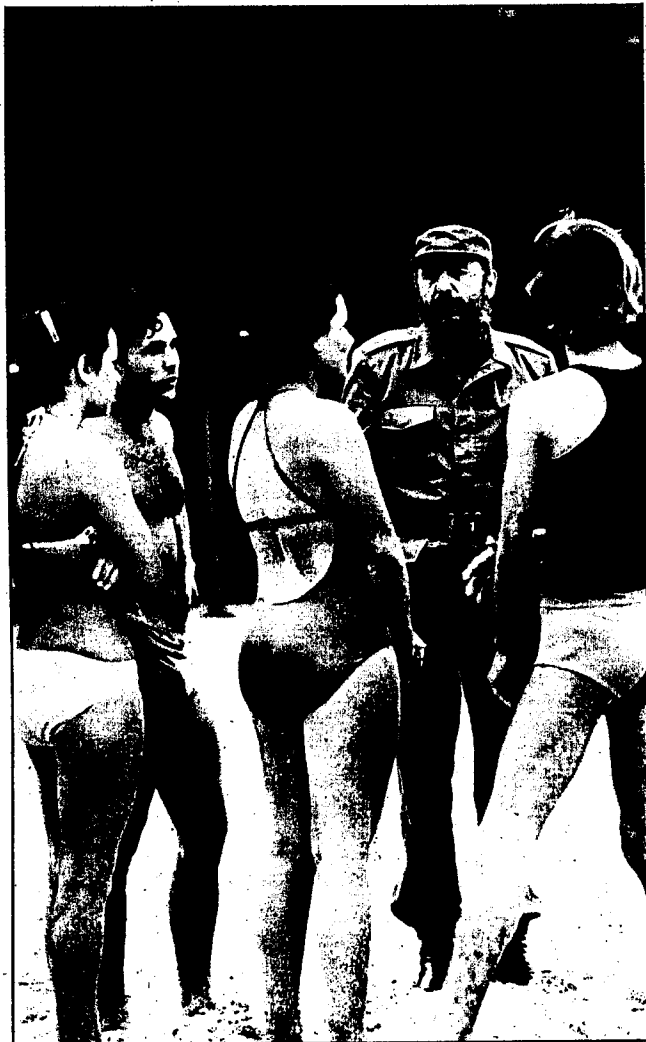


Fidel Castro discloses some questions about the Soviet Union, his fondness for John F. Kennedy, his conditions for a Cuban relationship with the United States

Friendship Is Possible, But...



Castro stops to chat during stroll on beach at Santa Maria del Mar. Though he travels with a small armed escort, he mixes freely with the Cuban people.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY EDDIE ADAMS

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AFTER the triumph of Fidel Castro's revolution, the governments of the United States and Cuba are still locked in what seems implacable hostility, now greater than ever because of mutual antagonism over Central America, bloodied by expanding civil wars.

Whether and how this enmity can be resolved was the principal topic in a series of extraordinary talks I had with President Castro during a recent weekend in Cuba. Our themes ranged widely: his proposals for a political settlement of the civil war in El Salvador, his belief that Latin America faces the most critical economic crisis in its history, the bitter Cuban-Soviet dispute—never before fully disclosed by Castro—that occurred at the time of the October 1962 missile crisis, his surprising admiration for John F. Kennedy.

But the relationship between our two countries dominated the discussions. Fidel Castro, the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary, says that improvement is possible only if the U.S. government accepts the reality that poor nations desperately need deep social changes and it acts accordingly, showing "respect" for revolutions in Cuba and elsewhere. But Ronald Reagan, the seventh U.S. President to be exposed to Castro's intractability, approaches the Cuban system with undisguised rage and frustration, and the Cuban president told me flatly that he would make no unilateral concessions to Washington in order to start a process that might lead to better ties.

For Cuban-U.S. relations to improve, Castro said, a "total change" in world outlook by the U.S. government would be necessary. "It is not we who declare ourselves the enemy of the U.S.," he asserted. "It is the U.S. that declares itself beforehand the enemy of revolu-

tionary countries. What the U.S. does is to place conditions, demand that countries cease being revolutionary, that countries sever their ties with other countries, that countries sell themselves."

Still, a partial improvement in relations would be possible, Castro said, if "partial changes" occurred in U.S. attitudes, such as "to respect Cuba and to develop diplomatic relations, even economic relations." He added, however, that any negotiations with the U.S. must be conducted "on the basis of equality of the negotiators, which would require that the U.S. be disposed to eliminate the [economic] blockade of Cuba and to discuss [U.S.] withdrawal from its naval base in Guantánamo [in Cuba]."

Our 12 hours of talks took place during an all-night session at Castro's office at the Palace of the Revolution in Havana, during a jeep tour of Havana's suburban beaches, over drinks and dinner in a rural hideaway, and aboard his helicopter. I had not been with Castro in many years, and I found him, at age 57, slimmer and trimmer and in excellent physical condition, though his beard is beginning to turn gray. He still lights the long *Cohiba* cigars one after the other, and he retains his inexhaustible thirst for conversation.

The Cuban president stressed the following points:

- Cuba has the right to support revolutionaries everywhere who desire social changes. In the case of nations endeavoring to destroy the Cuban revolution (Castro was clearly alluding to the U.S. and certain regimes in Central America), "we have the reciprocal right of helping the revolutionaries in the same fashion." This is his explanation for Cuban military advisers in Nicaragua plus combat troops in Angola and Ethiopia.
- Latin America faces its most critical

B Y T A D S Z U L C

economic situation ever. Castro said: "We have more ill health than ever, more unemployment than ever, more poverty than ever, more social problems than ever, an economic crisis like we've never had before . . . Even traditional politicians express the conviction that profound economic and social changes are imperative—although speaking of revolutionary changes doesn't necessarily imply violent changes."

• The crisis in El Salvador can be solved through negotiations. A collapse of the Salvadoran army, which Castro said is "increasingly demoralized," could lead to U.S. military intervention. He added: "I know that the Salvadoran rebels, although they are stronger than ever and have a great battle spirit, would be disposed to negotiate because, while they do not fear U.S. intervention, they consider that the cost in lives and destruction for their people would be very high . . . But a formula for a negotiated political solution must be accepted in which all sides would make concessions. In my judgment, this is possible." Both the U.S. and El Salvador reject negotiations with the rebels.

• "An intervention in Nicaragua" by the U.S. would be "even more costly" than in El Salvador. Castro said: "I am certain that hundreds of thousands of soldiers would be required only to occupy the country." He cannot rule out U.S. military intervention in Cuba either, he said, "and we have made great efforts to strengthen our defenses—even much more so after Grenada."

• But Cuba is in no position to intervene militarily in a Central American war. Castro told me: "We have no means to be able to decide the events militarily. All our means are defensive. We have no fleet or air force capable of neutralizing or breaking a U.S. blockade."

One of his most compelling stories; volunteered by Castro, concerned his anger at the Soviet Union in 1962 when, after the showdown with the U.S., the Russians removed their nuclear weapons from Cuba without consulting Castro or informing him of their accord with the Kennedy Administration. Moscow had, in effect, betrayed Cuba. And for the first time, Castro was revealing publicly his version of that crisis (though in the past he had alluded to his annoyance with the Russians).

The Soviet action "damaged for a number of years the existing relations between the Cubans and the Soviets," Castro said. "It never really crossed my mind that the alternative of *withdrawing* the missiles was ever conceivable, although events were occurring with great speed." He added that he later came to understand that the settlement worked out between Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev and President Kennedy had averted a nuclear holocaust. Cuba's 1976 constitution now firmly links the Marxist-Leninist nation's well-being to "the fraternal friendship, help and cooperation of the Soviet Union and other Socialist countries."

Why did Castro choose our talks to bring up past Cuban-Soviet controversies? One can only speculate. Cuba's economic and military dependence on the Soviets is overwhelming (Soviet aid to Cuba is estimated at \$4 billion annually). And Castro was among the first in Moscow for the funeral of Soviet President Yuri V. Andropov in February.

My own impression is that Fidel Castro may be beginning to search for additional alternatives for Cuba, a subtle effort to which U.S. policymakers might pay attention. When, last October, the U.S. invaded the island of Grenada, where Cuba held political sway, the Soviets



At a Havana hospital, Castro visits Cuban civilian, wounded in October fighting in Grenada, and wife. Cuba had supported the leftist Grenada regime.

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did little more than pay lip service to the Grenadian revolutionary cause, and the Cubans may have been disenchanted once more with their big ally.

Recounting the 1962 crisis, Castro said that it was born from a conviction

by both the Cuban and Soviet governments that the U.S. was preparing to invade Cuba with its own forces following the failure of the U.S.-sponsored landing by a brigade of Cuban exiles at

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CASTRO/continued

the Bay of Pigs in April 1961. "We took it up with the Soviets," Castro said. "They had already made great commitments to us, and they asked our opinion. We told them—though we didn't speak of missiles—that it was necessary to make it clear that an invasion of Cuba would mean war with the Soviet Union... It could be a military pact."

"Then they proposed the missiles," Castro said. "The installation of [Soviet] medium-range missiles was analyzed, among other measures." Castro said he concluded that the deployment of Soviet nuclear missiles on his island was politically convenient for the Cubans and could also be convenient for the Soviets "from the military standpoint."

Castro stressed that the missiles were not deployed under Soviet pressure: "They didn't come to us one day and say, 'We want to deploy the missiles because it suits us.' The initiative of requesting measures giving Cuba an absolute guarantee against a conventional war and a U.S. invasion was ours. The concrete idea of the missiles was the Soviets'."

And Castro never believed that the Soviets would take them out. "Perhaps in our revolutionary fervor of those days," he said, "we didn't consider the possibility of withdrawing the missiles... There were communications between the Soviets and us over the evolution of events. But in the last two days, events moved so rapidly that it was impossible for an exchange to occur in time over the proposal to withdraw the missiles. And we were really very irritated over the fact that an agreement had been reached without us having been consulted."

Castro said that the following year, the Soviets showed him all the documents pertaining to the crisis, and only then did he learn that the U.S. had secretly agreed to remove its nuclear missiles from Turkey in exchange for the removal of the Soviet missiles from Cuba.

He also revealed that the American U-2 spy plane lost over Cuba at the height of the crisis on Oct. 27 had been shot down by Soviet surface-to-air missiles. The Russians had not coordinated this action with the Cubans either, and, as it turned out, the incident was almost a giant step toward World War Three: President Kennedy had decided to launch a massive air strike on Soviet nuclear installations in Cuba if a second U.S. plane were shot down.

"It is still a mystery how it happened," Castro told me. "We had no jurisdiction and control over Soviet anti-aircraft missile batteries. We couldn't have fired against the U-2 [with conventional anti-aircraft guns]. But a Russian there, the battery commander, fired... We didn't want to ask too much about this problem."

Castro also said that Kennedy's commitment not to invade the island if the Soviets removed and kept "offensive weapons" out of Cuba was "explicit" and appeared in written exchanges between Kennedy and Khrushchev—a point of major relevance today: Reagan Administration spokesmen are questioning whether the 1962 "understanding" with the Soviets contained an explicit U.S. commitment not to invade Cuba. Three years ago, then Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. urged that the U.S. quarantine Cuba to stop the flow of arms to Central American rebels.

Castro said he believed the removal of the Soviet missiles would have made

it possible for Kennedy "to make small concessions in relation to Cuba." With Kennedy—whom, he told me repeatedly, he admired greatly despite the Bay of Pigs—he was "certain" that "forms of understanding with the United States could have been found," leading some day "to friendly relations."

"I judge Kennedy in the light of everything that occurred in relation with Cuba, beginning with the Bay of Pigs," he said. "I do not hold Kennedy responsible for

Girón [the Cuban name for the invasion beach]. Kennedy inherited the whole Girón plan from the Eisenhower Administration. At the time, Kennedy, in my opinion, was a man full of idealism, purpose, youth, enthusiasm; I don't think he was an unscrupulous man. He was, simply, very young—also very inexperienced in politics, although he was very intelligent, very wise, very well prepared and with a magnificent personality. I can speak of experience in politics because when we compare ourselves now with what we knew about politics in 1959, 1960 and 1961, we are really ashamed of our ignorance at that time."

Castro recalled that, a year after the missile crisis, Kennedy had sent him a private message inquiring "about our disposition to discuss and have a dialogue with the United States—with him—and reflecting his preoccupation and disposition to find a channel of contact, of dialogue, and to overcome the great tensions that had existed."

Kennedy's message was delivered to Castro by Jean Daniel, a well-known French editor, on Nov. 22, 1963. "It was noon," Castro said, "and we were just talking about it when we were informed of the assassination attempt." The delivery of his message coincided exactly with the moment of his death.

"This is why I have always maintained the impression that Kennedy had been meditating over the question of relations with Cuba. For us, for Cuba and for relations between the U.S. and Cuba, Kennedy's death was a terrible blow."

It is impossible in conversations with Castro and other Cubans to escape the impression that they are powerfully attracted by America and things American and that many of them would hope for an accommodation. Castro went out of his way to draft in long-hand a message to the people of the U.S. pledging that "feelings of hostility and hatred toward the North American people" would never be sown in

Cuba (see box on previous page). Fidel Castro appears pleased with his revolution after 25 years. He said Cuba, with its population of 10 million, has been growing economically at an average 4.7 percent annual rate since 1959. He noted that even the Human Rights Commission of the Organization of American States (which expelled Cuba 22 years ago) finds that Cuba is Latin America's second best nourished nation (after Argentina). The World Bank has reported that Cuba has the highest number of doctors per 1000 inhabitants of any country in the Third World.

Castro declares that Cuba is marching toward communism and the social equality it promises. But he mentions in passing the idea of liberty as it is understood in democratic countries. In so doing, he raises the eternal dilemma between social justice and political freedom:

"Equality," Castro said, "is a principle that comes from the French Revolution, which proclaimed that goal of liberty, equality and fraternity. Some liberty was obtained for a part of society, but the fraternity and equality that can be achieved under socialism has never been achieved."

This difference in philosophy is what, at least in part, divides the United States and Cuba, where all political dissent is punishable. Latin American reality seems to vindicate Fidel Castro's claim that profound social changes can no longer wait and that the U.S. must come to terms with it before new civil wars and revolutions erupt. At the same time, Castro must accept that the "new Cuban man"—now so well educated—will before long demand the freedom to think beyond the Communist dogma. These are the forces that, sooner or later, may bring the two nations closer after 25 years of official hostility.

For us and for relations between the U.S. and Cuba, Kennedy's death was a terrible blow

How Ernest Hemingway Influenced Fidel Castro

THE NOVELIST ERNEST Hemingway was Fidel Castro's first inspiration in the art of guerrilla warfare.

I made this discovery when Castro turned to the question of literary influences in the course of our weekend talks in Havana. Hemingway had lived in a house in the small town of San Francisco de Paula, near Havana, for a year or so after the 1959 revolution. Castro told me that the two had met and talked two or three times.

"But," he said, "it was never a real conversation, despite the fact that Hemingway's books exercised a certain influence on our guerrilla concepts."

"How so?" I asked him. Castro said that the best example was *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, where "everything takes place behind enemy lines, all action is in the rear guard... then how the guerrilla groups lived, how



Novelist Hemingway at work during the mid-1930s.

they moved, how they remained alert, how they acted when the cavalry arrived." Castro said he read this book in 1946—when he was 20 years old and

seven years before his first revolutionary feat—"with great interest." Of course, he said, "I had ideas about the possibility of irregular warfare, but Hemingway, in that work of his, had expressed everything—how the guerrillas developed with absolute freedom in the rear guard of the enemy."

"All the action occurred behind Franco's lines," he added. "All the personages—the North American, the gypsy, others—were irregulars in the rear guard. For example, the incident when they tried to blow up the bridge, when they were aiming the machine gun, and the cavalry approached almost 200 meters away, and the guerrillas withdrew. In this Hemingway book, one could see and appreciate the possibilities of irregular warfare because, in truth, nobody had taught us the ideas of that type of combat." —T.S.

'We Essentially Seek The Same Thing'

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By Fidel Castro

WE HAVE ALWAYS HARBORED the most sincere feelings of admiration and affection toward the people of the United States for their enterprising, dedicated, persevering, altruistic and idealistic spirit. They are also a very creative people. I have harbored these feelings ever since I first became acquainted with the history of their independence struggles and the concepts contained in the 1776 Declaration. These continue to be and will always be evident truths. Those ideas greatly influenced Cuban revolutionaries from our independence struggles to our Socialist revolution.

We essentially seek the same things but in different eras and historical conditions. Progressive ideas, as life itself, also evolve. In my defense,

when I was tried for the rebel action of the Moncada [his 1953 attack on army barracks in Santiago], I invoked, among others, the ideas from the 1776 Declaration.

I likewise greatly admire Lincoln, his humble origin, his life and his work.

I also admire the United States as the melting pot that has blended men and women of all origins, religions and ideas into a great nation, even though this melting pot has still much to blend

whenever I think about the fate of the Indians, the Blacks and the Hispanics.

The Americans' noble feelings, altruism and idealism, however, have not always been well directed. Not seldom—although always under the guise of noble and just purposes—selfishness, expansionism and chauvinism were enhanced and used to commit atrocious actions, such as the mutilation and seizure of Mexican territory, the occupation of the Isthmus of Panama and of Puerto Rico, the repeated interventions in numerous small, weak and poor nations of the Caribbean and Central America, the Vietnam War and the invasion of Grenada, to mention but some examples. Not few came to consider this

last and unglorious episode as a merit and a victory.

But whenever the people of the United States were led to commit unjust actions, demagogic appeals were made to their generous and noble soul. Freedom was always invoked, and, as someone has said, many crimes have been committed throughout history in its name. We have suffered from that policy in our nation. At times, attempts have been made—and are still being made—to eliminate me physically. As you can see, I am being candid in passing this critical judgment. But as a personally convinced revolutionary, and due to deeply rooted principles, we shall never blame the people for the responsibilities of governments and systems. In this case, more than ever

before, one must render unto God the things that are God's and unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.

In our homeland—and all U.S. citizens who have visited us in the past 25 years can bear witness to this—we have never sown and shall never sow feelings of hostility and hatred toward the people of the United States. I have always made it my personal concern to stress their great virtues and merits. The hospitality and respectful and

'We have never sown feelings of hostility toward the people of the United States'

friendly treatment U.S. citizens find here are the result of that policy and of our people's education. We are staunch and unyielding revolutionaries, but we are not fanatics. For us, the evident truths are never those that may be inculcated through lies, demagoguery or by appealing to the lowly passions that man may harbor but only those we are capable of reasoning and thinking through calmly and profoundly.

We wish the people of the United States peace, which is the same as wishing all mankind peace; and we wish them security and progress, which is what we also wish for all peoples. I am convinced that one day the people of Cuba and the United States will live in complete peace and friendship.