personality and of human dignity and serves the progress and the security of the country and the national capacity to fulfill the internationalist duties of our people.

Article XXXVIII. The state orients, fosters, and

promotes education, culture, and science in all their manifestations.... In order to make this principle a reality, general education and specialized scientific, technical and artistic education are combined with work, development research, physical education, sports, participation in political and social activities, and military training ... education is free. The state maintains a broad scholarship system for students and provides the workers with multiple opportunities to study with a view to the universalization of education. In order to raise the level of culture of the people, the state fosters and develops artistic education, the vocation for creation and the cultivation and appreciation of art.

... Creation and investigation in science are free. The state encourages and facilitates investigation and gives priority to that which is aimed at solving the problems related to the interest of society and the well-being of the people; the state makes it possible for workers to engage in scientific work and to contribute to the development of science.

Cuba's much-commented-on Africa policy, as we show below, is best understood as a direct extension of this commitment to spread economic development throughout the Third World, and not some terrifying spread of "communist militarism" wherever possible. That the former is in fact the essence of Cuba's Africa policy was proved beyond doubt by the remarkable challenge presented to the United States by Cuban Vice President Carlos Rafael Rodriguez a year ago on U.S. national TV. In an interview with CBS correspondent Barbara Walters on May 30, 1978, Rodriguez laid out the basis on which detente could be built between Cuba and the U.S.

"We could cooperate in Africa ... western powers ... western people, ... the Soviet Union ... Cuba. I

invite the President of the United States to think about the possibility of cooperating for development in Africa. There is room for cooperation ... for progress ... for development. ... Africa needs financing, as every underdeveloped country needs financing. Not only in Africa, but in Latin America and in Asia. We could cooperate in the problems of development for these countries without fighting. There are many things in which you can put your money and your equipment. It would be a good business for the United States ... that is what the Founding Fathers talk about, that is what Jefferson talked about, and it's the only way to see peace."

—Gretchen Small