

CASTRO'S CUBA TODAY

At the Havana airport, the health inspector was gloomy, the immigration man surly, the customs inspector actively unpleasant—but then, bureaucrats around the world can be like that. At the Hotel Habana Libre, formerly Hilton, the desk clerk greeted me with a grin and a 'Welcome to Havana!' At the Foreign Minister's office, it took me four days to make the receptionist smile, and the armed militiawoman behind her, who wore slacks, high heels and curlers, never did move her tight lips. But the bright young government public-relations men were cordial and as eager as any press agent to spout their propaganda line. 'Go where you like,' they told me. 'Just tell us when you want a car.' One of them even helped me buy some swimming trunks."

That was Robert Francis' introduction to Cuba, where he spent three weeks before returning to NEWSWEEK's London bureau. Here is his report:

Marxist-Leninist Cuba is still a luscious tropical isle, fragrant with the heady scent of frangipani and oleander, peopled by friendly, music-loving Latins. The famous moro crab is still succulent, the Cantonese cooking at the Mandarin Restaurant and the lobster chow mein at the Libre's Polynesian Room are excellent. Sloppy Joe's doesn't bounce as it did when the long bar entertained the celebrities whose pictures are still on display—Rosalind Russell, Gary Cooper, Alice Faye—but it makes the thickest ham sandwich in town and the beer is cold. Castro cleaned up Havana's sordid night life, but the shows in the clubs and hotels are still pretty wild. One of them patriotically features the favorite sugar-crop song, "How Sweet the Cane Is." Fidel Castro, himself, collaborated on the lyrics. And all across the island, radios blare familiar old "Hit Parade" tunes—"Little Old Lady," "Listen to the Mockingbird," "Dancing Cheek to Cheek."

Fear: But something feels wrong. The first day, a cab driver politely declined to show me the town. Putting his fingers to his lips, he said softly, "You talk, you go . . ." and chopped his right hand down on his left arm in a sharp, ominous gesture. Late that night, as lights twinkled along the curve of the Malecón, huge searchlights suddenly leaped up from the garrison near the Morro Castle, their bright arms semaphoring wildly across the bay. No enemy was at the gate, but the fear was there. A visitor soon senses that Havana is a beleaguered city with a nervous populace and a government primed to use violence on the slightest pretext.

"Fidel Castro's security forces have never been stronger or more thorough," a diplomat murmurs in the quiet corner of a European embassy garden. "His powers of repression are complete." Another foreign representative adds: "Our maids are even afraid when we tune in on foreign broadcasts, for fear someone overhears and thinks they are listening." A Western diplomat told of the recent arrest, on unspecified charges, of an American woman in her 70s, a longtime resident who remained in Cuba because her husband lies buried there. Another old Cuban hand, an American farmer, was picked up without warning about the same time. And the other day a Cuban employed by a foreigner for many years failed to report for work; nothing can be learned of his fate.

"The trouble is," one foreigner said, "the Castro people aren't very big on habeas corpus—or on diplomatic niceties. They don't take any notice of our complaints or questions unless they feel like it." People are locked up just on the suspicion of black marketeering, or currency dealing, or antirevolutionary activities; the investigation comes later. Well-informed sources suspect there are some 50,000 political prisoners in Castro's camps; hard-pressed officials will vaguely mention 7,000.

Guards: No one in Cuba can envision an internal uprising. The average citizen likes Fidel and doesn't think of the terror as directed at him. But when Castro heard that U.S. troops were landing in Santo Domingo he seriously thought Cuba was next, and tightened the overt as well as covert security. Militiamen and women still guard every building in Havana around the clock. Over a rum Collins at the Libre's Turquino Bar, one off-duty militia girl, an expatriate from Fargo, N.D., told me: "You're damn right I'd pull the trigger if you walked into my building without stopping. You just better learn to ask permission around here."

In rural Cuba, the atmosphere is the same. On the beach at Siboney, where the Marines landed in 1898, a powerful sentry stands, carbine ready, among the frolicking children. Six armed guards man the gate at the unoccupied farm—now a shrine—where Castro planned his original attack on Batista near Santiago.

Tightened security is only one aspect of Castro's changing policy for Cuba. The failure of his overly ambitious scheme to quickly industrialize the island forced a turnabout in economic planning. Fidel put sugar back in top place; next in order come industries related to it—fertilizers, farm machinery, jute for sacks, irrigation dams. After that



Studios Korda

Castro: Bringing in the cane

comes the rest: three Russian cement plants now under construction, a prefabricated-house factory (a gift from the Russians after Hurricane Flora), thermoelectric plants, a nut-and-bolt factory.

The renewed emphasis on sugar, plus good weather, has already lifted the sugar crop from 4 million tons last year to 6 million this June. But even though Castro is growing more, Cuba is earning less. The price of sugar is down from 7 cents a pound to around 2, and although Russia subsidizes Castro by giving him 3 cents over world prices, he will still have an unfavorable trade balance of about \$250 million—and no cash to spare for any more French locomotives or British buses.

Danger: Although Castro is willing to trade anywhere—even with Franco Spain—Western diplomats fear he is in grave danger of becoming a complete lackey of Moscow. According to Cuban statistics, 66 per cent of Cuba's trade is now with the socialist bloc, of which 45 per cent is with Russia, 12 per cent with China. Blas Roca, the old-time, hard-line boss of Cuba's Communists, now editor of the daily paper Hoy, tried to minimize the danger. "We shall achieve economic independence by doing exactly as we please, thanks to the help of the socialists," he told me. "We ask Russia for steel and we get steel. We ask for tractors and we get tractors. But they can't tell us what crops to raise or what industries to build. With the U.S., we couldn't do anything except what the bankers and sugar manipu-

lators told us." As an acolyte sprang to light Roca's cigar, he smiled his slow, Cheshire-cat smile and added: "Our great problem is the labor shortage, but we have a good birth rate."

And diplomatically, Castro does give the appearance of stoutly standing up to Russia by refusing to sign the nuclear-test-ban treaty and by continuing to export his revolution to Latin America in the Peking style. No one knows how many Latin revolutionaries are training in Cuba, but billboards everywhere cry, "Viva la Revolución Latinoamericana."

Showman: As Premier, president of the National Institute of Agrarian Reform, (INRA), First Secretary of Cuba's only political party, and commander in chief of the armed forces, Castro is running a one-man show. His brother Raúl is still his Armed Forces Minister, but his good friend and former economic czar, Che Guevara, is mysteriously missing. Castro is always on the move, roaming the island in a covey of three 1960 Oldsmobiles equipped with machine guns and bazookas. Fidel himself is said to wear a bulletproof vest under his olive-green fatigue shirt, and he carries a 9-mm. Makarov automatic. Yet he is the despair of harassed security men; he stops suddenly to talk to villagers on exposed roads or plunges into crowds in open courtyards. Government officials complain they never know where he is, but his methods pay off where they count. "Say what you like," a Cuban told me, "without his powers of persuasion, we'd never have gotten the workers out of their offices to get in the 6 million tons of sugar before the rain started last month." Fidel and his Cabinet ministers themselves took to the cane fields to set the example and give inspiration to a million volunteers.



At the Tropicana: Gaiety as usual

Castro hasn't been seen at many diplomatic receptions lately; he stopped attending them after his attempt to ease relations with Washington was sharply rebuffed last year. But Western diplomats suspect he would still prefer rapprochement with the U.S. An old Havana hand even believes Fidel regrets the fact that he permitted the Cuban revolution to turn Marxist. Now that he's stuck with it, however, Castro deftly uses anti-Americanism to rally an island in the face of its internal difficulties. A Fidelista colleague who had once been terrorized by traveling on Sierra Maestra roads with the Maximum Leader at the wheel of the car summed up things this way: "Fidel is not a very good driver, but he is in command at all times. You grasp the distinction?"

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC:

Campaign Opener

Looking even more fragile than when he went into exile three years ago, sad-eyed bachelor Joaquín Balaguer, 58, left New York City last week to return to his Dominican homeland where once he had been the nation's President. The reason for his journey, he said, was to be at the bedside of his dying mother; but at the comfortable, two-story Balaguer home in suburban Santo Domingo there was no hushed, somber deathbed scene. Instead, almost every room was jammed with dozens of dry-eyed beaming politicians, unemployed bureaucrats and ordinary citizens who, up until now, had been rooting for either junta chief Gen. Antonio Imbert or rebel leader Col. Francisco Caamaño Deño—or both.

Now, wearied by the bloody struggle and the seemingly endless peace negotiations of the Organization of American States, they joyfully offered their support to the former President. Balaguer is remembered as the soft-spoken scholar, who, when he held office under Trujillo, was described by the dictator's daughter as "father's puppet-intellectual collaborator," but who, after Trujillo's assassination, continued in office and won a reputation as an honest reformer.

As the search for a government in the rebellion-torn Dominican Republic became more desperate, Balaguer got a covert nod from the U.S. State Department to return and try his luck.

Last week, between visits to the darkened room where the 82-year-old Mrs. Carmen Celia de Balaguer did indeed lie dying of bronchial pneumonia, her son moved about in the crowd, shaking hands, and receiving *abrazos*. The rousing welcome indicated at least the great desire the Dominicans have developed for political leadership—almost any kind of political leadership—that can fill the current vacuum.



London Daily Express

Dewi: East treats West

Fair Lady: Hers was a purely private visit, explained DEWI SUKARNO, 24, and "I cannot comment on anything political." The London press couldn't have cared less, as long as photographers could click away at the stunning Japanese wife of 64-year-old Indonesian President SUKARNO. Dewi visited an art gallery, attended a piano recital and the movie version of "My Fair Lady," shopped at a department store and chatted with patients in a children's hospital. British girl-watchers agreed that she should have no difficulty keeping a vow to make Sukarno "the happiest man in the world." And it was easy to see why he once told her: "When I first met you I felt like a tired ship which at the end of a long journey finally finds a port where it can rest itself."

Firm Decision: "I consider myself a young adult," announced LUCI BAINES JOHNSON as she turned all of 18. Anyway, she is old enough to make her own decisions. Raised as a Protestant, the President's younger daughter began taking Roman Catholic instruction several months ago. On her birthday, with her parents among those watching, Luci was baptized as a Catholic at St. Matthew's Cathedral near the White House. Since she had already been baptized in the Episcopal church, the rite was not mandatory. But Luci insisted on it. She gave her responses in "a very firm voice," according to the priest who performed the ceremony. Next day the new convert made her first communion.

State of Gracie: "We couldn't see the top of it, it got so bloomin' 'igh." What? "The Biggest Aspidistra in the World," of course, and British comedienne GRACIE FIELDS, 67, is tired of singing it. "It's a bore, but that's the one they ask for," she said before inimitably rendering the 1938 tune at an outdoor concert in New York City. And though she still belts out a ballad with the best of 'em, Gracie claims to be tired of everything