

U.S., Cuba Carry On Secret Romance

By Drew Pearson
and Jack Anderson

An unpublicized romance has been taking place between Fidel Castro and the State Department. It hasn't blossomed into anything near matrimony yet, but relations between the United States and Cuba have improved so much that there's speculation among Latin American diplomats that the two countries will resume relations in a year or so.

One piece of evidence has been Castro's cooperation in regard to hijacking. Negotiations regarding hijacking are conducted through the Swiss Embassy in Havana and have resulted in, first, an immediate release of American planes forced to Cuba, and second, the jailing of hijackers.

One hijacker, Raymond Johnson, who describes himself as a Black Panther lieutenant, complained bitterly that he had been jailed for 21 days. He also said that other hijackers had been jailed and later sent to work camps in the interior.

A second indication of better American-Cuban understanding has been the position of the State Department in regard to the admission of Jamaica into the Organization of American States. Jamaica maintains consulates in Cuba. Hitherto no members of the OAS except Mexico have been permitted to maintain either consulates or diplomatic ties with Cuba.

During closed-door discussions over this problem, the United States has taken the lead in defending Jamaica's right to continue its consulates, while several other Latin American countries, led by Bolivia, have been opposed.

Meanwhile, Castro has made public statements that the economic and cultural ties between Cuba and the United States have been so important in the past that Cuba must resume relations with the United States and would be willing to pay for the American property seized by his regime. Castro has even made this statement in Moscow. Russian diplomats have also told the United States frankly that they would be delighted to end their economic commitment to Cuba, which is costing them around a million dollars a week.

The chief deterrent to the resumption of U.S.-Cuban relations in the past has been Castro's fomenting of revolution in neighboring countries. Recently, however, there has been no evidence of Cuban guerrillas in nearby Caribbean countries.

The anti-American sentiment stirred up during Gov. Rockefeller's trip has been traced to local student organizations and left-wing labor groups, due partly to President Nixon's criticism of Latin American universities and partly to the deliberate anti-American program waged by the Peruvian military regime. The Peruvians have been

more effective in poisoning public opinion against the United States than Castro ever was.

Surtax Jockeying

The snafu over extending the 10 per cent surtax resulted from two factors:

1. A grass roots groundswell against the surtax unless accompanied by drastic tax reform.

2. Bad bungling by Nixon leaders on Capitol Hill.

Regarding the latter, the White House had claimed that it had the votes to continue the surtax. The estimate was based upon a nose count by GOP leaders that was found to be inaccurate. So the White House suddenly postponed a vote until the last day of the fiscal year—yesterday—in order to give time to twist arms and influence votes.

More important than this jockeying, however, is the fact that both Democratic and Republican Congressmen have been deluged with mail demanding basic tax reforms that were ignored in the surtax extension bill. Rep. Charles Vanik (D-Ohio), a member of the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee, summed it up at the Rules Committee hearing:

"We have been dealing with little kittens while the fat cats are still roaming around the neighborhood. We still don't have a tax reform program affecting every major loophole."

Rep. Lloyd Meeds (D-Wash.) put it another way:

"Every day I receive letters asking why our taxes should be increased while the big corporations and the millionaires are getting special treatment because of loopholes."

Rep. Martha Griffiths (D-Mich.) also spoke out bluntly as Ways and Means was preparing to report the Administration bill behind closed doors.

"We have never taken a roll call vote in this Committee on needed tax reforms," she complained. "Nor do we have any real assurances or indications that the Committee will act on tax reforms."

The nine Committee Democrats who voted "no" behind closed doors were: Vanik, Mrs. Griffiths, and Reps. Al Ullman (Ore.), Phil Landrum (Ga.), Richard Fulton (Tenn.), Jacob Gilbert (N.Y.), James Corman (Calif.), William Green (Pa.) and Sam Gibbons (Fla.).

The 16 who voted for reporting the surtax extension bill were Rep. Dan Rostenkowski (D-Ill.), who said he would oppose the bill on the floor, and Democrats Wilbur Mills (Ark.), the chairman; Hale Boggs (La.); John Watts (Ky.); James Burke (Mass.); and Omar Burleson (Tex.).

Also, Republicans John Byrnes (Wis.), James Utt (Calif.), Jackson Betts (Ohio), Herman Schneebeli (Pa.), Harold Collier (Ill.), Joel Broyhill (Va.), Barber Conable (N.Y.), George Bush (Tex.), Rogers Morton (Md.) and Charles Chamberlain (Mich.).