

Seven Days

THE COMPLETE TEXT
What Fidel Castro Told Barbara Walters
That Barbara Walters Didn't Tell Us



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Dear Readers:

This special issue of Seven Days is devoted almost entirely to the full transcript of Fidel Castro's interview with Barbara Walters aired on ABC last June. As an alternative source of news for those who don't believe they are getting the whole story from the establishment media, we are printing the complete text of this important interview because we think that ABC's version was biased and incomplete.

For those of you who were wondering what happened to us, this special issue will provide welcome reassurance that we're still here and going strong. For new subscribers, it will be a preview of things to come.

We plan to resume publication by the end of January. Expiration dates of new and current subscriptions will be extended accordingly.

Since June our efforts have been directed towards fund raising and promotion. We have raised a considerable portion of the capital necessary to begin publication, and a large part of a direct mail loan fund that will finance our direct mail campaign. The new subscriptions and capital generated by this campaign will free us from the necessity of repeated injections of fresh funds.

The returns on our recent half million piece mailing have exceeded our expectations, and demonstrate beyond a shadow of a doubt that last year's biweekly issues successfully answered the need for a clear, well-written, unrheterical alternative to the establishment press. We have added 7,000 new subscribers since June, and expect at least 3,000 more from the current mailing. This is indeed a dramatic show of confidence in Seven Days.

We are now in the process of doubling the size of last year's staff in preparation for resuming publication. Our new feature editor will be Barbara Ehrenreich. Barbara has published several books on health care and has a wide background in journalism. Alfredo Lopez, formerly editor of the U.S. edition of Claridad, will work on domestic news. Alfredo writes regularly for the Village Voice and other publications. Our new business manager is Denis Berger, who comes to us with several years experience managing small businesses. Distribution will be handled by Steve Maikowski, a graduate of the Columbia School of International Affairs. Steve is a former member of the UAW, and worked in the United Nations Development Program. Liz Mestres, Maggie Block, and Sandy Rodriguez will design and produce the magazine.

We thank you for your patience in seeing us through a difficult period, and look forward to returning to regular publication with a Seven Days that will deliver all the news, whether it is "fit" to print or not.

*Dave Dellinger
For the staff of Seven Days*

BRIEFS

At Home

Dock Agreement Sets Precedent

New York — The dockworkers strike, which paralyzed ports along the Eastern Seaboard and Puerto Rico for days, has ended. The negotiated settlement carries contract clauses on job security and guaranteed income which are precedents for future contracts in all industries.

Besides a substantial wage hike, the International Longshoremen's Association, the union which organizes East Coast dock personnel, won agreements which protect workers against "containerization," the waterfront's version of speed-up.

Whereas, years ago, dozens of stevedores were needed to unload one ship in port, 90% of today's cargo is shipped in giant containers (the size of a van), which can be unloaded only with the use of a crane. In essence, one crane operator takes the place of dozens of workers.

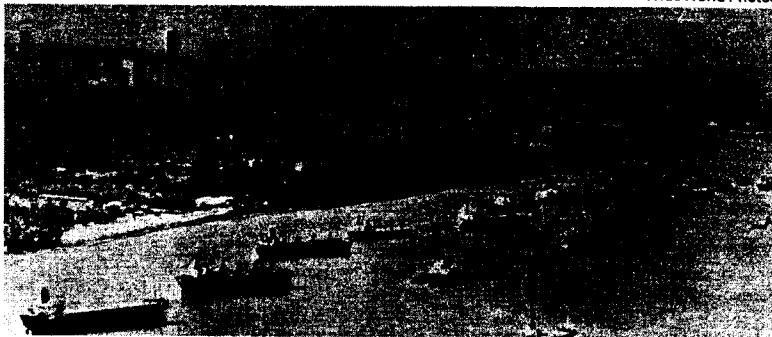
The approved clauses assure a definite number of paid work hours (over 2,000 in New York, slightly less at other ports) for all dock employees, whether they actually work those hours or not. In other words, workers need no longer compete with the crane for work time.

Although the agreement already holds on the West Coast, which is under the jurisdiction of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union,

it is unprecedented in the East and in Puerto Rico, and extremely rare in other industries.

Dock workers in Baltimore, however, expressed dissatisfaction with sections of the agreement which applied to their port area and voted two to one against the contract. However, because ILA locals in all other parts had ratified the contract, the Baltimore workers were ordered back to work.

Wide World Photos



Cargo ships in the Mississippi River displaced from New Orleans docks by the longshoremen's strike.

More Cointelpro Revelations

"They are sicker than anyone on the left had ever imagined." That was the reaction of a Washington researcher who had gone through more than 50,000 pages of documents, memos and letters which detail the activities of the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program (Cointelpro).

The documents were published through a Freedom of Information Act suit brought by eight reporters from prominent commercial media. This November, they were released after a two year battle.

The documents provide an in-depth portrait of the program whose purpose was disruption of the left, anti-war, women's, and Third World groups. They show Cointelpro to have been massive in scale and extremely well organized.

Among the highlights of the documents:

The Bureau went to great pains to disrupt the anti-war movement through the use of organized counter-demonstrations (which physically attacked anti-war demonstrators), issuing false directives by walkie-talkie to organizers, using slanderous rumors to discredit activists, threatening phone calls, confusing and fraudulent housing forms (for demonstrators going to Washington), and FBI written "newsletters" which spread misinformation to activists on different campuses.

The FBI also paid particular attention to disrupting relations which might exist between the Black Panther Party and non-

black left organizations (like the Communist Party of the U.S.) through rumors, fraudulent, insulting letters and well-placed agents.

Hoover seemed intent on "finishing off" the Communist Party itself, by spreading false rumors to the effect that the organization's leaders lived in opulence and how some of them were, in fact, agents. The FBI also attempted to spark a "war" between the Mafia and the Communist Party.

For the first time, Cointelpro's activities in the Puerto Rican independence movement are revealed. The documents profile concerted campaigns to provoke tension between different groups and, in one instance, an attempt to initiate "violent confrontation" between the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP) and another organization, through insulting letters sent to members of each.

At one point, upon hearing of a heart attack suffered by PSP Secretary General Juan Mari Bras (one of two Mari Bras suffered in the sixties), the memo expresses "pleasure" that its threatening phone calls and personal harassment "seem to be having an effect."

One interesting point is that the memo which disbands the program, written by J. Edgar Hoover in 1971, and subsequently used by the FBI to show that the largely illegal Cointelpro operation had ended, merely says that to insure the security of

the program, field offices would in the future undertake the same disruptive activities in specific cases, rather than under the Cointelpro name. Under the new procedures, an activist would be harassed in an operation carrying his or her name. The memo in no way suggests that these operations would cease.

New Seabrook Action In June

Concord, NH—The Clamshell Alliance, the organization which has been leading the fight against the activation of a nuclear reactor in the town of Seabrook, New Hampshire, has announced that it will reoccupy the site on June 24, 1978.

The announcement came in the context of growing controversy and hardship, results of the New Hampshire Public Service Company (PSC) plans for the reactor.

Clamshell activists report that, though the project is scheduled to be completed sometime in 1983, residents of the area's towns have already been faced with shortages, rate hikes, and pollution.

The PSC, pleading near-bankruptcy, recently won a 17% utilities rate hike, effective in December, which is part of a rate hike package which will total over 60% in the next three years.

This would mean that people in New Hampshire, including 11 towns in the

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immediate area which have already passed referendum propositions opposing the nuclear construction (and related activity), will now, in effect, finance the construction of the reactor.

Since the construction uses tens of thousands of gallons of water a day, area residents have suffered severe water shortages. Seabrook is now rationing water and some towns, like neighboring Hampton Falls, have had their own water lines tapped.

The building of a dock, in preparation for the arrival of a "reactor vessel," has released deadly deposits of silt, killing thousands of lobsters and affecting the very basis of one of the area's major industries.

All of this comes in the wake of the convictions of two anti-nuclear activists on "criminal trespass" charges. After refusing to hear testimony on the danger of the reactors from expert witnesses, Judge John Mullavey sentenced Carter Wentworth and Sister Carolyn Duprey to four and two months respectively. The prosecutor in the case had asked for fifteen-day sentences for each.

The two were convicted on charges resulting from the first occupation of the Seabrook site last Spring.

More than sixty indicted defendants remain to be tried and prosecutor Carlton Eldridge has announced his plan to "try a couple" at a time. Eldridge, who himself has publicly opposed the plant, has also stated that he feels "dogs, tear gas, and fire hoses" are more effective than arrests.

Murdoch Links Burchett to KGB

New York—A tour of U.S. campuses and cities by veteran reporter Wilfred Burchett sparked a surprisingly virulent McCarthy-type campaign in the pages of Hearst newspapers and those of the *New York Post*, which is owned by Australian publishing magnate Rupert Murdoch.

Both the Hearst and Murdoch publications published front page stories and editorials attacking Burchett as a "KGB agent" and charging him with having participated in the interrogation and torture of prisoners of war in Vietnam and Korea.

Burchett, whose dispatches from Asia and Africa appear in the left newsweekly *Guardian*, has covered people's liberation struggles all over the world for forty years.

The *New York Post*, that city's afternoon paper, published a series of articles by investigative reporter William Heffernan detailing the charges, implying collu-

sion between State Department officials and the KGB (the Soviet intelligence agency), and listing the times and places of Burchett's remaining speaking engagements. An editorial in the paper demanded that Burchett's tour be "stopped."

The stories are based on the testimony of Yuri Krotkoff, who claims that Burchett is only one of many KGB agents, including John Kenneth Galbraith, Jean-Paul Sartre, a number of Canadian officials and several European ambassadors to the Soviet Union.

When he presented this information to the British Parliament in 1967, that body forced Krotkoff to promise never to make such public charges again. The British press labeled Krotkoff "a quack."

It is no surprise that Hearst publications, long famous for their reactionary views, would try to discredit Burchett. The mystery is, why did the traditionally liberal *Post* join in and print stories which were too flimsy to be picked up by any other New York paper?

At a November press conference, Burchett shed light on this matter.

"In 1970, the Labor Party, which was then in power in Australia, granted me my first passport in seventeen years," Burchett said. "There are elections scheduled for December 10 and the Labor Party, according to recent polls, seems to have a good chance of winning."

Rupert Murdoch's mining interests have brought him into conflict with the Labor Party since that time, and the Australian multi-millionaire is apparently intent on using all his press power to work toward its defeat. "Murdoch is in Australia now directing his newspapers' campaign against Labor," Burchett claimed.

He also hinted strongly that, pending discussions with his lawyer, he will

probably take legal action against the *Post*.

Called by *Seven Days*, Murdoch's office refused any comment.

Something in Your Milk

Heavy rains, which swept across the United States during the last week of September, brought more than mud and runny noses. They also washed down large quantities of radioactive Iodine 131 from a nuclear cloud which passed over the country during that month.

The incident has sparked speculation, among some scientists and government authorities, about possible health hazards, and even infant mortality, as a result of the cloud's fallout.

According to Rick Cahill of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the People's Republic of China detonated a nuclear device in mid-September. "The resulting radioactive mass reached us about September 21 and passed over at five thousand feet. The rain clouds averaged twelve thousand feet off the ground." Disaster was averted; the rain missed the cloud.

But, "there was a tail-end," Cahill said, "which was much lower and the rain swept that down." A significant portion of this country's grass, the cows which eat it and the milk they give was contaminated.

EPA spokespeople told *Seven Days* that raw milk from heavily contaminated areas was very dangerous but, because pasteurization pools together milk supplies from a great number of farms, store-bought milk would have only "negligible" contamination.

The EPA's chief analytical scientist, Charles (Chick) Philips told us that he is not quite sure what the impact could be, but "one thing is sure. No quantity of radioactivity is safe."

One EPA spokesperson, Martha Casey, speculated that the cumulative effects would be "a few cases of thyroid cancer" and "a couple of leukemia".

Dr. Ernest J. Sternglass, of the University of Pittsburgh, disagrees. The well-known physicist has since published findings, based on statistical data, which indicate that, in several particularly "hard hit states," the infant mortality rate rose by 17%. Scientists believe that to be a very notable deviation from the normal rate.

Sternglass alleges that fetuses, in the sixth to the ninth month, were particularly affected by the radioactive fallout.

The findings have caused something of a stir in the scientific community, although the consensus among experts seems to be that the findings need much more study.



AT HOME

International Hotel Fight Lost

San Francisco—Tenants of this city's International Hotel, who battled eviction for nine years, lost their fight last August and have now filed five different court actions challenging the eviction and the sale of the hotel.

On August 4, after overpowering some 2,500 supporters who tried to block the early morning eviction, police and sheriff's deputies dragged and led the fifty-five elderly tenants and their supporters from the building.

The hotel, wedged between the skyscrapers of San Francisco's downtown area and its crowded Chinatown, had become a symbol of the fight for low-income housing. The hotel's owners, Four Seas Corporation, say they plan to raze the hotel and build a parking lot, although a high-rise is sure to follow soon.

The tenants and their supporters have continued to pursue legal avenues to get the hotel back, placing a proposition on the November ballot which would have had the city buy the hotel and use it as renovated low-income housing. The proposition was defeated by a two-to-one margin.

One lingering question is how the owner, a Thai businessman, brought the money for the hotel's purchase into the country. There is no record of its entry, according to Customs officials and, if the entry violated customs procedure, the Treasury Department could conceivably confiscate the hotel or declare the sale void.

Bob Clay



San Francisco cops persuade International Hotel demonstrators to leave.

Skyhorse and Mohawk Still On Trial

The prosecution's case against Paul Skyhorse and Richard Mohawk seems to be falling apart. Witnesses, many of them "hostile" (subpoenaed against their will), continue to contradict each other on basic facts which place the two American Indian Movement activists at the scene of the murder where a California cab driver George Aird was fatally beaten.

Skyhorse and Mohawk have been on trial for more than six months in one of the longest and most notorious trials against Indian leaders in recent history.

The prosecution has built its case around the testimony of Marvin Redshirt, Marcie Eaglestaff and Holly Broussard, the three people in the cab driven by Aird on the night of the murder. Because of strong circumstantial evidence implicating the three in Aird's death, they were arrested, but later were granted immunity in exchange for testimony against Skyhorse and Mohawk, who were arrested one week later.

Thus far this strategy has not proved successful. Only one witness other than Redshirt, Eaglestaff, and Broussard has been able to place Skyhorse and Mohawk at the scene of the crime, or implicate them in the murder, and she recanted.

The prosecution's next move is to present witnesses who allegedly "saw them running" from the scene of the crime. However, other witnesses at the scene are prepared to testify they were not involved.

The trial continues to attract wide support, and recently Amnesty International took up the case as a human rights issue.

South Dakota Stalks Means

Sioux Falls, SD—The State of South Dakota continues its campaign to jail American Indian Movement leader Russell Means. In November, Means was again imprisoned and again won his release.

Tried several times under dozens of counts and several indictments (including murder), Means has been fully cleared in every case but one, a relatively minor indictment stemming from an unprovoked attack by the state police against a group of courtroom observers during a trial of AIM activists in Sioux Falls. Means was convicted under that indictment and sentenced to four years in jail.

He is appealing that conviction and was released, earlier this year, on bond. One of the provisions of that bond stated that Means must not communicate with any member of AIM. When this proved impossible for the AIM leader, his bail was revoked. Early in November, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the provision and Means was sent to jail.

In addition to the disturbing precedent set by the Court's decision, a statement by South Dakota's attorney general that "AIM must be wiped out" sparked renewed concern among AIM activists and supporters.

"We're concerned he might be killed in jail," one supporter told *Seven Days*.

A week after the imprisonment, lawyer William Kunstler won Means' freedom through a writ of habeas corpus, filed in the South Dakota appeals court. Means' appeal continues.

Wide World Photos



South Dakota's attorney general has said: "AIM must be wiped out." Russell Means is a prime target.

Of Tear Gas and Torture

Wash., D.C.—That master of torture and repression, the Shah of Iran, received a "tumultuous" welcome when he visited this country in mid-November.

Iranian demonstrators, protesting the open-arms welcome which President Jimmy Carter gave the Shah, clashed with police and with a group of "pro-Shah Iranians," probably led by the hundreds of agents of SAVAK (the Iranian intelligence agency) whom experts claim reside, work, and study in this country.

It is hardly surprising that the Shah was not shocked by the display of force. Demonstrations in his own country, during his U.S. visit, were dispatched with ruthless efficiency. Some 10,000 students demonstrated at the University in Tehran on November 16 and were viciously attacked by Iranian police. The next day some 60,000 Iranians took to the streets of that capital city, and this time police used machine guns to contain the action. Forty-seven people were killed.

In his own remarks during the brief public ceremony, President Carter called the Iranian dictator a man of "progressive and long-sighted vision."

Through all the ceremonies, no one mentioned that SAVAK, reportedly aided and financed by the CIA, along with the Shah's police state concept of "law and order" (which outlaws strikes and unions), are what maintain stability in Iran. Nor did anyone mention that, because workers' wages are about \$15 a month and living conditions are among the worst in that part of the world, SAVAK and the Shah have their hands full.



BARBARA WALTERS' INTERVIEW WITH FIDEL CASTRO

The ABC's of Network News

by Saul Landau

In July, 1968 a caravan of Soviet jeeps strained their way up the rugged trails of Cuba's Sierra Maestra. I sat behind Fidel Castro in the lead jeep as he surveyed—while bouncing and jostling—one of the poorest and most backward parts of eastern Cuba. "So much has to be done," he muttered as the jeeps chugged past the bohios (palm-roofed shacks that might have been built in the 16th century) and the barefoot children. Today the rugged trails have become paved roads and the shacks are dwarfed by apartment complexes and large new boarding schools in the countryside.

Castro has looked out for Cuban national welfare throughout the nineteen years he has led the Cuban revolution, but he has interpreted that national welfare to include the needs of international communism. When Cubans had just enough to eat and wear in the late 1960s, he reminded them that the Vietnamese had less, and that Vietnam was the front-line battlefield against imperialism. The Cuban masses shouted their approval. And Cuba sent aid to Vietnam—with pride.

By 1973-74 Castro's investment in Cuban health and education during the first period of the revolution began to pay dividends. Production levels soared, and Cuban life began to change. The shortages eased. But new sacrifices were called for when Cuban forces landed in Angola in response to the South African invasion. When Angola was freed from South African designs, and Prime Minister Neto offered Cuba millions of pounds of coffee (Cubans are coffee addicts and rations are short), Castro turned down the offer. "We didn't sacrifice in Angola for any material reward," he explained in a speech in Cuba, but he thanked Neto for the offer. "Angola needs it more than we do." The crowd roared approval.

Castro has guided Cuba down a Third World revolutionary path: revolutionary ideas, backed by guns and only as much butter as needed. Steering Cuba away from the consumer-society road, he and the revolutionary leadership made many economic errors over the first fifteen years, due to inexperience and, to no small extent, to the U.S. blockade. But in politics Castro's ability to read the pulse of his people, and then take them a beat faster, has proved almost unerring. With his audacious move in Angola he showed the ability to make that instinct work abroad.

The Fidel Castro who at age 32 led the victorious bearded guerrillas into power in Havana in 1959 has changed. His talent as a revolutionary has now become tempered by the wisdom of a statesman. The impulses that shaped the early insurrectionary and revolutionary periods, which gave Cuba its style, flare, and drama, its revolutionary theatricality, have now become disciplined by experience, and guided by a more studied, though no less revolutionary, Marxism.

The foreign policy defeats Cuba suffered throughout Latin America in the 1960s—most painfully the death of Ernesto "Che" Guevara in Bolivia in 1967—have paled in the light of the successful effort in Angola. The economic failures, disorganization, and low productivity, culminating in the failure to achieve, in 1970, the widely publicized goal of harvesting 10 million tons of sugar cane, are now eclipsed by the economic gains of the 1970s.

Cuba has become a socialist model for Third World countries. Ironically, it has fulfilled the basic material goals put forward by John F. Kennedy when, as a rhetorical response to the Cuban revolution, he offered Latin America an Alliance for Progress. Today Cuba's literacy rate, her health statistics (especially infant mortality and doctor-nurse-patient ratios), and her levels of productivity and organization have created the very showplace that eighteen years of U.S. hostility have tried to crush.

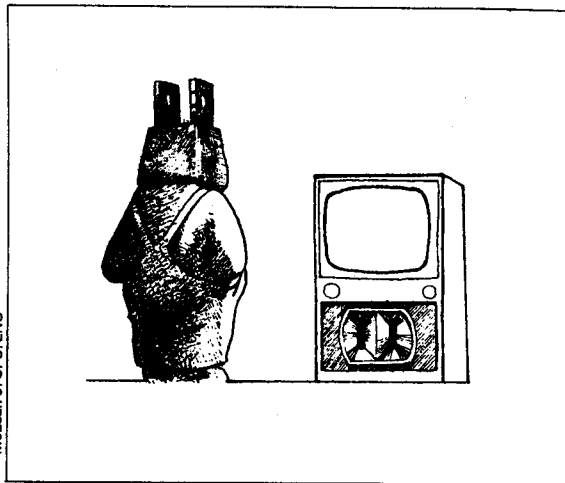
Successful socialism inside Cuba allows for a more aggressive and confident foreign policy: not only can Cuba send troops to Angola to turn back the armies of South Africa and Zaire, but it can export doctors, teachers, and technicians to provide friendly developing countries with the kind of program that Kennedy himself dreamed about—but which failed—when he launched the Peace Corps. In Jamaica, Guyana, Panama, in South Yemen, throughout Africa and in Vietnam, Cuban-built dams, hospitals,

Saul Landau is the director of the Transnational Institute, the international arm of the Institute for Policy Studies. He has made several films in Cuba with Fidel Castro, including Fidel, a 96-minute portrait of the Cuban leader.

schools and resorts stand as monuments to the revolution's success. Its ideology of proletarian internationalism has concretely manifested itself in such projects.

Castro's appearance on the "Barbara Walters show" (as some referred to it) produced a peculiar blend of the noble, the daring, and the visionary, with the banality of American television. Castro and the Cuban leadership had made a decision then to allow revolutionary ideas to become the bread of a sandwich, the meat of which would be the performance of Barbara Walters and the commercials.

All the other Americans who interviewed Fidel, Frank Mankiewicz, Dan Rather, Bill Moyers, myself, had shown respect, even reverence for the man, his accomplishments, his intelligence. These qualities would be lost on Barbara Walters, herself competitive for the attentions of the camera, and trained in the talk show tradition of Johnny Carson—and Fidel knew it. Why then did Castro decide to allow Walters to conduct the interview?

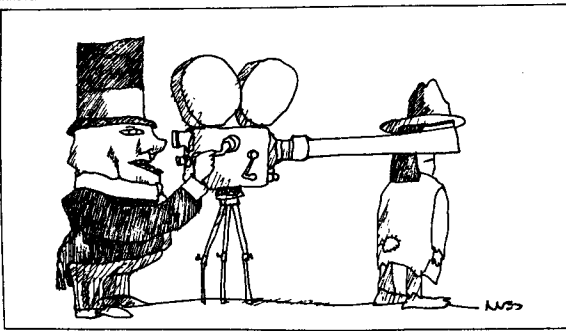


McLennan's/OPS/LNS

Very simply, like the other decisions to grant interviews to Mankiewicz and Rather in 1974 and Moyers in 1977, this one was a function of Cuban policy, not the result of a whim of Fidel's. The entire series of TV interviews were part of a larger decision to help create a favorable climate of public opinion in the U.S. in preparation for resuming U.S.-Cuban relations.

Summer 1969. I sit next to Fidel as he watches on the University of Havana's color TV the astronauts landing on the moon. At times he asks me to render certain idioms. He watches with fascination. The program had begun with "TANG: THE BREAK-FAST DRINK PRESENTS . . . THE MOON LANDING." "And without Tang," he asks, "would there have been no moon landing?" I tell him that some other company would surely have sponsored it if Tang had not grabbed it first. "Incredible," he says.

Nixon appears, superimposed over the astronauts walking on the moon. He congratulates them, himself, and America, in the Nixonesque aren't-we-wonderful style. "Imagine," says Fidel, "what an opportunity Nixon has. He could use this greatest scientific feat as an opportunity to announce the end of the Vietnam War. If he did this he would go down in history as a great statesman, a man of peace and greatness. But I bet you that the idea never occurred to him. A man of little imagination, a crude man. I'm sure that if Kennedy had been President the idea at least



Nuez/Gamma/LNS

which she treats matter-of-factly, belittling its importance: "I sometimes feel that you feel everything, everything comes back to the CIA..."

August 1974, Castro's office, with Frank Mankiewicz and myself. He was angry, not at Mankiewicz, but at the question, at the suggestion that anyone, any sane and reasonable person could believe that he would have had anything to do with the Kennedy assassination. But he quickly regained his composure, looked at Mankiewicz, then at me, standing beside the camera, and began his preface, about Oswald's strange behavior, the secrets that have not yet come to light, odd circumstances, the obvious intention of someone to involve Cuba. Then came the nitty gritty. "We have never believed in assassinating adversaries. It would have been easier to kill Batista than to assault Moncada. But we do not believe that liquidating leaders abolishes the system. And it was the system that we opposed . . . We had been attacked by Kennedy, of course, after he inherited the Bay of Pigs plans, and without question he carried them out and adopted measures against our country. But it went against our political convictions to organize any kind of personal attack against Kennedy. Besides," Fidel shifted gears, "Kennedy could be followed by someone worse. At least we knew Kennedy. We fought against him at the Bay of Pigs, during the Missile Crisis and that whole period. He was a known enemy."

would have occurred to him. Not that he necessarily would have done it, but at least he would have thought of the possibilities that such a feat opened up."

Castro's audacity, his revolutionary vision, then, collide with their antithesis: American television tuned to the wavelength of Nixon's middle America. Castro's interest in Walters lies in just her access, through the turn of a knob, to the living rooms and bedrooms of millions of Americans—and to the offices of American policymakers. These policymakers have primed her for the interview, fed her ideas for questions that touch the concerns of American rulers. Their questions, interspersed between gossip and banality, are designed to draw Castro out on certain matters, while at the same time provoking American TV viewers to focus their intellectual energies on the differences between "us" and "them."

In the mythology of TV Barbara Walters stands, vis-a-vis Castro, for freedom. She is both a spokeswoman for the "free" world, and an instrument of the "liberties" networks take with their material. This freedom is license for her to interrupt, occasionally almost rudely, but more important is the freedom of the network to interrupt the interview to show commercials. This is the ultimate meaning of television freedom: to buy time if you have money.

Walters' approach to news is to equate policy questions and gossip in the same report: Louella Parsons and Edward R. Murrow. This has become the trademark of TV journalism, which lives off scandal and therefore "famous" people. But above all television news relies upon its ability to produce anxiety in the viewer, the kind that makes us turn the set on for fear of missing the latest catastrophe or the newest inside gossip.

When we do turn on, we are assured that whatever we are watching is a "scoop." We're seeing it for the first time:

"... ABC News spent several days and evenings with Fidel Castro. He promised for the first time in many years he would answer..."

The television anchor person must display a confident, bedside manner, and a sense of authority and omniscience. When Walters asks a question, she "speaks" for the American people, with a the-public-has-a-right-to-know inflection, although at best she represents only one major corporation, ABC. But she does transmit, every now and then, another real anxiety, not only when she interrupts Castro: the anxiety of American rulers who have always been afraid that Cuba would develop an independent foreign policy.

Walters uses voice-overs to save precious commercial "time" and to get across her point of view, carefully interspersed with "facts." Voice-over: "... we talked of Russia. Castro seemed oblivious to any faults in the Soviet system." Or after an interview with a Cuban man who says "We agree to go wherever it is necessary . . . to liberate any country which is underdeveloped. We will help them", Walters interjects voice-over: "Maybe they really mean it . . . or maybe they just want to please Fidel Castro." Or on the CIA,

Relations with Cuba will come, but the road will be rocky. The right wing, which is now opposing the Panama Canal Treaty and has a long history of adamant opposition to Cuba, can be expected to launch a massive campaign against relations with Cuba when they come closer to realization.

On top of this, the liberal media has launched an attack, with the backing of the U.S. State Department, on Cuba's Africa policy, giving wide publicity to the presence of Cuban advisors in Ethiopia, while at the same time treating, as it has always done, the presence of American advisors in much of the world as natural and desirable.

As this interview makes clear, however, as far as the Cubans are concerned the obstacles to improved relations between the two countries come not from Cuba but from the United States.

Seven Days and the Center for Cuban Studies have jointly prepared this material for publication.

Barbara Walters' narrative summary of portions of the interview are printed in bold italic type and indicated as "voice over". They are placed as close as possible to the material they summarize.

The parts of Castro's interview and Walters' questions which were televised in the U.S. are printed in bold type.

The photographs accompanying the interview provide a pictorial history of the Cuban revolution.

All uncredited photos appear courtesy of the Center for Cuban Studies.

From the Cutting Room Floor:

The Complete Text of Barbara Walters' Interview with Fidel

voice over

In preparing this program, ABC News spent several days and evenings with Fidel Castro. He promised that for the first time in many years he would answer questions of an American television reporter in any area we wished to pursue. And, further, he would take us to visit parts of the country we wanted to see.

We chose the Bay of Pigs, the scene in 1961 of the American-sponsored invasion of Cuba, and the Sierra Maestra, the mountains in which Castro hid for three

years, conducting guerrilla warfare before he came to power in 1959. We decided at which villages we would stop. No questions were submitted in advance, although there were specific questions Castro refused to answer, as you will hear. Our formal interview through an interpreter took place in his Havana headquarters. Castro gave us a message for President Carter. It said, "I am honestly and seriously interested in improving relations, and am going to think of which ways I can help." Despite the new diplomatic developments between the U.S. and Cuba, Castro feels we're still a long way from normalization.

Mr. President, when will your country and my country have normal relations?

I believe that that depends on the good will of both parts. And I believe that it also depends on time. Many years of bad misunderstandings have passed and many things have happened. Logically, it requires time to overcome all existing problems and create the environment for a true improvement to take place and for the reestablishment of relations. I can assure you that on our part we have the will to work in that direction. And we will be attentive also to the will of the United States in this matter. But being optimistic, I do not believe that relations can be reestablished in a very short period. I don't even think they could be reestablished during Carter's first term. Maybe in Carter's second term, between 1980 and 1984; or maybe even later.

Why? Why not until Carter's second term? Is it because he will be in his second term?

I think so. The general rule is that presidents try to aspire to a second term. It is a kind of rule, and I don't think that Carter is the exception.

No, what I meant was do you feel that domestically Carter could not do it in the first four years, [but] if reelected, he could then take such a bold move?

I believe that Carter himself will have to remove many internal obstacles to change his policy. History proves that any change in U.S. policy needs time, and it must overcome resistances. I believe that that time is needed so that the change can take place. It seems to me that it is not probable

that in the next four years relations be reestablished, if they are going to be reestablished on serious and solid grounds.

On this question nobody can improvise. We can't improvise. I believe that Carter can't either. And the obstacles cannot be eliminated overnight. I believe that undoubtedly positive steps have been taken since Carter's administration came to power. The first steps have been taken, and I consider that they are positive.

But there are also some signs of resistance. Recently there was an agreement in the House of Representatives opposing the motion presented by McGovern for a partial lifting of the blockade. In spite of the



1906. Cuban humorists interpret Uncle Sam's concept of "Cuban Independence".



Every day now I am in danger of having to give my life for my country and for the obligation I feel to impede, through the independence of Cuba, the extension of United States control over the Antilles and the still greater repression of our American nations which would follow. All that I have done up until now, and all that I shall do, is devoted to this purpose. I lived in the monster and I know its entrails; and my sling is David's.

Jose Marti, 1895

fact that the motion did not solve the problem, it was undoubtedly a good gesture, a good initiative.

A Senate Committee has already agreed to adopt the partial lifting of the blockade in respect to food and medicine, but only in one direction. That step alone was very modest because if they do not buy food or medicine from us, we will not buy either food or medicine in the United States. As a matter of principle, we cannot accept any type of unilateral formula for trade.

Aside from that, a partial lifting of the embargo would be a good gesture, a positive step, but it does not solve the problem. As long as the embargo exists, in any form, the adequate conditions for better relations between the United States and Cuba will not exist. Now then, I ask myself whether Carter wants or does not want to lift the embargo. I also ask myself something more, whether President Carter can or cannot lift the embargo.

Well, suppose the embargo is lifted. We have seen the beginning now. If it is lifted, would that mean for you normal relations?

I think it would be a decisive step for normal relations. Then we could sit down on equal terms to discuss the differences between the U.S. and us and the many problems that can be discussed. But we cannot hold discussions if we are not on equal footing. That is the fundamental principle that we maintain.

All right. Let us look at where we are now. We have made many gestures recent-



Thousands march towards Havana's Parque Zayas in a demonstration against the repressive and corrupt Prios Socarras regime, 1950.

Courtesy Saul Landau/Center for Cuban Studies

ly, of friendship or of trying to improve relations, [such as] the Fishing Rights Agreement [and] the fact that American tourists can come here now, and indeed you do allow them to come. We have stopped military surveillance planes, and we are talking of a partial lifting of the embargo. Now, what signs from you? What gesture in return?

Well, we have responded to the gestures of the U.S. government. For instance, on fishing. We have historical rights to fish in those seas, since we respected the 12 miles that had been established previously, and we fished in international seas for food for our people.

The U.S. government made a decision that did not respond to an international agreement, but rather to a unilateral decision; it expanded its jurisdiction to 200 miles. We on our part did not have any other alternative but to expand our seas 200 miles, as preferential economic rights. From that moment on, the U.S. established that in order to fish there, we needed U.S. authorization. So we have held discussions. We were willing to discuss; the U.S. was willing to discuss; the U.S. has been willing to authorize a certain amount of fishing in the new U.S. seas. It seems like something just, as we historically, as well as according to international law, had fished in those seas.

Very well then. We have accepted U.S. law, and on our part we have also been willing to reach an agreement in that sense. The U.S. has done so with many

countries. Actually, in expanding its seas it has had to hold discussions with everybody, with all those who used to fish in these seas. That has been admitted. The U.S. has made the gesture of discussing with us, and we have made the gesture of respecting that law by virtue of which the U.S. expanded its fishing jurisdiction over old international seas.

The U.S. has authorized U.S. citizens to visit Cuba. That seems good to us. What does it mean? First, a reestablishment of a freedom for U.S. citizens that they had been deprived of before. Now North Americans are somewhat freer. They can also visit Cuba.

What has been our attitude? We have

responded by authorizing these visits of U.S. citizens, facilitating that right of U.S. citizens to visit Cuba, even though we do not know how inconvenient that could be for us, because we face the risk that terrorist elements could come. We also face the risk of CIA elements coming in. We face all these risks.

You also make some money.

We might earn some money. But the economic element has not been the decisive factor, because as I say, there are risks of other kinds. We have done this simply as a gesture of friendship to U.S. citizens. We will not become rich because of those visits, nor are we going to solve our economic problems through those visits. We do not even have enough facilities to develop a large tourist industry here. That is why I can tell you that it was a gesture on our part, and an example of confidence and friendship to the people of the U.S., an assurance that they will be received with all of the courtesy, hospitality, and friendship in our country.

Thus for each gesture on the part of the U.S., there has been a corresponding one on our part.

You also mentioned a third fact, the lifting of spy flights over Cuban territory. That pleases us. We appreciate that gesture. That seems to us a positive one. But we cannot respond with an equal measure, since we have never carried out spy flights over the U.S. So, therefore, we cannot adopt a reciprocal similar measure.

Now let me ask you, who stands to gain with this? Cuba does gain something. We are pleased that we don't have planes flying over us, which every once in a while would shake up Cuban skies, break the sound barrier, and bother everybody.

The spying was an arbitrary act, an abusive act, an illegal act, a violation of international law. Who gains more in suspending these flights? Cuba or the U.S.? I think that it is the U.S., by accepting international law. By eliminating an act which was an open violation of our sovereignty,



the U.S. gains in the face of world public opinion, it gains in respect. So we both gain by this.

Mr. President, we have made these gestures whether you think that they are to our benefit or not. For us, they were gestures of friendship. There are some things that you could do as a return gesture. For example, you could let Cubans in the United States, maybe even second-generation Cubans, return to this country to visit their families. You could make a gesture of releasing any or all of the 24 Americans in prison here. You could reinstate the hijacking agreement which ended on April 15. You could make some effort for compensation of the property, estimated at two billion dollars, which was confiscated at the time of the Revolution. Perhaps at this time you cannot do any of these [things], but maybe [there is] one sign which [could] show your heartfelt intentions.

Barbara, it really seems funny to me that you speak to us about the possibility that a country under economic blockade by the U.S. could make any promise for compensation for U.S. property.

First of all, the profits on these properties were at least ten times the investments that the U.S. had made in Cuba before the triumph of the Revolution. Second, the United States, through 18 years of hostility, aggression, subversive plans, and economic blockade has brought about damages in our country many times superior to the value of those properties that you say were confiscated. So in that sense, we cannot make any gesture.

I admit that on these questions of mutual economic interest and of mutual economic claims, we could hold discussions in the future, when the blockade against our country has ceased.

On the air piracy agreement, we cannot forget that only a few months ago a Cuban plane was sabotaged while in flight. Seventy-three people died. All of the young fencing team that had just obtained almost all the gold medals in an international match died because of that sabotage, which created a very deep anger in our people. More than one million people met to accompany the few remains of these victims to the burial place. That deed, perpetrated by people that were trained by the CIA, was the reason why we denounced the agreement, for unilateral measures or attitudes are unacceptable.

Only a few months after that criminal act, and at a time when we still do not have any proof that the U.S. has decided to take measures against these terrorists, how would our people be able to understand our signing again this hijacking agreement? What have we done? We have said that as long as the economic blockade exists, we will not sign this agreement, because we had been very clear in saying that that agreement would not be signed again as long as the U.S. hostility against Cuba continued.



Cuban Dictator Fulgencio Batista with then Vice President Richard Nixon.

We consider that the economic blockade is a serious act of hostility against our country that encourages terrorism. You blockade Cuba. Why? On the other hand you trade with South Africa, you make investments in a fascist country, a racist country, where 20 million blacks are discriminated against and oppressed. The United Nations has adopted blockade measures against Rhodesia, and they have also adopted measures against South Africa. The United States trades with Rhodesia, violating UN agreements; it trades and makes great investments in South Africa, but on the other hand it blockades Cuba.

We could debate all evening why [there are] actions against this country and not against others. For the record, we have changed our trade agreements with Rhodesia, and we are trying to have some...

You no longer buy chrome from Rhodesia?

No.

He says that Carter must first remove the embargo imposed on Cuba after the missile crisis in 1962. When told that the U.S. has recently made gestures of amity, he said they're merely reversals of former acts of hostility. He can't, for example, officially renew the hijacking agreement which expired in April, because it's too soon after the sabotage of a Cuban plane last October in which 73 were killed. He blames that on people trained by the CIA, but says that unofficially the agreement exists and he'll try to make some gestures in return.

No chrome. Fine, that is good news. I congratulate you.

I'm surprised you didn't know that. And [as to] South Africa, that is a very large question, and one that many countries are pondering, and the United States is trying to have its own effect and change its policy. But I want to return to the main question. Unless the embargo is lifted totally, Cuba will do nothing, no small step towards making the United States feel that you too want to be cooperative? You only react to us?

No. We have taken the steps that we mentioned before, regarding the visits of your citizens, the discussions on the fishing agreement—this is a big step. But let me say that U.S. citizens can be completely calm in relation to the hijacking of planes although there is no agreement, since we will not at all encourage hijacking, and we will adopt energetic measures in order to discourage this. Aside from the fact of the existence or not of the formal agreement, that is our attitude, that is our position on that question, and the U.S. government knows it.

Will you allow Cubans to visit this country, to visit their families?

I don't think that at this moment conditions exist for that. Actually conditions do not exist. Until relations with the U.S. are normalized, we cannot allow that type of visit.

Is it possible to have any of the American prisoners released? Eight are political, [and] the rest are in prison for drugs or hijacking.

I listened very attentively to that, and I certainly agree with you on one question.

American prisoners in Cuba

On our part, we should consider what type of thing we can do, aside from the things that we have done, to actually express our sincere and serious intentions to seek normal relations with the U.S. Therefore, I understand that we should think of what type of gesture we could make among those that are possible for us.

The problem was that there was a unilateral situation. The U.S. took many measures against Cuba which we had not adopted in relation to the U.S. Therefore, when the U.S. drops some of these measures, it is not possible for us to drop similar measures, because we have never applied them.

But I understand that you are right in saying that gestures should be responded to with gestures. So we will study how we can make some of them. We have already made the U.S. government know that although we will not sign the agreement formally for the time being, nobody should worry in the U.S., since we will adopt all measures necessary to eliminate any kind of airplane hijacking. And I think that is a gesture and an important one.

What about prisoners?

About the prisoners, we would have to consider it; I cannot commit myself now to take any measure, but it is something that can be considered. I agree.

You have not let the Red Cross or any international group visit the prisoners.

Yes, as a matter of fact, we have not allowed it. We follow a principle. We are very allergic to all forms of investigation and interference in our country's affairs. We have always opposed anyone inspecting us. It is a question of sovereignty. Besides, I am of the opinion that it is a question of the country's dignity. We fulfill our norms, our principles; we always tell the truth. If someone wishes to question it, well, it can be questioned; but we shall not let anyone try to verify our realities or try to question our truth. So, as a matter of principle, we have never accepted nor will ever accept any kind of inspection of our country.

When you say you will consider the situation of the prisoners, does that mean that in the near future you might release them? Or any of them?

What I can promise is that we will analyze these questions within the leadership of our government and the possibility of a gesture will be studied. You cannot hope that we will free them all, of course, since some of them are important CIA agents, and under the present conditions we cannot free them. I don't want to make false promises, I'm not used to that.

Speaking of gestures, I see that you rightly concern yourselves about some of these CIA agents that are in prison, and

this is human. I ask myself why there has never been any effort done through all these years to free Lolita Lebron, for instance, and a group of Puerto Rican patriots [who took part in an attack on the U.S. Congress on March 1, 1954] who have been in prison for more than twenty-five years in the U.S. Wouldn't that be humanitarian, just, elegant to free these Puerto Rican prisoners?

Eight of the American prisoners are political: the rest are [jailed] for other charges, drugs or hijacking. But as I listen to you, I am reminded that Batista [Fulgencio Batista (1901-1975) established a military dictatorship in Cuba on March 10, 1952, until he fled from Cuba on January 1, 1959.] released you from prison and you came back. So perhaps that is part of your thinking.

I will tell you why. Because Batista, first of all, had no legal right to keep us in prison. Our country was living under a constitutional regime. Batista seized power by force, through a coup d'etat. He looted

the country. All his acts were illegal. Our struggle against Batista's regime was totally just and totally legal.

Furthermore, it was in agreement with the precepts of the Constitution. I could be as worthy of going to jail as Washington and Jefferson could when they rose up against English domination in the old British colonies. And nobody questions the legitimacy and the honor and the greatness of those U.S. patriots who rose up against tyranny. That is what we did.

voice over

We asked Castro about releasing the 24 American prisoners, seven [sic] of whom are political. The rest are in prison for drugs or hijacking. He said release is something that could be considered as a gesture. Since our interview he announced he would release ten in prison for drugs. We then asked why all his prisons were closed to observers.



Running as a candidate for congress soon after Batista seized power was a 25-year-old lawyer named Fidel Castro, a supporter of the reform Ortodoxo Party. Below: Fidel with his son Fidelito and his former wife, Mirta Diaz Balart.

Courtesy Saul Landau / Center for Cuban Studies

Batista was not the one who freed us, it was the people and their movement, the masses with their demands, which coincided with Batista's interests in carrying out an electoral masquerade. He could not do it as long as we were in prison, so in order to benefit from his plans and his interests, he freed the very few survivors of the attack against the Moncada Garrison [unsuccessfully attacked by Fidel Castro and about 180 companions on July 26, 1953 in Santiago] after having murdered more than 70 of our comrades.

On the other hand, the CIA agents sentenced here were men who, coming from a foreign power, worked to overthrow the Revolutionary Government, thus perpetrating a very serious act that is condemned by all international laws, by national laws in every country, and by our own laws. We were doing something just; they were not doing anything just. We were serving our homeland; they were serving a

powerful foreign power and they were legally sentenced. That is the difference.

Do you consider yourself a George Washington or a Thomas Jefferson?

I would be incapable of considering myself a George Washington or a Thomas Jefferson. I have too much respect for historical personalities to try to place myself at their height. I don't think that individuals themselves are the ones who can speak about their own historical dimension; only the future generations can do so. I have never in my life fought to occupy a position in history. I have always fought for concrete facts. I have always struggled for justice, and I always follow a slogan of Marti: All of the glory of the world fits in one grain of corn. [Jose Marti (1853-1895) is considered the father of Cuban independence. He was a leader in the 1895-1898 War of Independence in which he was killed.]

Lifting the blockade

Mr. President, can you have trade relations with the United States before the embargo is lifted and before we have normal relations?

Before the lifting of the blockade—you call it an "embargo," I call it a "blockade"—it is impossible to have trade relations, because U.S. laws and agreements and the provisions of the government prohibit them. If the embargo—as you say—is totally lifted, we could have trade relations before reestablishing diplomatic relations, but I believe that that step would create the appropriate conditions to propitiate the further development of relations.

Now then, if the embargo is lifted partially and only one side can purchase merchandise, that is to say, specific merchandise only, we could not have any trade, because we could not accept that

The unsuccessful July 26, 1953 attack on Batista's army garrison at Moncada by Fidel Castro became the rallying cry for the Cuban Revolution. Those who were not killed were captured and imprisoned.

Courtesy Saul Landau / Center for Cuban Studies



Prensa Latina



discrimination, that is, that we buy food from the U.S. and the U.S. would not buy sugar or other agricultural products from us. That would be impossible. But if it is partially lifted in both directions, then there could be a certain trade of agricultural products between the United States and Cuba. That would be a step of progress, but it doesn't solve the problem. I want to warn you, it doesn't solve the problem.

voice over

Congress is currently debating an act which would allow Cuba to buy food and medicine from the United States but not allow the same trade in return. How does he feel about that?

But if the embargo or blockade is lifted one way so that you can buy food and medicine, would you refuse to do that because it is not two ways?

If the embargo is only lifted from the point of view that we are the ones who can buy agricultural products from the United States and we would not be able to sell agricultural products to the U.S., we would not buy anything at all in the U.S., not even an aspirin for headaches—and we have a lot of headaches.

So that bill at the Senate right now is useless as far as you're concerned?

It does not solve the problem. I really understand the fine intentions of McGovern and, to my knowledge, the initial purpose was to lift the blockade partially in both directions, but the Senate's decision was then modified—not modified but blockaded—at the same time by a Congressional decision banning any kind of trade with Vietnam and Cuba.

Once again the United States, the powerful, the preeminent, makes gestures of this kind with regard to two small and underdeveloped countries. So I cannot understand how these institutions and Congresspeople can feel honored with such an attitude. Seemingly they are saying: "Are we going to forgive these poor people for living? No, not at all, don't forgive them for living, don't even sell them an aspirin." And they do this without even investigating whether we have money or not to buy aspirin. If we cannot export, where are we going to get the money to buy?

If the United States' companies do come here, in what form would you welcome U.S. investments? That is to say, the investments would be in companies or they could not own plants. How would it work?

You have posed a totally new problem that we have not thought of. Look, we cannot be dogmatic. The important thing for a country is how it aims its efforts. The important thing for a country is whom the

government represents. In our country, the government represents the interests of the workers, of the peasants, of the working people. Everything we do is for their benefit.

Therefore, without advancing any future policy, I believe that when the specific time comes, when a problem of that nature arises—that is, the question of foreign investments in our country—with a practical attitude and without any type of dogmatism we would have to examine what is convenient or not for our country. And then, according to this, we would make decisions. I'm certain that in the leadership of our Party, any proposal in that direction would be coolly analyzed, without any sort of dogmatism, that is, we would consider what would be convenient or not convenient for our country.

You mean that you've been discussing trade with people like the Minnesota businessmen and not thought of whether they could have plants or how they would invest, or how would the trade conditions take place?

Barbara, you want us to cross the bridge before getting to the river.

On, no, you are at the bridge.

You said that we made no gestures and that's another proof: we have lately received many U.S. personalities and a large group of U.S. businessmen. But they did not come with any ideas of proposing investments in Cuba; they came to have the initial contacts and to analyze what trade possibilities there would be once the blockade was lifted. But U.S. investments were not mentioned here, and actually we have not thought about that.

I'm sorry to have said that. If you and the U.S. have relations, economic relations, trade relations, what about the future when we are on different sides, politically and often in foreign policy? Would normal relations affect some of your decisions, some of your foreign policy decisions? For it is hard to be friends in one way and enemies in another.

Look now, it would be nothing new. In the first place, the U.S. trades with the Soviet Union, with China, with all socialist countries of Eastern Europe, and that trade is still developing. The trade with Poland is growing, the trade with Hungary, with Bulgaria, trade with the German Democratic Republic, that trade grows. The experience would not be new.

In the second place, I could also pose a similar question. Would the U.S. trade with Cuba change some of the positions of the United States' international policies? We would have to analyze this in terms of equality and ask ourselves that same question.

Now then, the topic that you have put forward is undoubtedly of important

content, and this is my opinion: the U.S. policy of hostility towards Cuba is its worst policy. I'm totally convinced that, in regard to Cuba, a policy of normal relations and a policy of commercial exchange would be much more intelligent. I would not say—for I don't want to deceive the North Americans or anyone—that we are going to change our thoughts, that we are going to change our ideology, that we are going to change our political principles. We would not do as that character of the Bible who sold his right to primogeniture for a plate of lentils. We will never sell our ideas for any kind of money nor for any type of material interest.

But historical experience, even our own experience, shows that once economic bonds are established between two countries, any responsible government, any government truly concerned for its people, does take into consideration those interests and those economic bonds, and in one way or another they do exercise a certain influence in the governments' attitudes.

We actually feel very free, very free. There are no economic bonds with the U.S. We have a blockade over us, and the fact is we never have to ask ourselves whether the U.S. likes anything about our international policy. I say this because I'm a realistic man, and I like to be sincere. And that's why I can always tell when the adversary acts well or badly. But, as to the U.S. point-of-view, I am certain that the policy it has followed towards Cuba is the most erroneous policy, not to use other stronger adjectives.

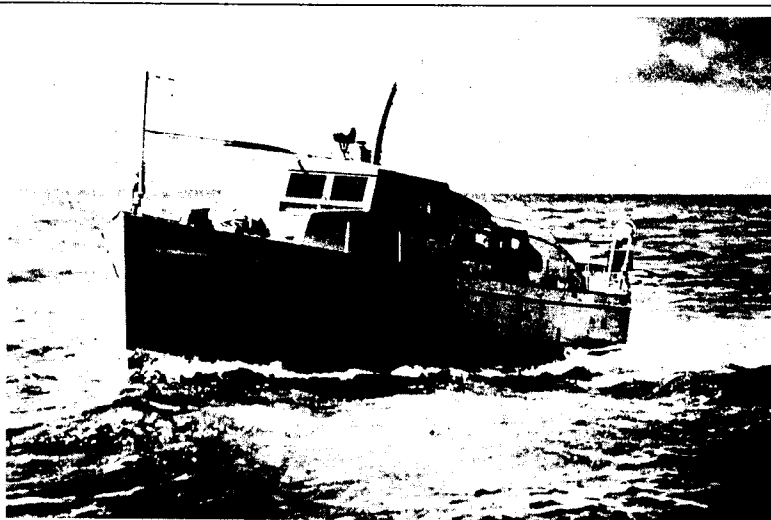
Socialism in America?

Do you think that the U.S. will one day be a socialist country?

I do. One day. Some time ago, the U.S. was an English colony. If an Englishman had been asked if the U.S. would be independent, the English Crown would have said, before George Washington, "No, it will always be an English colony." Afterwards, the colonies liberated themselves, a nation was established, but it was a country with slavery.

If the question could have been posed then to the slave owners, they would have said, "No, slavery will never disappear." But a conscientious man at that time would have said that some day slavery would end. And slavery did end. Wage workers came; capitalism came; it developed extraordinarily; large multinational enterprises developed.

And if a reasonable man is asked now if this will be eternal, he would have to say, "No, it will not be eternal." **Some day the capitalist system will disappear in the U.S. because no social class system has been eternal, some day class societies will disappear. It's in that sense that I say it. But you can be calm, I do not foresee any**



Courtesy Saul Landau/Center for Cuban Studies

November, 1958. Returning from exile in Mexico, 82 men set sail for Cuba in the second-hand boat, the Granma.



In initial skirmishes with Batista troops many of the 82 are killed and most are declared dead. The rest flee and are reunited in the Sierra Maestra mountains.

change towards socialism in the U.S. in a short time.

In my child's generation?

Realistically... Look now, most of those who have thought about social changes always imagined that they were going to take place much more rapidly. History has proved that social changes do not take place so quickly. If I said that in your children's generation the U.S. will change towards socialism, I could rightly be accused of being optimistic. I believe that it will not happen even in your children's generation.

Now then, I don't know what the Marxists and the socialists in the U.S. think. Probably they would have different criteria. Maybe they have hopes that it might happen sooner. But I can say one thing: nobody will impose that change on the U.S. Do you believe in democracy?

I was just thinking. I was wondering if any people might think that Cuba might have democracy around the same time we have socialism?

No, a U.S.-style democracy, no. A capi-

talist democracy, a bourgeois democracy, we will not have. That you can be sure of. But if one day the majority of the U.S. people want socialism, I ask myself a question: Will the CIA agree, will the Pentagon agree, will the multinational companies agree, will the power elite agree?

It wouldn't matter if they all disagreed if it was the people's choice and they voted for it. We do have free elections.

Yes, I do admit so. Every four years the two parties in the U.S....

Not every four years. There are local elections; we have Senate elections every two years. It is not just that every four years we elect a president; and we are not a country run by the CIA.

I'm not contradicting you. I was referring to the center of power, to the Presidency. Every four years the two traditional parties nominate their candidates and elect their president. And I think that when they elected Roosevelt, they made a good selection; when they elected Nixon, they made a great mistake.

What do you think of Richard Nixon?

I think we have talked about this on other occasions. I say that one is little honored to speak about Nixon now that he has not been president for awhile. But it was always my impression that Nixon was a false man and that he was a mediocre politician, he was using tricks all the time. And I think that events have coincided with that impression I had. But I believe the best thing Nixon can do is to let people forget him.

You don't think he should have done those interviews?

What is the meaning of all that? What was the result of all that? Have the people become convinced that Nixon is an honorable man? So, I am of the impression that his attempt to justify himself has actually made people angry.

Do you consider the United States an enemy?

No. It is the U.S. that considers itself our enemy.

Yesterday you and I went to a farm together. The children did not know I was from North America and they said, "Fidel, Fidel, hit the Yankees." You said, "Ah, they are not being impolite," for they didn't know I was North American. But they thought that would please you. "Hit the Yankees." And you are teaching your children about Yankee imperialism and to hate the Yankees. We don't teach our children to hate the Cubans.

If we teach the children that the U.S. is an imperialist country, from my point of view, we would be teaching them a truth. In regard to what you say, that did happen. But that is a slogan since the days of Giron, [Playa Giron is the name of the beach where the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs attack took place on April 17, 1961. The CIA trained Cuban exile mercenaries for the attack.] since the days of the October crisis, since the days of the aggression plans, since the days of the CIA, since the assassination plans. It is an old slogan.

But it lives.

It is an old slogan that has persisted during all these years. But the children also know, and the workers also know, the peasants also know, that the U.S. behaves as an enemy of Cuba and that the United States maintains a strict economic blockade against Cuba. They know that. These are slogans. On many occasions, in many public activities, there are slogans that gain strength. So then they repeat it; not the children, it is not the children...

I was not insulted...

I know it, I know it. That is, the teachers do not teach that. They are slogans of the people in the large rallies. So then they are repeated. On many occasions you go to a meeting and they repeat it.

Now then, think about the following: when Cubans died in a dramatic way a few months ago—and the history of all these facts must be made public—it is logical that in the heart of all the people there are sentiments of rejection in this regard. So words become symbols.

I told you that if they knew that you were North Americans, they would not have said that. Why? Because these children are educated children, and our population is an educated population. It is no longer an illiterate population; it has acquired a general culture and a political culture. And one of the characteristics of our people is hospitality, the respect for the visitor. If they had known that, just for courtesy, they would not have said it. That is what I meant. And it was funny for you, and it was also funny for me.

I wish we had time. I want to, if I may, ask you, before we go back to politics again, some personal questions, for you are a man of a great mystery to us. First of all, why the mystery? You come from nowhere, you seem to disappear, we hear that you have no one home. You are a man of secrecy and mystery.

So then we could say we are facing the theory of mystery. I ask myself, I'm the first to ask myself, where is the mystery? And who are the ones that invent the mystery? Because, well, there are certain things that we've had to do since the beginning of the Revolution. That is, if a trip is made, why should we tell the CIA and its terrorists that we are going to make a trip? Why should we tell them at that time, more than ten years ago, when the CIA used all its means and resources to assassinate me? Did we have any obligation to facilitate the CIA's work? This is something that forced us to take logical precautionary measures.

But, aside from that, you say that I appear and disappear. Is that the image you have of a punctual man? We meet at such and such a time, in such a place, in such an office. Actually, isn't that the important thing? Why should a mystery be made of all this? There is nothing further from my mind than mystery. Nothing is more distant from my mind. On the contrary, I like things to be without protocol, without solemnity, in the most simple and in the most normal way possible. That's the way I am, and that's the way I live.

Fidel's family

Recently, your sister was on American television. You have a sister, Juanita, who lives in the United States. She has been very critical of you; she has even written to President Carter about you. She says you are a monster who should be destroyed. . .

Imagine!

Now I'm telling this, I have two

questions. . .

Don't you think it is monstrous that a sister should say something like that about a brother?

Yes, I wonder why.

Well, I can tell you the following: we are children from the same father and the same mother, we have the same blood, but we have different ideas. I am a socialist, I am a Communist, although she, in her passion, even goes to the extent of stating that I am not a Communist. She has different political ideas, she is an enemy of socialism, she is an enemy of communism. She is an active and passionate militant in her struggle against communism, and that explains her very critical position regarding me. I knew that she wrote a letter to Carter, and then the letter was published. A letter against relations with Cuba.

Actually an error is made in trying to identify Castro as the symbol of all the evil things in the world. But that is not a fundamental question. I am a citizen of this country, a country with nine and a half million inhabitants. I would say the following, very much according to my convictions: I have nine and a half million brothers, brothers in ideas, brothers in homeland, brothers in Revolution; those are really and truly my brothers. We have millions of children, these are really our children; we struggle for them, we work for them.

I have had many brothers in this struggle. Those who went with me to Moncada

and died, those are my brothers. Those who were with me in jail are also my brothers. Those who came with me in the *Granma* [The *Granma* was the yacht which carried Fidel and about 80 comrades from Mexico to Cuba in December, 1956 to begin the revolutionary struggle in the Sierra Maestra mountains.] are also my brothers. Those who fought in the Sierra Maestra are my brothers. Those who fought and died in Giron are my brothers. Those who fought in the Escambray Mountains are my brothers. Those who fought in Angola are my brothers. Those who have died defending just causes in any area of the world, those are my brothers.

Raul doubly; he is my brother in all that struggle and my brother in ideas. [Raul Castro is the first vice-president of the Cuban Council of State and head of the Revolutionary Armed Forces.]

But Raul does not occupy a position in this Revolution because of his being my blood brother, but because he is my brother in ideas and because he has earned that position with his sacrifice, with his courage, with his capacity.

I have a different vision of the world. My family is very large. My family is not only Cuba. My family is the Angolans, the liberation movements in Africa; my family is made up of all progressive and revolutionary people of the world. I have the privilege of having an immense family, an infinite family, the family of all revolutionaries in the world.

You may understand that maybe

A platoon of Batista's soldiers hunt the guerrillas in the Sierra Maestra.



Courtesy Saul Landau/Center for Cuban Studies

voice over

We advanced the oft-voiced opinion that his closest companion was Celia Sanchez, first secretary of the Communist Party, and one of the women who served with him in the mountains. He wouldn't affirm or deny this. We then asked about his sister.

someone attacks us, because of having different ideas, although there are blood links, but I have a very different idea about this. I'm very sorry, I'm sorry for her doing those things, but actually I cannot find any importance in that. What would be very painful for me is that it would be said that I have a sister in Cuba who has stolen, who has privileges, or who has become a millionaire; but a sister who attacks me because of not allowing those things or because we are revolutionaries, that does not affect my honor, that does not even hurt me.

On becoming a Communist

One of the things that your sister said, one of the things that some Americans believe, is that you did not become a communist until after you had control of the government; that when you were in the mountains the people did not know that you were a communist, [or] even in the beginning, so that you deceived the people. I would like to ask you, when did you become a communist? You have heard this, I'm sure.

Yes, of course, I've heard that thousands of times. It's very funny. That is to confuse persuasion with deceit. If they would say that I helped a lot in persuading the people in favor of socialism and communism, then a truth would be said. That I deceived the people? How can one deceive people and make them communists through deceit? Only through persuasion can people become socialist or communist. If I had become a communist yesterday, that would not be important. If I had become a communist after the Revolution triumphed, that would not be important, if I was a sincere communist.

Now then, what a strange thing! What are they accusing me of? Of being a communist or of not being a communist? In the end, what am I? For your information, and not that I am especially interested in making this clear—I have spoken about this on other occasions—I became a communist on my own, and I became a communist before reading a single book by Marx, Engels, Lenin, or anyone. I became a communist by studying capitalist political economy.

When I had a bit of understanding of those problems, it actually seemed to me so absurd, so irrational, so inhuman, that I simply began on my own to elaborate formulas for production and distribution that would be different. And that was at

the time when I was a law student in the third year at the University of Havana.

And I'll tell you something more, because I do not hide my life, nor my origin, nor do I have any reason to invent things. If I were a false man, if my ideas were not deep and sincere, I would not have been able to convince anyone in this country, because I can say that when the Revolution triumphed, the majority of the people were not socialist, and the majority of the people were not communist. But when the Revolution triumphed, my convictions were socialist, were communist.

I was born within a landholding family; I studied in religious schools, that is, my primary and secondary education; I arrived at the University of Havana being a political illiterate, and no one instilled ideas in me. These ideas were the result of my own analyses and my own meditations. I'm very sorry not to have had someone who would have oriented me politically since I was a child, someone who would have educated me politically. I had to discover on my own.

I reached those convictions in such a way that I became what could be called a utopian communist. Then I was introduced to Marxist literature: the *Communist Manifesto*, by Marx and Engels, the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin.

Maybe there are in Cuba and even outside of Cuba some of those who for hours at a time had the patience to listen to all the criticisms that I had of capitalist society when I had not even read one Marxist document. Of course, when I encountered it, Marxist literature had an immediate influence on us.

voice over

Such is the power of Fidel Castro's personality that people are as interested in the man as his politics. He is six feet two. He's a massive man, and this adds to his image. Add, too, a keen sense of humor, an apparent warmth with people he likes, and a gallantry with strangers. He eats sparingly, smokes continuously, carries his cigars, called Cohibas, in a small wooden box. He also carries a blue tin of very sweet hard candies and, when we were with him—perhaps for our benefit—a volume of the selected works of Ernest Hemingway. He has read just about everything Hemingway ever wrote. He likes to fish, occasionally plays basketball. He enjoys driving, but rarely drives himself these days, although with us he took the wheel of his Russian-made jeep with its rifle across the dashboard. And then he talks, drives, and smokes all at the same time. Except when driving, he wears a .45 automatic on a belt around his hips. He has, of course, helicopters, and limousines at his disposal—all Russian-made.

He is surprisingly soft-spoken, almost as if he knows it will be a surprise. He says he dislikes the cult of personality—blames

Now, what we can say is that before the Revolution our program was not yet a socialist program. But anyone who sits down to read carefully the Moncada program of 1953, [the program of the young revolutionaries who attacked the Moncada Barracks. It was described by Fidel in his defense speech in October 1953, since published as *History Will Absolve Me.*] issued long before the triumph of the Revolution, anyone who examines it in depth, will see, first of all, that it was a program of national liberation, a very advanced program and a program very close to socialism. I would say that it was the maximum that could have been understood by the masses of the population at that time and under those circumstances.

Our program was not yet a socialist program, but I did have deep socialist and communist convictions. When the Revolution triumphed, the people were still neither socialist nor communist, because they were still too deceived, truly deceived; too poisoned through anti-communist propaganda, McCarthyist propaganda; too poisoned by bourgeois papers, bourgeois books, bourgeois literature, by bourgeois cinema coming exclusively from the United States. That was the McCarthy period. So we can say that our people were not socialist yet, nor communist.

What made our people socialist and communist? The revolutionary laws, the work of the Revolution, persuasion and education. That is the historical reality. Historians, leaving aside gossip, will eventually take to the task of writing down things just as they were.

Now the people are socialist and com-

China's Mao Tse-tung for making himself a god. His khaki uniforms are neatly pressed. Castro wears his no matter what the weather, and says it's a habit. He is 50 years old, a lawyer, and the son of a landowner. One of eight children, he was born illegitimate, but his father later married his mother. One of his five sisters now lives in the United States and has recently been increasing her verbal attacks against her brother for deceiving the Cuban people by not admitting he was a Communist until he came to power. Castro insists that he has been a Communist since his university days, and that everyone associated with him knew he was a Communist. He was married in his early twenties, and has a 27-year-old son now studying in Moscow. His son bears his name, Fidel, but is not interested in politics, although father and son are close. Castro's not-too-happy marriage ended because while he was in prison his wife took financial aid from his enemy, Batista. No one seemed to know if he is married today. Castro never discusses it and is never seen publicly alone with a woman. He seems to like living behind a mask. We decided to try to penetrate it.



With a nucleus of only 18 women and men, the armed struggle begins. Here, the guerrillas plan their third attack.

Courtesy Saul Landau / Center for Cuban Studies

munist. There exists full coincidence between the people, the [Communist] Party, and the leadership. That is the truth. And that cannot be changed. I warn you, that cannot be changed by anything. No matter how many millions of North American tourists come here.

Mr. President, you have said that a man should not remain in office too long lest he become arrogant. Could that happen in your case?

So I have to speak about myself, right? I feel truly relaxed and totally convinced that it could not happen. My life has always been a struggle against myself, or rather an effort for constant improvement. I have experienced different life stages: childhood, adolescence, youth.

In different stages, a man may feel assaulted by some of these things, by arrogance, vanity, and all sorts of things. I was always very much on the alert or at least aware when I let myself be carried away by some of these sentiments.

In my opinion, the more one matures, the more one struggles, the more you get an idea instilled in you, a purpose. Those factors with which we are born—because one is born with these factors—are left along the path, at least that is my case.

It has always been said that power corrupted people. It has always been said that power made men arrogant, proud. And it has not only been said, but it has actually happened like that in many cases in history. But one cannot forget that we Cubans have a doctrine, that is, I am not a chieftain, whose influence and whose power is based on his personality or on his personal sympathy. Our power, our strength, is based on ideas, on a doctrine, on conviction.

voice over

Many people in this country feel that Cuba is Fidel and Fidel Cuba. And there are some people who even think he is a dictator.

tions. You understand? We are educated on that principle, we have a kind of religion—if you want to call it that—with regard to our ideas.

I follow a philosophy based on the quote from Marti that I mentioned before, but I think that the danger simply does not exist in my case, not only because of a subjective matter, but also because of an objective matter.

When the Revolution triumphed, we could say that my personal power was very great. I was the chief of a victorious army, and a war is not conducted through collective, democratic methods. It is based on the responsibility of the commander, the one that makes final decisions. But because of our convictions, immediately after the triumph we started to create conditions so as to unite other organizations and to establish a collective leadership, to create a party. All these things were done.

Even before Moncada, in our movement we had a small leadership which was collective. Afterward came the whole process: the war, and then, after the triumph of the Revolution, all this process of institutionalization of the Revolution. Almost since the very beginning, we created a leadership group among the most capable leaders of our movement and of other movements.

Since then, we have always preached incessantly against the personality cult, against making men gods. We prohibit statues, the names of the leaders being used to name streets, and every other sign of personality cult. In my case, far from being a process in which the individual had growing power, the case is one of an individual who increasingly shared that power. Because of the institutions we have created, because of our convictions and our attitude, that danger simply does not exist at all.

But children kiss you. People shout: "Fidel, Fidel!" You are a legend.

That's right, but how do I see it when they shout: "Fidel!" and children kiss me? I cannot think in terms of that being due

to personal merit. They take me as a symbol.

Children have schools, but I was not the one who built those schools; dozens or hundreds of workers were the ones who built those schools. They have a camp. That camp was not built by me; that camp was built by hundreds of workers. The economy of the country, the clothes, the shoes, the food for those children, are not produced by me; they are produced by the workers, by millions of people. The credit goes to millions of people. What happens is that the people cannot thank millions of people and they thank one person.

I have never thought that I deserve all that credit. I deserve some; I am not going to deny that I have merit because of the role I have played, because of the leadership in which I have participated, because of the influence I have had on events. But that is not a reason for me to feel that I deserve recognition for the work of millions of people.

Do you think that you will be president until your death?

I hope not.

But do you think it will be a long time? Do you have any thoughts of a successor?

I don't think I would have the right to resign. What alternative would I have? I would not have the right to resign. For example, if in order to rest, to dedicate myself to writing, to have a less tense life, I personally preferred to leave the responsibilities I have, it would be selfish on my part, in my opinion. So I could not do that.

Now then, if I didn't feel capable or competent, I would have the obligation to resign, and the most likely thing is that my comrades would replace me if I myself did **Signing the Sierra Maestra Manifesto, calling for basic land reform and unity in the struggle against Batista.**
July 12, 1957.



Courtesy Saul Landau / Center for Cuban Studies



Camilo Cienfuegos, one of the most important guerrilla leaders, was killed in an airplane accident in October, 1959.

not understand the need for that. But as long as I have the capacity, and as long as I can be useful in this position or in another, and as long as it is a demand of the Revolution, I have the duty to carry out that job.

Until when? I don't know when I'm going to die, I don't know if I'm going to die tomorrow, tonight, in an accident, from natural causes. I cannot know. Maybe if I have the capacity to govern until that moment, I will be here until I die. If I'm going to live very long, then the most probable thing is that I will not be president until I die. But I'm totally opposed to any personality cult, to unipersonal government, and to men becoming gods. There are many examples of that, even in revolutionary processes. Now, our revolution is perfectly well organized and foresees and guarantees that this will not happen.

In our country we think that Cuba is Fidel and Fidel is Cuba.

I'm going to explain why. Because you practice a lot this theory of the role of personalities in history, and I think you are exaggerating the role of these personalities. You tend sometimes to see in the work of a people the work of a man. You—with all reason—respect, admire, and venerate Washington, but Washington alone did not achieve independence. Independence was achieved by the North American people. Could we say that the United States' independence was achieved by Washington, or was it the work of hundreds of thousands of people who struggled?

What is a dictator?

But after Washington, we had elections. In this sense you were not elected. There are some people who even think of you as a dictator.

What is a dictator? I cannot identify myself with one.

A man who has almost total control, a man who runs the country, a man who allows no dissent, a man who has the most and almost total power. Is that Fidel Castro?

Yes, but only in one respect: a man who leads. But not a man that has all power, not a man that makes unpersonal decisions, none of the other things. I'm a leader, but I am very distant from having unipersonal power or absolute power.

You allow no dissent.

It is not I. That's not the question. That is not true either. Why say me? We have a revolutionary process; we have a Revolution, a party, a program of the party, and a leadership of the party. You can dissent within the Revolution. In our party you can dissent, you can discuss, and in our assemblies people can dissent.

Now, there is a principle that the will of

the majority must be accepted by the minority. It is a political principle called democratic centralism. North Americans are not very familiar with these terms and I don't want to be rhetorical or use Marxist terms that are not going to be understood by North Americans.

I'm going to be more specific. Your newspapers, radio, television, and motion pictures are under state control. People can dissent in their meetings, in their congresses, but no dissent or opposition is allowed in the public media. Why, if you are so sure that everybody is happy and likes the way things are? If you wanted to change it, I believe that you could.

That we do not allow dissent? What about these [last] 18 years of counter-revolution organized in the U.S.? Who says that the Revolution has no opposition? We have had the opposition of the

The triumphant revolutionaries come down from the mountains. January 8, 1959.



United States, the U.S. press, radio, TV, of thousands of counterrevolutionaries.

But I'm talking about your country.

But the revolutionaries are in this country, and the opposition is on the other side of the Florida Straits. There has been a great opposition. That cannot be denied.

You tell me people want socialism, they want the country this way. Fine, I believe you. But why not allow dissent in the newspapers or an opposition newspaper? Or dissent on radio or television?

Well, you have to ask the people. It depends. For example, in the U.S. who owns the papers? Whom do they belong to?

The papers belong to a great many different people. Many times the editors do not follow the political point of view of their owners. There are all different kinds of papers and magazines. Underground and overground dissent is possible.

But they all have an owner. The TV and radio have owners, either an individual or a big enterprise. Magazines have owners. The papers have owners. Now, then, I would ask you: if the directors of your TV station want to, can they fire you and sign somebody else? Who runs the TV station where you work? Who runs every newspaper in the U.S.? The owners.

Not the owners. No, not the owners, usually the editors, the individual editors. There are papers owned by people, and the papers themselves have a different point of view than the owners.

Yes, the newspaper is run by the owner or by the editor appointed by the owner. Who appoints the editor? The owner.

Not necessarily.

The company.

Not always. Sometimes it's a board, sometimes it's a group, and also even a journalist can be fired by the board.

An owner.

But could we get back to Cuba, before we change American papers?

I have no plans to change North American papers. In Cuba, the owner is the people. Okay, ask the people if they agree to using newspapers for counterrevolution.

I can't believe that there is not somewhere some young student, several students, who might like to have an opposition paper, and say they would like this or this change. And it's against your law...

Barbara, we do not have your same conceptions. Our concept of freedom of the press is not like yours. And I say this very honestly. I have nothing to hide. If you asked us if a newspaper could appear here against socialism, I say honestly, no, it

cannot appear. It would not be allowed by the party, the government, or the people. In that sense we do not have the freedom of the press that you have in your country.

We are very satisfied. There are no scandals like in the U.S., and we don't have the commercial propaganda that you have in the U.S. Nothing of that sort. Our

mass media serve the Revolution. Now as long as the Revolution develops, and as long as hostility against Cuba exists, and as long as there is counterrevolution supported by the U.S., and as long as this struggle exists, we will not allow any paper against the Revolution. It's that simple. And besides, who pays for it? the CIA?

The CIA spends \$5 million for subversion & murder

voice over

Everywhere we traveled in Cuba, Fidel Castro talked of the CIA. One would say that he was obsessed by the CIA until he tells you that he knows of more than 20 assassination attempts against his life. He feels that the CIA has trained so many terrorists... not only Cuban exiles, but also terrorists around the world... that even if the United States has stopped direct attacks against him, the CIA and this group have a life of their own and that life continues to threaten his. Further, Castro says, and I quote his words, "The CIA, the Pentagon and Richard Nixon all actively participated in the overthrow of the government of Chilean President Allende, and I am certain that if there were CIA plans to assassinate me, Richard Nixon did not change them." Castro also blames Dwight Eisenhower and Nixon for the CIA-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion by Cuban exiles in April 1961. John Kennedy, he insists, only inherited the plan. His fault, he says, was in carrying it out. On the ride across the Bay of Pigs, on his armed patrol boat we talked of the assassination of John Kennedy to see if Castro could shed some new light.

I sometimes feel that you feel everything, everything comes back to the CIA.

The problem is that the CIA has a budget of five million dollars for subversion, murder, counterrevolution, espionage. It's a lot of money. The CIA uses more money each year than the total volume of Cuban exports, and you don't want me to think about the CIA. The CIA has made plans to assassinate the leaders of the Cuban Revolution for more than 10 years, and you don't want me to think about the CIA. In fact, I'm not the only one, everybody thinks about the CIA throughout the world.

Why do you think, or do you have proof of the last CIA attack against you, the last plan perhaps to assassinate you?

The last plan that I recall that had the unquestionable participation of the CIA—they were people very closely connected to the CIA and the weapons were transported through the American Embassy in Bolivia—took place in 1971, during my visit to Chile. It was in November 1971,

We told him of two theories in the United States: one, that Cuba was involved in the President's assassination as retribution for the Bay of Pigs. The other, that Castro was exploring better relations with the United States just prior to Kennedy's assassination and that perhaps Cuban terrorists planned the murder with Lee Harvey Oswald as part of that group. Castro said it was true that Cuba had preliminary contacts with Kennedy administration officials. This is now a matter of public record. But, said Castro, the actual explanation of the assassination has yet to be found.

Castro says he does not know either Oswald or Jack Ruby, but he recalls that at one point some weeks before Kennedy's murder, a man calling himself Lee Harvey Oswald had appeared at the Cuban consulate in Mexico, asking for a visa to Cuba. When refused, the man became in Castro's words, "practically hysterical." It is Castro's feeling that this visa was needed so that after the assassination of Kennedy, Oswald could be traced to Cuba, and Castro, therefore, would be blamed for the murder. We asked Castro if he thought that Robert Kennedy and John Kennedy knew of the CIA attempts on his life.

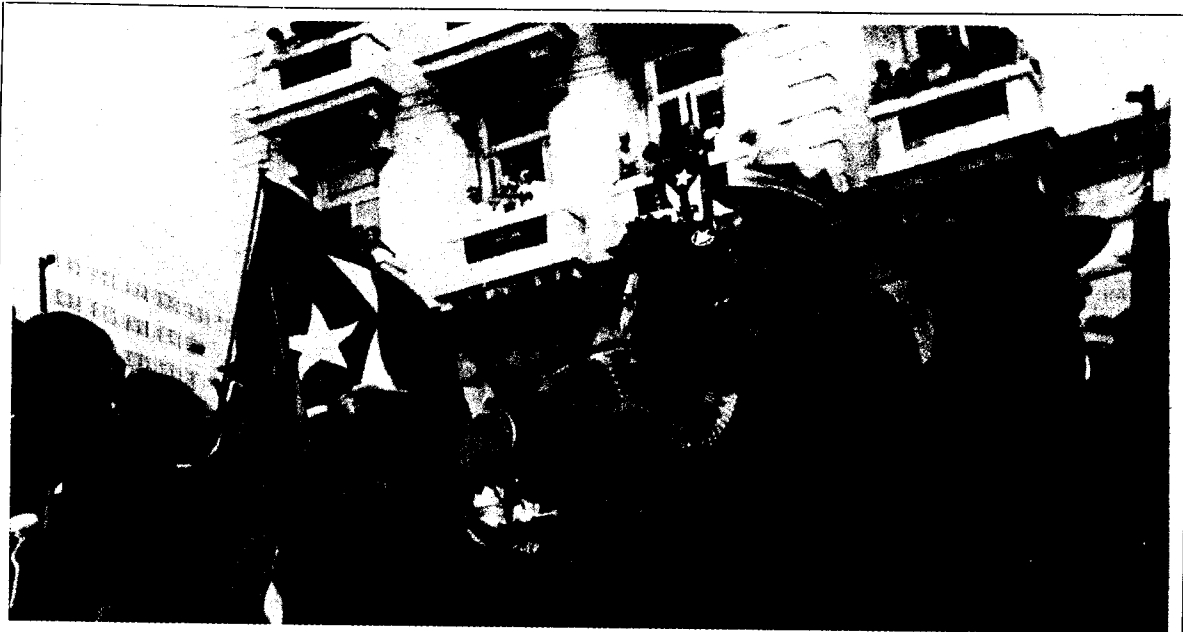
when I visited Chile under the government of the Popular Unity.

The plotters actively moved. They used Venezuelan documents, as Venezuelan journalists, and they transported different types of weapons. Some arrived through the American Embassy in Bolivia. They had rifles with telescopes, machine guns, all that, and they also took a TV camera and connected a weapon inside it. It was even in front of me, the way this camera is in front of me now.

But they did not shoot. They aimed rifles from an apartment, but they did not shoot them either. In fact, in that situation a factor of demoralization intervened, a factor of fear. Afterward they knew I was going to Peru, and they also tried to mobilize themselves there, where I was only making a very brief stopover. When we stopped in Ecuador, they immediately found out, and they also tried to carry out the attack there.

This is what I know of. That was in 1971.

The CIA plans went on for more than 10 years, and I do not know when they ceased.



The entry into Havana. With victory came a call for a general strike, to prevent a counterrevolutionary coup, and the dismissal of the U.S. military mission.

Besides, they have many subtle ways of acting. Sometimes they act directly and sometimes they act through terrorist organizations that more or less follow their guidelines. They have direct methods and they have indirect methods.

And now, at this very moment, I have no proof that the CIA has stopped its plans. I have not received any CIA message telling me that the plans have stopped, nor have we received any excuse from the U.S. government for the fact that that country's officials have been preparing the plans to assassinate the leaders of the Revolution for more than ten years. In spite of the fact that the Senate investigated and verified a very small part of those plans, the Cuban government has not received a single apology from any U.S. administration.

Do you feel now under Jimmy Carter and the new director of the CIA that there are still orders being given to assassinate you?

I do not know the new CIA director. I was not a fellow student while he was studying in military school. I think that Carter might know him better. But with regards to your question whether I think that Carter maintains plans of this type, I tell you that I'm totally certain he is not, according to my opinion about Carter.

In 1971 Richard Nixon was President. Do you think he still deliberately ordered attacks against you?

Nixon is a different thing. We cannot compare Nixon with Carter. Nixon did many things. He participated in all of the Giron activities, and besides, he participated in the overthrow of Allende's government. The CIA actively participated in that, and the Pentagon also actively participated.

People speak of the CIA, but they do not speak of the Pentagon. The Pentagon has maintained very close relations with the Chilean army. All those counterrevolutionary plans led to the murder of Allende.

So I ask myself, who is responsible for all this? The U.S. government, the CIA, and the Pentagon. That was during Nixon's period, with Nixon's full authorization. So Nixon was capable of anything.

I remember the negotiations with Vietnam. When they wanted to obtain something, they stressed the bombings. We cannot forget the B-52 bombings. When discussions were being held in Paris, they launched hundreds of sorties of B-52s in order to weaken the Vietnamese position. They assassinated hundreds of thousands of people. We could expect anything from Nixon. You know it well.

Do you think that Nixon ordered or approved specifically assassination attempts?

Look, Barbara, I don't know how these mechanisms operate. I don't know how an assassination is planned in the U.S. I don't know the mechanism. I don't know if they

write down an order, I don't know if they discuss it with the CIA director, I don't know if they tell him directly, or if they tell him indirectly. That I don't know. But what I can assure you is that there were indeed assassination plans, and Nixon knew about these plans. He did not change them.

In the Sierra Maestra

I would like to talk about your life in the mountains before the Revolution.

You mean during the Revolution.

I mean during the Revolution, before your success, before your victory.

Our victory. (in English)

You are speaking English, you know.

A little, because if I say "my victory," it is not my victory, it is our victory.

Your country's victory.

Our people's victory. (in English)

You don't need a translator. You understand me very well.

No, sometimes, most of the time. (in English)

I have read that you said that the happiest time in your life was that period in the mountains.

Actually, I believe that in a sense they



Courtesy Saul Landau / Center for Cuban Studies

The new government, under President Osvaldo Dorticos, calls for unity, and reduces all rents by 50%. Left to right: Vilma Espin, Raul Castro, Fidel Castro, Osvaldo Dorticos.

were some of the happiest days. First, because the struggle was very hard, living conditions were very hard. It was a very hard struggle for survival. I believe that under those circumstances—the constant risks of war, the efforts that had to be made—men offer the best they have. And of course, everything was simpler.

Nevertheless—well, maybe I am a man of action, that is, I feel good in action. That period involved different aspects—organizational and political aspects—but it also involved a lot of action. And that is why I believe that it was one of the best periods for any of us.

Then life changes, then government comes, then different kinds of tasks are faced which involve less action, more office work, more meetings, a totally different type of life.

But that doesn't mean that this life lacks stimulus. Where is the incentive that we have in this institutionalized life? I would say that it appears in the work of the Revolution, in the things that can be done for the people. Our satisfaction is not our own life, but the work of the Revolution. From my point-of-view, our own life was more interesting in the earlier stage than our life in government.

What was the worst time for you? What was the darkest time?

In what sense, during the war or in government? Because there were very difficult moments after the attack on Moncada,

when we were defeated. Let us say that we suffered a setback, a hard setback. Many of our comrades died and only a very small group of us was left, some of whom were captured. Those were very bitter days in prison. We took advantage of prison. We made use of prison to study and to plan for the future. Of course, we had total confidence in what we were doing, a total willingness, and we were persevering.

Then we had a second bitter moment, that is, a second setback. Three days after the landing from the *Granma*, we were attacked by surprise, and we were totally dispersed. Those were also very bitter and difficult moments, I would not like to expand on that. I only want to point out the nature of those moments.

Afterwards, we met again. There were two men with me, and we had only two rifles. Then I met with Raul, he had a few men and five rifles. So we had seven rifles. And then we started to feel happy again, convinced that we were going to gain victory. And so it went.

The two most difficult moments were those two moments, not only for me, but also for all of the comrades: the setback after Moncada and the setback after the *Granma*. I do not recall any other moment as bitter and difficult as those two.

What, if anything, makes you cry today?

If anything?

What, if anything, makes you cry?

Sometimes one cries for one reason,

sometimes another. One cries when someone that one loves a lot dies. Sometimes we also cry when we feel moments of emotion, among the people, in an historical celebration. There are many moments of emotion. I don't say we would cry full tears, but sometimes we must sort of disguise our tears. To cry full tears for strictly sentimental reasons—I don't know, but I have not had that experience for many years.

Are you a lonely man?

In what sense? The loneliness of power, or what?

Sometimes when you are in power, most of the time you are on top of a mountain...

Actually, I detest loneliness, total loneliness.

You mean being alone? Solitude?

Yes.

Why?

Maybe because of the need man has for company. I think it was Aristotle who said that man was a social being, and it seems that I belong to that species.

Were you in solitary confinement in jail?

Yes. I was for many months in solitary confinement. And I not only had the company of mosquitoes, I was myself placed in front of a room where those who had died in prison were laid. Sometimes I would have the company of a dead body, and every day the company of millions of mosquitoes. But I always had a book around. I studied, I adapted myself. The

fact that I detest loneliness does not mean that I am not capable of standing it.

Do you have private time, time to relax?

Yes, of course, it's logical.

What do you do?

Many things. I read, I play sports, I do underwater fishing, I look at a film, I talk with friends, I receive journalists... I do many things.

You were 34 at the time when the Revolution succeeded. You are now 50.

I think there's a slight mistake. On January 1, 1959, I think I was 32.

You were 32 when the Revolution succeeded, and you are now 50.

Right now I'm 50, according to my estimates.

There's some question about your estimates.

Yes, but I have my own estimates, and I make the less favorable estimate. Some say less, but I'm 50, and I'm satisfied. I never thought that I was born to live for half a century, never.

Do you have any plans?

I've never made prolonged plans about my future life.

Fifty years is a mellow age for a man. Are you very different now than at 32?

Well, at the age of 32 I think I was an ignorant boy.

At the time that you succeeded in government you were an ignorant boy?

Yes, in comparison with the experience we all now have, we see ourselves at that time as ignorant. Of course, we had an idea of what we were doing and what we wanted to do. And of course, our ideas have proved fundamentally correct. But if we look at our experience 18 years ago, we see ourselves as ignorant young boys then. Now we have somewhat more experience. But if we live ten years more, probably when we become 60, we will say we were now totally ignorant individuals.

I have one final personal question. Will you ever shave off that beard?

As an exchange for what? The ceasing of the blockade?

If we stop the blockade you shave off that beard, eh? I don't think that would make America do it, but...

We would be importing Gillette razor blades, right? I don't know if they are still making them in the U.S., but... Do you know why we left our beard? Because we did not have razor blades. But as time passed, the guerrillas were known by their beard. It was more difficult to introduce a spy. They had to wait many months for the beard to grow. So that is why the beard became a useful thing. And finally, it became a symbol.

After the Revolution, many people started shaving. Then some regulations appeared in the Army; people had to

shave. And little by little, I was left as one of the very few with a beard. Well, I continued with the beard.

But what happens? When the gray hair comes, it starts to appear precisely in the beard. And you can notice them more. That is why my idea now is to wait at least until I have a totally white beard. And then I will make a decision, whether I tint it or shave it.

And the country can vote.

The country? That's a personal matter. Don't forget about human rights.

Africa will be Socialist

May we talk about Africa? Our State Department estimates that there are between 10 and 15,000 troops and civilians in Angola. I believe you say there are 5,000 civilians.

Where have I said that?

That is the information I have.

No, I have never said that.

Can you tell us how many troops or advisers you have now in Angola?

I cannot tell you and I will not tell you. I will not tell you. On this subject I would like to say that the data given by the State Department have been very inexact. Under Ford and Kissinger, they gave certain data. They said that there were 12,000. Actually, at a specific moment there were more than 12,000. Possibly the CIA would know. I do not underestimate the CIA. The fact that we have fought against the CIA and that we have had some successes does not mean we underestimate the enemy. I believe they knew the figures. But for electoral reasons and prestige, they did not say a word about this.

I can tell you that when the war ended, in agreement with the Angolan government we immediately started a process of withdrawal of Cuban military personnel. That is, we programmed it, in agreement with the Angolan government. Everything had been planned. We started withdrawing our military personnel, and increasing our civilian personnel: doctors, engineers, technicians in the most varied fields, to assist Angola in its reconstruction. Now we have a few thousand civilian technicians.

That reduction process of military personnel took place from the very moment the war ended until the month of April. When the intervention of France and Morocco in the internal affairs of Zaire took place in April, which constituted a threat to Angola, we stopped the process of withdrawing our military personnel, and we are now studying how events develop.

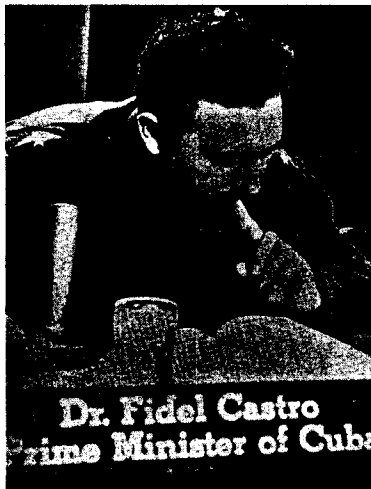
Do you think that one day all of Africa will be communist?

Yes. What do you think? Communist?

On his first visit to the U.S., Prime Minister Castro is given an enthusiastic reception, but Nixon refuses to meet with him.



Courtesy Saul Landau/Center for Cuban Studies



Courtesy Saul Landau/Center for Cuban Studies

September 26, 1950. At the U.N. Castro addresses the question of Nationalization of U.S. companies in Cuba. In an unprecedented gesture of solidarity with Black Americans, the Cuban delegation to the U.N. stayed at the Hotel Theresa in Harlem.

Let's not say communist. It depends on what is understood by communist. I don't know if all of Africa is going to be Marxist-Leninist. I could not say that, because there are African countries that have a strong religious Islamic influence which determines their political philosophy. If you ask me if all of Africa will one day be socialist, I could tell you yes. I'm convinced it will be.

Actually, part of Africa is working within socialist processes, an important part of Africa. Some countries will do it under the principles of Marxism-Leninism, others will do it under the principles of Islam. And who knows, maybe some will do it under the principles of Christian humanism.

In the economic and social field, I am fully convinced that all Africa will be socialist, also because of the fact that they have no other choice. It would be illusory to imagine that they can follow the capitalist path. That path could be followed by a group of European countries. That process started in England, continued in France, went on the United States, and then developed in Japan. These countries achieved a great productive development, a great level of technology, and they could accumulate a great amount of wealth. They were able to develop along the capitalist path when there were no other industrial areas in the world.

But African countries cannot do so. There is a terrible backwardness in Africa. Health conditions are terrible; there are countries that have only one doctor for every 100,000 inhabitants. There are few universities, and they have very few students. There are few technicians. The educational and health situation is terrible. Those countries cannot allow the

luxury of thinking about a capitalist-type anarchic development—that is, what we call the path of neocolonialism, i.e., foreign investments that take over the national resources of the country.

By this, I am not denying the possibility of agreements between foreign enterprises and these countries, but essentially, the control of the national resources should be in the countries' hands. Economic development should be planned, for the resources cannot be wasted, and corruption cannot be allowed. They must use correctly their very last penny, and the economy must be planned. If they don't follow a socialist path, they will never be able to solve their problems.

So it is not a question of my wish, my ideas; it is a need, since they have no other way out. That is why I say I am convinced that one day the whole of Africa will be socialist, and that neocolonialism will fail in Africa.

What colonialism left is in itself impressive. Colonialism was a product of capitalism. What capitalism and colonialism have left behind must be seen on the spot. It would be worthwhile for North Americans to know what is happening in those countries; they would reach the same conclusions if they meditate on what I'm saying without prejudice.

Those countries cannot follow the way of life of France, Paris, London, New York, or the United States. You have created a specific way of life, and a society that has a lot of wealth—badly distributed, as a matter of fact. Do you think the U.S. way of life could be a model for Africa, for India, for China? Imagine each Chinese citizen having an automobile, and each Indian citizen having an automobile, and each African citizen having an automobile

20 years from now. How many years would the fuel reserves, the world oil reserves, take to be exhausted?

So you have created a society that runs very well for you, if that is your opinion, but it cannot be the model for the underdeveloped countries of the world in Latin America, in Africa and in Asia. That is the truth.

Do you think Africa will be socialist within the next 20 to 25 years?

That is possible. That I dare to predict. There is the case of Algeria; it is developing socialism, and it has a solid basis for that. Libya is working for socialism. In Ethiopia they are working for socialism. In Mozambique they are working for socialism. In Angola they are working for socialism. In Dahomey they are working for socialism, in Guinea-Bissau...

And you are helping them?

In everything we can. Unfortunately, we do not have much. But I ask myself. You will be spending next year \$112 billion to manufacture war planes, warships, atomic bombs, laser rays, massive destruction systems... How much could be done with half that money? With half that money, the problems of development could be solved in ten years. With half that money, for a period of ten years.

Do you tell that to the Soviets?

I will finish the idea if you allow me. In ten years, the problems of the 100 poorest countries of the world could be solved. Of course, excluding India. I do not dare guarantee how long it would take to solve the problems of India. How is all that money used? In the case of the Soviets? Gladly. The Soviets think like that, and we think like that.

Will you remove your troops from Angola?

They will not be there forever. That was never our intention. But not because of any commitment to anybody. That will be exclusively the result of the interests of Angola and the interests of the Angolan government. I would like to say that this problem can only be discussed with the Angolans and with the Angolan government. We cannot discuss this problem nor will we ever discuss it with the United States.

What would be the meaning of maintaining that military personnel in Angola forever? The mission is that of supporting Angola against any external attack, while the Angolan army is organized, equipped, and trained. The Angolan army is organizing, training, and preparing, and the day will come when they will not need us to defend themselves from South Africa or any other imperialist country. That is the only reason.

What interest could we have in maintaining that military personnel there forever? It makes no sense, it is expensive for us. It involves efforts. It involves sacrifices.

Why are you in Angola in the first place, and did the Soviets ask you to come in?

I'm going to tell you something. If you knew the Soviets, if you knew them well, you would not think that the Soviets were capable of asking Cuba to send a single man to Angola. That is totally alien to Soviet relations with Cuba and to Soviet behavior.

A decision of that nature could exclusively be taken by our party and our government on our own initiative, at the request of the Angolan government. It is so, historically. There is no need to invent anything.

Do you want to know if the Soviets asked us to go there? **The Soviets absolutely did not ask us. They never said a single word in that sense. It was exclusively a Cuban decision.** The CIA is sometimes

aware of some of these things, and some things have been written by the CIA about that. I think they coincide with what I'm saying.

Will you send troops to other countries in Africa?

It depends on the circumstances that may justify it.

Cuba's role in Africa

What do you see Cuba's role as in Africa?

The role of Cuba in Africa is mainly civilian, not military. For a long time we have been assisting a growing number of countries; sending them technical assistance, civilian assistance, especially doctors. We have doctors in many countries of Africa. That is, our support to African countries is a civilian type of support, within the level of our possibilities.

On certain occasions they have asked us for military advisers, to help organize their armed forces. A small group of military advisers, a dozen or a few dozen. And we have sent them, at the request of these governments. **The case of Angola was the first occasion in which we sent military units.** I would not like to repeat that story, unless you want me to speak about that.

We always had relations with the MPLA, since they started their struggle for independence. And we assisted them. When they were at the point of achieving their independence, an attempt was made to snatch it away. The CIA—that is, not the CIA, the U.S. government—invested some tens of millions of dollars to organize a movement—the famous FNLA—handled by them in Zaire, in agreement with their friend Mobutu—not your friend, but a friend of the U.S. The Portuguese organized another counterrevolutionary movement before they left. It was UNITA.

South Africa was determined to stop the victory of the MPLA.

Now then, we had been assisting the

MPLA for a long time. We were sending them weapons, and we had sent them some military instructors. There is an historical truth that cannot be denied by anyone. We sent our first military unit at a time when the South African regular troops invaded Angola on October 23, 1975—Blitzkrieg-type, i.e. Nazi-type, apartheid-style tank columns, artillery columns. They sent their regular army.

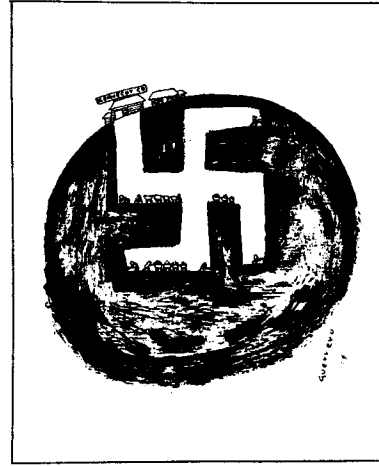
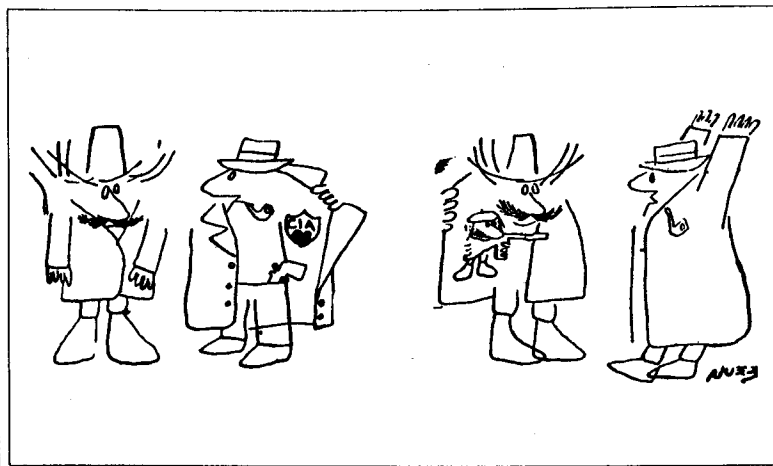
So we had to make a decision. Either we sat idle, and South Africa would take over Angola, or we would make an effort to help. That was the moment.

On November 5, we decided to send the first military unit to Angola, to fight against the South African troops. That is the reason why we made the decision. **If we had not made that effort, it is most likely that South Africa would have taken over Angola.** So it would not only be South Africa over Namibia, but we would also have Angola in the hands of the South African racists.

I don't know what has been published in the U.S. about it, but I am sure that black people in the U.S. know the meaning of discrimination, and they know what apartheid means. The black people in the U.S. will know how to appreciate the effort we made. The conscientious people of the U.S., whites or blacks, who understand apartheid and racial discrimination will some day be totally in agreement with us for the effort we made to save a black people of Africa from South African occupation, even if they don't understand it today because they have not received the correct information.

Would you send troops...?

I will say something more, I am totally convinced that the South Africans did not start that invasion without prior consultation with the U.S. government; I am totally certain of that. They would never have gone into that adventure without Kissinger's and Ford's approval. You may ask Ford about it if you interview him, if he





The CIA-backed Bay of Pigs Invasion is crushed in less than 72 hours. Over 1,000 prisoners are taken by the Army and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution.

knows anything about this. Let's see if he tells you the truth.

Would you send troops into Rhodesia?

In that regard, we have our own point of view. Independence is a task for each people. It is a task of each people. Independence cannot be brought in from abroad. It is not the case of Angola, which had won its independence, the government had already been established, and the country was invaded from abroad. As to Rhodesia, Namibia, and South Africa, the peoples of these countries must achieve their own independence. We could give them political support, and any support that we could give them, but our concep-

tions do not include the sending of troops to achieve the liberation of Rhodesia or Namibia. That is a task for their own peoples mainly.

Would you send troops into South Africa?

It's the same question. It's the people of South Africa. . .

You would not send troops to Rhodesia or to South Africa?

We don't want to make any promises to anyone, not to the South African racists, nor to the Namibian or Rhodesian racists. Do not see this as a promise. It is simply an expression of the way we think and our criteria on these issues, that is, that the

voice over

The barren, rocky, tropical terrain of much of Cuba seems to provide Castro with a natural tactical understanding of other underdeveloped countries. These sites that he showed us in southeastern Cuba near the mountains are not unlike those to be seen in many areas of Africa. Castro also made the point that Cuba's large black population has its roots in Africa. This is the poorest section of Cuba. . . a nation in which the average income per month is only one hundred ten dollars. Castro says he hopes to improve the lot of these Cubans by developing tourism in this remote section of his country, but the realization of that plan would seem to be a long way off. We traveled over two-and-a-half hours where there were no paved roads and we forded

18 streams. So, Castro says it is much easier for an African to identify with the Cuban way of life than with life in Paris, London or New York. Imagine, he says, each African citizen having an automobile.

On the other hand, it was not possible for us to determine how much average Cuban citizens identify with Africans, or how they like sending sons or husbands to fight in Angola. Occasionally, when we entered a small village, Castro would ask the people if they have relatives in Angola and the answers like this one were enthusiastic. [Cuban man] "No, we don't worry about that—we are happy to go wherever it is necessary. . . to liberate any country which is underdeveloped. We will help them."

Maybe they really mean it. . . or maybe they just want to please Fidel Castro.

liberation of the countries must be the fundamental task of every people, and not a task to be performed by military units coming from abroad. Do you understand? I will ask you a question. Do you agree that Lafayette and French troops should have helped you against the English in 1777?

Do I think that [they] should have? Is that what you are asking?

I'm asking whether it was correct for Lafayette and the French to assist Washington and the U.S. patriots to struggle against English colonialism?

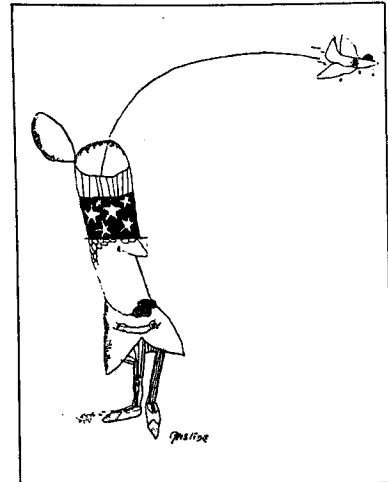
Are you trying to make a comparison between that and Cuba sending troops into South Africa?

No, no, I simply want to make an historical summary. You build statues to Lafayette, you thank the French every year because they helped you in your struggle, and now I see you very much concerned because another country helps the patriots elsewhere in the world who struggle against colonialism. Why?

It is not the same situation, since we are talking about Africa.

What is the difference?

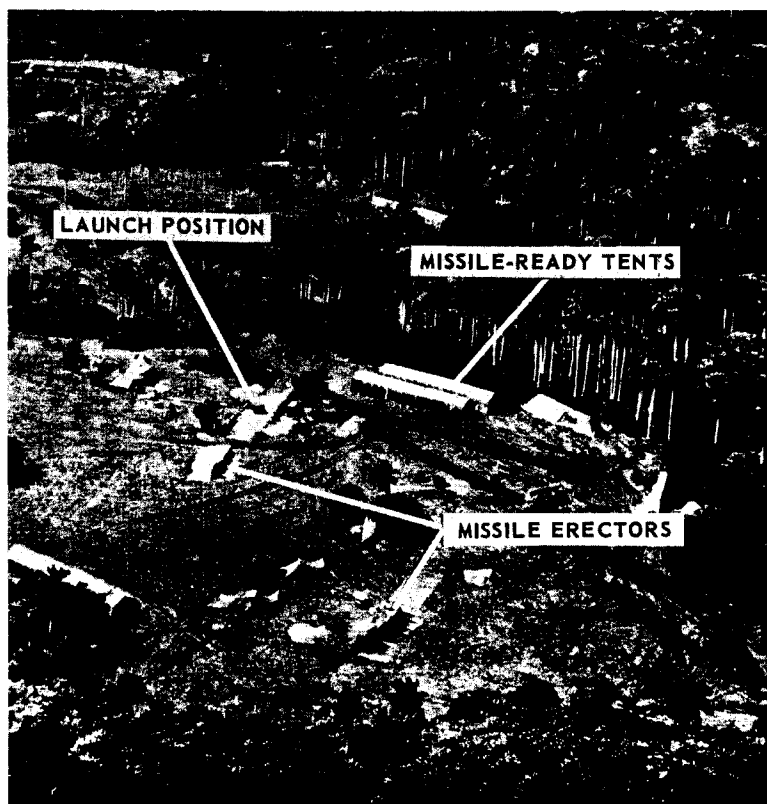
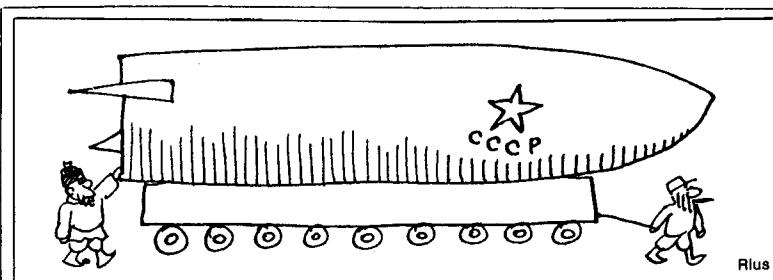
The difference is that what we call the Americans at that time were striving to free themselves from a foreign government. In South Africa, they are not striving



ing to free themselves from a foreign government, but to solve what might be a civil war. We did not have foreign troops fighting in our civil war. What I am asking is if you would send troops.

No, I first wanted to ask the question of whether you think it was correct or not. You gave me your answer.

Now, what exists in Rhodesia? And what is the situation in Namibia? I don't understand why you worry so much. I already told you my position. I think that the task of liberating a people should be car-



In the crisis that followed the taking of the above photo by US spy flights over Cuba, President Kennedy ordered the US Navy to search all vessels approaching the island. The Soviet Union agreed to withdraw the missiles, and the US was forced to pledge no more direct attacks on Cuba.

ried out by each country's people. But when the North Americans worry so much about others helping these liberation movements, they forget their own history. That is simply what I wanted to point out. What do you want to discuss about South Africa? What is your thesis about South Africa?

I just want to say in passing that I can see why you were a terrific lawyer.

Do you mean that I am a sophist, that I am using arguments in our discussion?

No, no, I don't think a lawyer is a sophist, I just think you gave a very good argument.

We say that a terrible lawyer is a very bad lawyer. I agree with you if you mean a bad lawyer.

Terrific, terrific, good, good! A good lawyer!

Are you now sending military advisers into Ethiopia?

We have sent diplomatic personnel to Ethiopia. All our personnel in Ethiopia are credited as diplomatic personnel. There are no military advisers as such in Ethiopia.

What do diplomatic advisers do?

They are diplomatic advisers that have good experience in revolutionary matters,

and they even have some experience in military questions. I don't deny that. But, as such, we do not have military advisers credited to the Ethiopian government.

We will send civilian assistance. We will send the maximum possible number of doctors to assist the civilian population, since Ethiopia has only 125 doctors with over 30 million inhabitants. Any county in the U.S. has more doctors than Ethiopia. Of course, we consider ourselves having the right to send military advisers to Ethiopia if the government needs them and we can send them. If they are necessary, we do not give up our right to send military advisers to Ethiopia. I have only answered strictly the truth.

Do these diplomatic advisers assist in training troops?

No, they do not assist in the training of troops. But I repeat: if it were necessary, if the Ethiopian government requested it and it were possible for us, we would not give up our right to send these troop instructors.

Can you tell us approximately how many advisers you have? We hear that there are 20 there now and 200 more expected.

Where?

In Ethiopia.

I can tell you that that information is not correct. Now, Barbara, I will ask you why you have so many detailed questions on these matters? I cannot work for free for the CIA. I will not work for them for a salary, I want you to know that. But much less for free.

Look, there's a difference between sending 20 and sending 200, and what I am trying to accomplish for the Americans is to understand how deep is your involvement...

Yes, but we could be shooting two birds with one stone. I am most willing to do anything for American public opinion and for the viewers of ABC, but I am not willing to do anything for the CIA. If I start saying things that may help them, my conscience would bother me.

But look, don't worry about that, there is not so much difference between 20 and 200, because Ethiopia is a country with over 30 million inhabitants. It is a country that is carrying out a deep revolution, a country that has a great mass support from the peasants and the workers, that has advanced straight from feudal times.

Look what your friend Haile Selassie did—a friend of yours, of North America, whose government you supported for so long. When he died, he left 125 doctors in the country. Is that what can be expected from the friends of the U.S.? Is that U.S. cooperation to Third World countries—35 million inhabitants and 125 doctors! You see, in a few weeks we can send more than

125 doctors there, because we are already graduating 1,000 doctors per year, and we have a doctor per 950 inhabitants. Then Ethiopia can mobilize its people, its masses. So actually 200 instructors is nothing. It isn't very important.

We do not have military instructors in Ethiopia, but we do not give up our right to send them if the government asks it and it is in our power. I want to warn you about that. I have answered the truth, but the truth does not imply a commitment that we are not willing to send them.

Up until a few days ago, U.S. instructors were there. So why do you worry so much about whether there are Cuban instructors in Ethiopia? Besides, we also know how to handle U.S. tanks and U.S. weapons.

Did Cuban advisers train troops to fight in Zaire?

No. Absolutely not. Take note of what I am going to say. During the war, Zairois citizens from the province of Katanga were together with the MPLA. During the war, there were contacts with them. Once the war ended, more than a year ago, we had no other contact with these people of Zaire. Why? Because we thought that what Angola needed was peace. And even when we knew that Zaire's government is one of the most corrupt, repressive, reactionary, and bloody governments in Africa, what Angola needed was to improve relations with its neighbors. They needed peace to rebuild the country.

That is why we avoided all sorts of contacts with Zairois elements which could hinder this policy. We have consistently followed that rule. That is why we have had no contact, nor has there been any training, nor weapons. Furthermore, we did not even know that those events were going to happen, because these people lived to the east of Angola. It's thousands of kilometers. These are areas that are isolated.

Now, the CIA knows, the U.S. government knows, the French government knows, and everybody knows that we Cubans have neither trained, armed, nor had anything to do with that question of Zaire, because it is strictly an internal question. Everybody knows that. The rest are lies, simply to justify France's, Morocco's, Egypt's intervention with the approval of the United States, to send troops to Zaire from Morocco, Egypt, and other countries, with logistic support from France.

That is why we have stopped the program of withdrawal of Cuban military

voice over

Castro then admitted for the first time that he stopped the withdrawal of troops from Angola when France and Morocco entered Zaire. He told us he is still considering how events will develop before he withdraws more troops.

troops from Angola, because we have more than justified reasons to believe that behind all this there may be a further plan to attack Angola.

Why did you personally make your trip to Africa?

Don't I have the right to travel?

Yes, but I wonder why you did and at this time.

Now look, we have a lot of friends in Africa who invited us to visit their countries. We had commitments with many of them. We have many technicians working in many African countries. My visit was to develop relations with these governments, to complement the invitations I had received to visit the Cuban technicians, and to be able to have a direct and personal appreciation of African problems. Actually, I do not regret having made the trip. I'm very glad that I did it.

Would Cuba intervene in Puerto Rico?

If there were forces in Puerto Rico who wanted to change the political conditions and become socialist, would you send advisers—diplomatic or otherwise—into Puerto Rico?

If Puerto Rico becomes an independent state and asks us to send advisers, we would have the right to send them, if they were willing to receive them. We have been sending advisers to countries that have legally established governments, and that is not the case with Puerto Rico. In Puerto Rico there is no sovereign state, no independent state.

Are you trying to help them achieve their independence?

Now look, in the case of Puerto Rico as well as the rest of them, independence is, first of all, a question of the people themselves.

But now that you mention Puerto Rico, I want to make something clear. There are people who are always inventing a pretext to maintain hostile attitudes toward Cuba. All throughout life, even before our independence, there had been bonds between Puerto Rico and Cuba. The Cuban Revolutionary Party, which was the party of independence founded by Marti, included Cuba and Puerto Rico. When the U.S. intervened after the Spanish-North American War, at the end of the last century, the United States took over Puerto Rico and transformed it into a colony.

Historically speaking, political and moral support has always been given to Puerto Rico, always. I remember that I belonged to the Puerto Rico Pro-Independence Committee when I was a student at the university. One day in front of the U.S. Consulate in Old Havana, the police beat me a few times because I was participating in a demonstration in support of the independence of Puerto Rico at the time of the uprising led by Albizu Campos, who was the leader of Puerto Rican patriots. Throughout life, we Cubans at the university have always given political and moral support to Puerto Ricans, and I want to make this clear, to the Puerto Ricans who were fighting for their independence.

It is a political and a moral support. No one can accuse Cuba of having promoted violence. No one can accuse Cuba of having participated in violent actions in Puerto Rico or of having promoted violence in Puerto Rico. We give Puerto Ricans moral and political support. If we did not do so then we would be false.

Nikita Krushchev and Fidel Castro in Moscow, 1963. The Soviet leader warmly welcomes the Cuban and pledges continued support.



Courtesy Saul Landau/Center for Cuban Studies

Some North Americans say that the problem is that the majority of Puerto Ricans do not want independence. Well, before U.S. independence, 20 or 30 years before, many North Americans did not want the independence of the United States.

You're going to make me feel sorry we had that revolution.

No, not at all. That independence makes us happy, and we admire Washington and Lincoln. Very well. Now, maybe a majority of Puerto Ricans are still not fully aware of the problem. But undoubtedly, Puerto Rico has been a U.S. colony and has been politically, economically, and culturally dominated by the U.S.

We have never practiced nor have we promoted violence against the U.S. Our support to Puerto Rican patriots is a political and moral support. And what I can tell you about this is that as long as there is a single Puerto Rican whose aspiration is the country's independence, we have the moral and political duty to give support. As long as there is a single one. If one day there are none, then our commitment to Puerto Rico will cease.

How are you right now supporting politically or morally independence for Puerto Rico? What are you doing?

Well, we hold meetings of solidarity, international meetings, and we support them at the UN.

Do you have any advisers there?

No, not there. Of course not.

I just want to go back to Africa for a moment. Do you feel that you have the right to be there?

No, we do not have the right. The right is on the part of the governments who request that we be there. Besides, I can tell you we don't have a bank, nor a hectare of land, nor a mine, nor an oil well, nor a factory there. Absolutely nothing. And I want to tell you that the civilian assistance and support we give Africa, and the military advisers, are totally at our expense.

China is a good ally of the U.S.

Do you consider China a friend or an enemy of Cuba?

I consider China a good ally of the United States.

Does that make her an enemy of Cuba?

Well, to the extent that the U.S. is our enemy. But you have done very good diplomatic work with China. You have them now on your side in all fundamental issues. They support NATO, they support Mobutu like you do, they support Pinochet like you do, they support all the reactionary governments in the world like you do. That's life!

No, no. They do not vote the way the United States votes in the United Nations. They certainly...

But what is the importance of having some differences in the United Nations if they agree in all other things? You know this as well as I do, and besides, you are very pleased with it. Are you pleased or not with China?

We are pleased that we are having new relations with China, just as we would be pleased to have relations with you.

Of course. But we would not act like the Chinese. If I were to promise the North Americans that we would act like the Chinese, and we would turn into allies of the U.S. if the blockade is lifted and relations are reestablished, this would be an immense lie, a terrible deceit. I could not say such a thing. We will continue being socialists. We will continue being communists. We will continue being internationalists, and we will continue being friends of the Soviet Union.

So has China.

No, China is socialist but not internationalist.

We are far less involved with China than you are with the Soviet Union. China does not consider herself our ally. We do not have diplomatic relations with China.

What was that? Involved? What do you mean?

I find that your thinking of our relationship with China is almost naive. China does not consider herself our ally. We're just beginning to normalize relations. We don't even have diplomatic relations. We disagree about Taiwan. We have totally different systems of government. We certainly don't have in any sense the relationship with China that you have with the Soviet Union.

No, no. Of course not. We have internationalist relations with the Soviet Union, and China has reactionary relations with the United States. There's this problem: you created Pinochet, China supports Pinochet; you created the FNLA and Holden Roberto, China supports the FNLA and Holden Roberto; you created Mobutu, China supports Mobutu; you created NATO. Didn't you?

China does not support NATO.

China does support NATO. China supports the English Conservative party, receives their leaders there. China supports the reactionary forces of the Federal Republic of Germany [West Germany]. I'm talking about serious things.

The Chinese secret service meets in Paris with the secret services of France, the Federal Republic of Germany, England, and the United States. China opposes the withdrawal from the Guantanamo Naval Base. China uses the very same arguments

that the U.S. uses to attack Cuba.

I do not know if, later on, some of these Chinese leaders will be expelled, and then it will be said that they are part of the Gang of Four. There are some things I do not understand about China. Now the blame for everything that has happened in China falls on Mao's widow and three others.

But for more than ten years these things have been happening. What kind of genius, what kind of god, and what kind of revolutionary was Mao Tse-tung whose wife and group of attaches were able to do these things that the present Chinese leadership is fighting against? My evaluation is that you have in China one of your best allies.

Are you saying that China is in the pocket of the United States?

I can't say that China is in the pocket of the United States, because China is too large to fit into a pocket. Maybe Pinochet,



Che Guevara, who embodied the strong internationalist spirit of the revolution, was killed while fighting as a guerrilla in Bolivia on October 8, 1967.

Somoza, the heir of Chiang Kai-shek, fit into the pocket of the U.S., but China is too large to fit into a pocket. I'm not saying that. I'm saying that China is one of the best allies of the U.S. at present.

Do you not feel that Mao Tse-tung was a true revolutionary?

I do. Sincerely, I do believe he was a great revolutionary leader. I think he made a great revolution. I believe that at certain times of his life he had brilliant thoughts. He came to power. A personality cult developed. He became a god, and at the end he made so many blunders that they constitute a true stain.



The OAS, under great American pressure, votes to join the US blockade against Cuba, July, 1969.

China had a true, deep revolution. The Chinese are extraordinary people, heroic, hard-working, dedicated, with extraordinary qualities. But I believe that Mao Tse-tung destroyed with his feet what he did with his head for many years. I'm convinced of that.

And some day the very Chinese people, the very Communist Party of China, will have to admit it. It's a question of time. That is my humble opinion on this question.

Do you not feel that China now is a true socialist country?

Yes, I do think that China is a socialist

country. There are no great landowners. There are no capitalists.

China's paradox is that having a revolutionary domestic policy, she is carrying out a foreign policy of betrayal to the international revolutionary movement. But since that does not have a domestic basis, since this is a distortion of the process. I'm confident that this will not last long.

What do you think Mao did to destroy, what were his mistakes?

First, his personality cult practically destroyed the Chinese Communist Party. It unleashed a witch hunt against many of the best cadres of the party. Mao allowed himself to become a god and betrayed the people's revolutionary solidarity. That is Mao's great failure, in my opinion.

I think that he was an extraordinary man, with a great capacity, who transformed China. What happens? Men who participate in these processes acquire great power, men who found revolutions and later abuse that power.

We were discussing this topic before, and you asked me if I could become that type of man. I feel satisfied—more than satisfied, proud—that I have not become nor will I ever become that type of man. Because men who make revolutions acquire a great personal power, I also acquired that great personal power; but I never abused that power nor did I keep it in my hands. I distributed it, I gave it to the revolutionary institutions.

What about Stalin? What about Lenin? That was a personality cult. These are men who became heroes, legends.

One cannot compare Lenin with Stalin. Lenin was an extraordinary man in all aspects, and there is not a single spot on his life from my point of view. Stalin also had great merits, extraordinary merits undoubtedly, at the time of the USSR's industrialization and in the difficult days of the Nazi attack. And those merits must be admitted. They are real.

But undoubtedly during Stalin's time, a personality cult developed and abuses of power did take place.

The United States supports Taiwan, China does not. The United States supports Israel, China does not. The United States in the United Nations voted against the Zionism and racism statement, China voted for it. We do not have at all the same aims or votes.

There are some tactical differences. Only tactical differences, but strategically they agree. One vote over one matter could be a rhetorical question. China still tries to maintain a certain image. But on the fundamental issue, in the struggle against the Soviet Union, the United States and China are great allies. So at present, you do not know who fights the Soviet Union more, China or the United States.

The USSR is the bulwark of the revolution

For us revolutionaries, the USSR is the main bulwark of the world revolutionary and progressive movement. She has earned that right by being the first socialist state; by her role in the struggle against fascism and by the 20 million Soviets who died in World War II; by assistance she has given to the revolutionary movement, to a country like Cuba at moments as difficult as those of the blockade or facing the danger of aggression; to the revolutionary movement in Africa, in Asia. We could even say that without the revolution in the Soviet Union, the Chinese revolution would not have been possible.

voice over

Later in the interview we talked of Russia. Castro seemed oblivious to any faults in the Soviet system.

Today, the essential strategic question is that both China and the United States are allies in the struggle against the Soviet Union. For example, Carter is touching dangerously the borders of the cold war, increasing military budgets, encouraging NATO, stimulating NATO into an arms program. I think that's one of the major problems today. The risks of that policy are very serious. And China favors that policy. So there can be tactical differences between China and the U.S., but they agree on essential matters.

Do you think that Jimmy Carter is deliberately trying to strain relations with the Soviet Union and coming close as you say to the cold war?

I think so. That is something that worries me, and really I don't understand it. I cannot say it is deliberate. Maybe he starts off from some premises and he believes that that is what he should do. But I know the Soviets well, I know them very well. And I know the North Americans. With the Soviets, we have had a lot of relations; and with the U.S., we have had a lot of struggles.

I know that the main concern of the Soviet Union is to avoid the arms race, to create an environment of detente and peace. I know this. I'm convinced of this. That is the main question for the Soviet leadership. They are really concerned about avoiding a world war. They are really concerned about avoiding international tensions. They're very much concerned about achieving a formula of peace and peaceful coexistence. There is no doubt about that.

But I don't know whether that is understood or not in the U.S.

How do you reconcile the Soviet domination of countries like Czechoslovakia

and Yugoslavia? How do you reconcile when the Soviets put down what they call an uprising in Czechoslovakia?

I'm going to tell you the following. The Soviet Union has very close relations with all these countries, because millions of Soviets died to free these countries from fascism. After the war, the Soviets were not the ones who unleashed the cold war. It was Churchill and the United States.

Churchill and the United States did what?

They were the ones who unleashed the cold war. You have to look back to history to recall that famous speech by Churchill. So the cold war emerged. I think that one of the most absurd things that has ever emerged in the last 30 years was the cold war. And I repeat, millions of Soviets died to free all these countries from fascism.

So did millions of Americans.

No, no. I'm sorry for having to disagree with you. Some hundreds of thousands of North Americans died in World War II.

I'm sorry, we have a difference of numbers perhaps. But we also fought and died to fight fascism.

That's true. Fought and died. But don't forget that the United States, England, and the Western world had a certain responsibility for the emergence of fascism. Don't forget the credits granted to Hitler and the support given to Hitler because Hitler raised the banner of anticommunism. Do not forget that Hitler emerged with the banners of anticommunism. That is how fascism appeared in Italy. That is how Nazism appeared in Germany.

And also antidemocratic. We did not support Hitler and we fought against Hitler.

The same thing you did in South Africa—large investments—you also did in Hitler's Germany. That cannot be disregarded. It's historical.

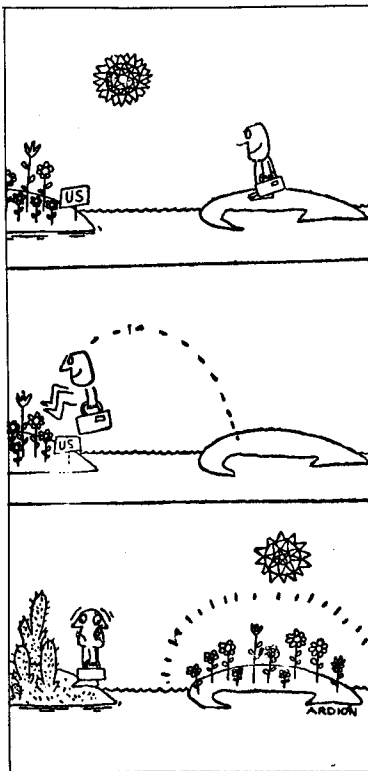
We had investments all over the world, but we certainly did not support Hitler idealistically or politically. But can we get back...

But you supported him economically. And in Europe, the capitalist countries regarded with sympathy the fact that an anticommunist fortress would emerge, an anticommunist fortress in Germany. And after World War II, you raised an anticommunist fortress wherever you were able to do so. In Latin America, in Asia...

Also antidemocratic, not just anti-communist.

Your allies were the most reactionary, corrupt, and repressive people in the world. You were the allies of Franco, and Franco was a creature of fascism.

The Soviet Union originally was an ally



The Varadero airlift begins to facilitate the departure of Cubans to the U.S. September 28, 1965.

of the fascists and then changed and fought.

Who said that the Soviet Union was an ally and then changed? In the beginning, when Hitler had to be stopped, the Soviet Union was willing to struggle together with the so-called Western democracies against Hitler, with France, England, Poland. Then the Western powers met with Hitler and signed the Munich Pact. They planned to use Hitler against the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact with Germany because it could not go along with the Western policy of launching Hitler against the Soviet Union.



If we had done that you would say we were allies of fascism and supported fascism; with the Soviets, you excuse it.

No, the Soviets never supported fascism. They signed a nonaggression pact in the same way we could sign it with the United States. Do you want to sign a non-aggression pact with us? Let's do it. This doesn't mean that we support you or that you support us.

To make a nonaggression pact in that sense means that you turn your back and allow it to continue. You would be very critical if we had done that.

I believe that the nonaggression pact was the resource the Soviet Union had to counteract the plans, not of the U.S., because at that time the U.S. was not intervening so much, but of French and English imperialism, and of Western Europe's capitalism. They wanted to encourage a war between fascist Germany and the USSR.

What was fascist Germany? Wasn't it a capitalist country? Wasn't it a monopoly country? Wasn't it a country of free enterprise? What was it?

What are the great differences between the economic and social system of the United States and that of fascist Germany? Are these differences in the economic and social systems?

Look, any time a country has a capitalist system you automatically condemn it. All right. There are worlds of differences between a country that is a democracy and believes in free enterprise and believes in people striving for the best and having the opportunity individually to improve their lives and the pursuit of the individual freedoms and successes.

But do you really think that the United States and Nazi Germany are the same?

No, I don't think so. I said that they had the same capitalist system, the same monopoly system.

You have the same system as China, yet you condemn China.

Yes, and I do not deny that. We have common things in socialism. The only thing I say is that China has betrayed the cause of internationalism.

Now then, fascist Germany and the U.S. had the same economic and social system, not the same political regime. The U.S. had a president, Congress, House of Representatives, all that, two parties. In Germany there was only one party. There were some differences. But the social and economic system was exactly the same, the kingdom of monopolies and of free enterprise. That cannot be denied.

Our ideals were different, our aims were different, our philosophies were different, our essential feeling of freedom is different.

I admit that.

Then we go back through to something I began to say. I was talking about Soviet domination of countries like Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Rumania, and the people's attempt in Czechoslovakia to be independent and the Soviets coming in and putting down that attempt.

Correct. I don't know if it was Ford in a TV debate who said that those countries were independent...

He made a mistake and corrected it. Now, come on, you are too smart for that.

I have relations with those countries. Those countries have very close relations with the Soviet Union, in the economic, political, and ideological fields. But I can say that they are totally independent states. What you call domination is a kind of unity that has been created among these countries.

Now, what brought about the events in Czechoslovakia? Two things: errors in political leadership that had no discussion, a group of opportunists that took over the situation, and Western conspiracy. The Soviet Union could not allow a new Munich with Czechoslovakia. My view is as simple as that.

We see it very differently.

We see it from two different points-of-view.

We each write our own history.

Well, but on the first occasion, Czechoslovakia was a victim of a Munich; on this occasion it was not a victim of Munich.

I went to Czechoslovakia twice. I made a visit and had some contact with the people. And I can guarantee you that the overwhelming majority of the people are for socialism, that the immense majority of the people support the party, and that political conditions in Czechoslovakia were excellent. I saw that only about four years ago.

Yes, there are some dissidents, there are some people like that, but that is a very small, fragmentary minority whose activity is magnified by the Western press.

Do you think Russia is a free country?

I think it is the freest of all countries, although you North Americans will not understand that, because you start from totally different conceptions. We will not agree on that. So it is best not to enter into theoretical and rhetorical discussions.

Fine, what do you say about the intellectuals...

I have a question for you.

No, it's my turn, my question.

No, no... Can one conceive of a people that is not free sacrificing 20 million human lives defending the homeland, fighting fascism? The U.S. would have to go through a similar test to know to what extent freedom exists in the U.S.



Sandra Levinson/Center for Cuban Studies

July, 1969. Inauguration of an all-out campaign to produce 10 million tons of sugar cane. Though the crop was the largest in history, it did not reach the goal.

We have. We did not lose as many people, but in our turn we risked as much. And not only that, it was not on our continent, and we fought fascism. But can we go to today. The intellectuals in the Soviet Union, the writers, many of the artists, have complained worldwide of the restrictions of their intellectual freedom. Many books have been written about it; they have not been written by the U.S. or by the CIA. They have protested in countries all over the world that their freedom, their intellectual freedom, is limited. How do you explain this?

First of all, I disagree because you speak about the intellectuals in the Soviet Union; I know a great many intellectuals in the Soviet Union, writers, artists. The overwhelming majority of them support the Soviet power, support the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. There is a minority, very much encouraged by the West. On many occasions the West turns a mediocre writer into an international hero. You do not realize it, but that's the way things are.

Do you think that Solzhenitsyn is a

mediocre intellectual?

Maybe I've been subjective, but I do not like his literature. Maybe technically he is not mediocre, but politically he is mediocre. Do not forget that some of these people even defended the fascist regime when they left the Soviet Union, and some of these so-called dissidents even justified Hitler when they went to the West. One should not forget those things. You transform even a criminal into an international hero, the Western press does.

Yes, there could be a very insignificant minority who are in disagreement. So what are those people compared with the tens of millions of workers, of Soviet peasants, of Soviet workers, that are the essence of the Soviet Union?

Your mistake is precisely to confuse the activity of four isolated cats with the formidable reality of the Soviet Union. You never speak of a worker, of a worker hero of the Soviet Union, of a Soviet peasant hero, of a Soviet scientist. You only speak about three or four dissidents in the Soviet Union.

I think there are more than three or four cats...



Above:

While free, quality education for all is a priority in the Cuban plan for development, students are called upon to spend half their school day in productive labor.



Courtesy Bohemia

The army also builds the New Cuba.

Well, I do not receive any reactionaries. I receive revolutionaries. Now, Carter does not receive any revolutionary, he only receives reactionaries.

Let us say that there are four cats, as you call them, or four dissidents, or twenty-four, or fifty-four...

Or 240, one for every million Soviets...

If Russia is so secure, if its system is so good, why cannot it tolerate these four dissidents, these four cats? We tolerate dissidents in our country. We may not like it, but we don't imprison them, we don't put them in camps; they write, they speak...

I don't think that the Soviets imprison dissidents unless they carry out activities against Soviet power. Besides, these dissidents are great allies of the U.S. Why do I have to tolerate the allies of my adversaries? If you want to tolerate them, do so; but we don't.

You say you are independent. Are you independent of the Soviet Union? Maybe not. Maybe we are another state of the Soviet Union.

Are you? What do you say?

Look, let's get things straight. I wish there weren't any independent states. I wish

there weren't a single bor humanity were a single socialist family with no exploit by man, with genuine eq exploiting and exploited ideal.

We are a sovereign c dependent country. Yo fectly well. Carter know it and those who are in U.S. know it. Maybe an the deceived people, might think that we a Soviet Union. But I war are communists, we an and our ideal is that of humanity, only one na have it so.

A socialist family?

It will have to be would be very difficu The capitalist human existed.

Why can't you live ours? Why does the w socialist, like you?

I'm not saying that follow their own lives that all have their ov humanity live...

You want the who say you want the w community, a social

Well, actually I t ble through the capi going to accept ex others, is humanit society of millionair criminated blacks, men? My ideal is th it is me or anyone going to do that.

What has been p move from this pl idea? Nationalism history. But wha compared to triba there were tribes, t So some day peop ism as we look a day the borders w

Do you think i that day when the it will have total and total peace? of history...

But never beft have the present past the Indians and the Africans The world has has multiplied. manity survives ments, it will ha to live as only on we cannot move

And you make them heroes, and Carter receives them.

Well, Ford didn't. So...

One question, why doesn't Carter receive a worker hero of the Soviet Union?

Well, I'm sure he would, if...

A prominent peasant or Soviet scientist. Why does he only receive a dissident?

Well, that is not true. We have Soviet workers, we have Soviet visitors all the time touring our country. But look...

But Carter does not receive them...

Well, Carter does not receive everybody. You do not receive everybody. Brezhnev does not receive everybody.

Who knows? Maybe we can.

I know. Scientific research and discoveries have shown that we cannot live on the moon. You have helped us to prove that, with your research on the planets. There is no atmosphere, there is no oxygen. Man evolved on earth, and he cannot live under those conditions.

It's a CIA plot...

And the closest star... You are confusing me... The closest star is four light years away, so we cannot get there. That has been proved scientifically and mathematically. Besides, it would have to be a CIA-less world.

In what area of foreign policy have you publicly or even privately disagreed with the Soviet Union?

On certain occasions I have disagreed privately, on certain occasions I have disagreed publicly. Differences cannot be personal. I remember that during the October crisis there were differences of criteria, but I believe that the differences that could come up between socialist countries must be discussed between them and solved between them. Sometimes we have had public differences with the Soviet Union.

Do you want me to tell you the truth? I think that was the result of our lack of political maturity. Now we know ourselves much better, now we know the Soviets much better.

At the time of those differences they were extraordinarily patient with us. They never adopted even the slightest reprisal

against us, and they continued assisting us. Today the level of our relations is very good. If someday any differences come up—and they could—we must sit down and discuss them in conversations around a table and not make them public, because that does not serve the interests of socialism.

What do you think of Brezhnev?

I have a very good opinion of Brezhnev. I'm not going to speak about him personally. Brezhnev is a very intelligent man, a very well prepared man, he is a man with exceptional personal qualities. But for me, Brezhnev's greatest merit is the role he has played in the struggle for detente and peace. His political life as leader of the Soviet Party has been dedicated to the attempt to improve relations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, to avoid a war, to create conditions of peace. I think that mankind will someday have to take that into consideration and will acknowledge that.

There were very difficult times—the Vietnam War, tensions, all that—but I can assure you that Brezhnev is a man fully dedicated to the cause of peace. I think that it is his greatest historical merit.

The Soviets give Cuba approximately a million dollars a day in money, and almost three million in other aid.

What? Where are those millions?

A million a day in money and another three million in aid.

During all these years we have been threatened from the point of view of our

security by the U.S., and they have freely supplied us with the weapons that we needed. When we faced difficulties from droughts or exports, and we were not able to fulfill our commitments, they always fulfilled their export commitments to Cuba.

At the beginning of this interview, you recalled the comment of the Triunvirato children. They did not know that there was an American delegation, and they started to cry: "Fidel, sure, hit the Yankees hard." I explained to you that that was an old slogan of a long time ago. Now, I am amazed that you are repeating old propaganda slogans, the famous slogan about the four...

All right, then, you tell me... Correct me, set me straight. How much aid do they give you?

I will answer that, if you allow me. The old slogan that the Soviets used to help us with four million a day is still being repeated. The Soviets have given us an extraordinary amount of assistance, undoubtedly. When the oil companies cut off our oil, they sent us oil. At the time the U.S. cut off the sugar quota, they bought our sugar. When the U.S. stopped the sale of food and imposed on us an almost worldwide blockade, the Soviets sold us raw material, machinery, foodstuffs, and especially fuel for the country. When the U.S. was preparing the Giron invasion, the mercenary attack, they sent us weapons which played a very important role at that time.





Lolita Lebron, Puerto Rican nationalist, was arrested on March 1, 1954 for leading an armed attack against the U.S. Congress. She is currently the longest held political prisoner in the U.S.

Now time has passed, and today we fulfill all of our export commitments to the Soviet Union. What have we established between the Soviet Union and Cuba? We have established a satisfactory exchange for our country. They pay us just prices for our minerals and sugar, and we pay them just prices for the goods that we import. That is, we have established a commercial exchange that is perfectly satisfactory, the kind of exchange that should exist between a developed country and an underdeveloped country, the kind of commercial exchange that should exist.

If the U.S. would trade with all the underdeveloped world as the Soviet Union does with Cuba, or Europe would trade with the underdeveloped world as the Soviet Union trades with Cuba, the problems of underdevelopment would be solved. The implementation of the principle of a just exchange between a developed and an underdeveloped country is what you call a three-million, four-million, ten-million dollar subsidy.

Well, but can you give me a figure, since you tell me that the figures being used are wrong?

Do you want me to give you a figure?

Yes.

The Soviets buy our sugar at a price of 30 cents a pound, and the Soviets have been selling us oil—last year, for instance—at a price of around \$50 the ton, which is almost half the world price. We have established agreements so that if the goods they export to us increase in price, the price of the sugar we export to them also rises proportionately.

Yes, I know that they sell you oil at half price, and they buy your sugar at what, two or three times market price?

It depends. When sugar was 60 cents, it was much under world market price. It is simply a stable price, which is what underdeveloped countries need.

Yes, but you know what I am asking. I used a figure of one million a day in money and almost three million in aid. This is a figure that our country considers the figure. Can you tell me, if we are wrong, what is the figure? If not one million, what?

What figure?

That figure in aid.

There is no figure, unless it's the question of aid in weapons. There is no such thing. Of course, there are credits.

Only sugar and oil?

Of course, there are credits for industrial investments. But our trade is based on just prices, more or less balanced prices. That's the way it is. The only thing is that they pay us a just price for our products, that's all. So forget about the three, four, five, seven million. They simply pay us a just price for our goods.

For sugar, and they sell you oil.

For sugar, for nickel, for everything they buy from us. They don't sell us just oil, but a large amount of goods.

And they give you no money to help your economy and no special aid?

They give us credits for industrial in-

vestments, and they supply us with weapons.

What does that come to?

Well, those are military secrets.

Guantanamo, is this something that is a very important part of your conditions for normalization with us? Is it a secondary matter?

Guantanamo is militarily useless for the U.S. today. They keep it as a show of strength, of power. They occupy a part of our national territory which today, in the nuclear age, has no strategic value. The U.S. has no right to be there, because it is there against our will, and I believe that you can't have any military base in the territory of any country against the will of the country.

So let's say that the U.S. is there by force. We have never wanted to turn Guantanamo into a special problem and raise the banner of vindication of Guantanamo, because we wanted to avoid creating a feeling of permanent irritation among our people. We have put that aside. If the North Americans want to be there, very well. They will have to leave some day, the day they start thinking intelligently. The world is much broader and greater than Guantanamo. Guantanamo is a very small piece of land.

Of course, if some day we sit down to hold discussions to normalize relations, one of the points that cannot be eliminated is the question of Guantanamo. We can



reach an agreement about which day they will leave, which year. They imposed on Cuba an agreement for an indeterminate length of time. When one mentions an indeterminate period of time in a legal contract, it's understood that it means 100 years, and in 20 years the 100 years will have passed.

What right has the U.S. to occupy Guantanamo against the will of our people? What right does it have to occupy a part of our territory against the will of our people? Guantanamo is an act of strength, they are there by force. Now, we have not used nor are ever going to use force in order to recover Guantanamo. We are not going to wage a war against the U.S. because of Guantanamo. The world is broad and wide.

What are Cuba's biggest problems today?

Many. For example, one of the problems we have had is drought. During the last three years we suffered a great drought, but this year we have had a good rainfall. More than necessary, actually.

Our problems are those that any underdeveloped country faces, but we are solving them. Our development is moving forward. You asked me yesterday about something similar, and I told you that one of our most serious problems was housing, because we dedicate most of our building resources to schools, hospitals, social works, roads, agricultural and industrial investments. For example, in order to solve the accumulated housing problem, we would need to build 100,000 homes per year, and we are only building 25,000.

Where or how, if in any case, do you think the revolution has failed here?

In strategic questions, it has not failed in any respect. Tactically we have had failures, but they are not fundamental.

Do you still have many political prisoners?

Yes, we do have some.

How many?

I don't remember the figure right now, but I can tell you that the overwhelming majority of those that have been imprisoned because of counterrevolutionary activities are already free. I can give you an example. The mercenaries who invaded the country in Giron were 1,200. We invented a formula to free them in exchange for indemnization. We made plans and offered participation in them, including the possibility of working, to counterrevolutionary prisoners as well as to common prisoners. We pay them a salary, and we still maintain that policy. The majority of the prisoners in Cuba work. They work either in prison or in open areas. They receive the same salaries and have the same economic rights as a worker.

Would you say you had hundreds?

Maybe a little bit more than hundreds. A little more. Maybe two or three thousand, due to different counterrevolutionary incidents. When the U.S. activity against Cuba was more intense, there were times when we reached a point of having more than 15,000 prisoners. About 20% of those prisoners may still be in prison.

Two or three thousand political prisoners seems like a great amount.

They are not political prisoners, they are counterrevolutionaries, people who rose up in arms in the Escambray Mountains by order of the CIA, people responsible for sabotage, for different crimes.

Cubans?

Cubans, yes. Our counterrevolutionary prisoners are the fruit of U.S. doings, the fruit of U.S. policy. Who nurtured, encouraged, armed and trained them? The U.S.

Don't you think that any of them may just oppose you and socialism?

Some, yes. But who mobilized them? No one in Cuba would have dared to challenge...

Maybe themselves, maybe their own thoughts.

Maybe, I won't deny it, but no one in Cuba would have imagined that it was possible to overthrow the Revolution if they had not believed that the U.S. was behind them. Since those years of intense activity by the CIA and the U.S. in Cuba, we have liberated more than 15,000 counterrevolutionary prisoners. And this was not done because Carter asked us nor because anyone asked us.

Now then, at a time when the blockade against Cuba is still maintained by the U.S., can we say that we are going to free these counterrevolutionary prisoners? No, we cannot do it. These are people who have committed crimes, serious crimes, and they have to do their time.

OK. If we lifted the embargo, would you release those prisoners?

I want to ask something. If we reestablish relations, would you liberate all the blacks that you have imprisoned in the U.S., who have turned to crime as a result of discrimination, unemployment, and abandonment? Let's agree on that.

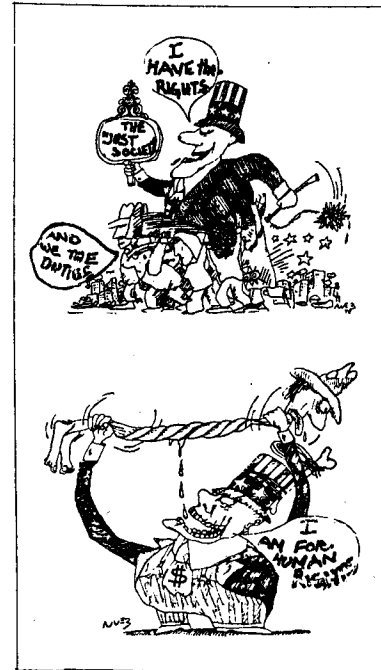
That is not why they are in prison.

Why not? Because they robbed? But why did they rob? Because they had no jobs, because they received no education, because they were exploited and forgotten. So then, let's reach an agreement. Why are you going to demand from us unilateral measures? As a bilateral measure we can reach any agreement. We free all counterrevolutionaries in prison, and at the same time you liberate all those you have in jail who had to steal because they were hungry,

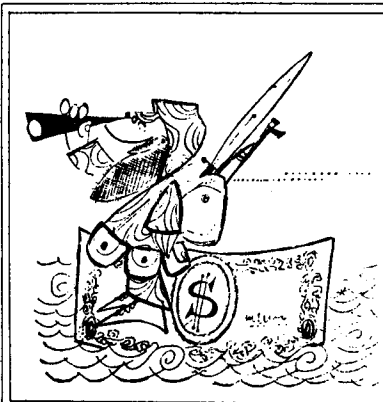
because they had no jobs, and because they lived in misery.

So let's reach an agreement. I propose that. Let's agree. You free a certain amount, and we free another amount, but bilaterally. Don't come here to impose on us those kinds of unilateral conditions, because we are not going to accept them.

Now then, I did not. You said to me: Do you think as long as we have an embargo we will let these people go? And the next logical conclusion was: If you did not have an embargo, would you let these people go? It was you that brought [up] the idea.



February, 1976. Some of Cuba's troops in Angola.



I will give you my opinion about this. I believe that if relations are normalized between Cuba and the U.S., and the counter-revolutionaries that are receiving U.S. support lose their hope... What is the blockade? Support for counterrevolutionaries. If the blockade ceases and relations are normalized, one can no longer speak about U.S. support to counterrevolution. And then we can adopt the measures that we deem pertinent, on our own and without any kind of commitment, freely and as a sovereign act, not as a condition.

Now then, if both governments want to do something for mankind, even before the ceasing of the blockade, let's agree and then let's reach a common agreement. A certain number of counterrevolutionaries

are freed, and we also free a certain number of U.S. prisoners who have had to commit crimes because of the social system, hunger, and unemployment.

voice over

Finally, we asked Fidel Castro if he wanted to say anything directly to the American people and if so, would he try to say it in English.

President Castro, I would like to ask you [during] this opportunity to say some words to the American people about the situation or anything you want. Please, in English.

(In English). Few words, only a few words. I would like to speak much to the people of the United States in English, but I am sorry, I am not sure I can translate what I think.

I want to tell them clearly. I feel the best wishes for the people of the United States. Every time when I know a new American I always have the reason to try to understand your people, and I think that every time I find that the Americans, the newsmen, the workers, the technicians, are wonderful people. Really, I appreciate and admire the people of the United States for what they have achieved in technique, in science and because I see that you, your people, are good working people, and honest and idealistic people.

Really those are my feelings, my sincere

feelings to the people of the United States. I hope in the future we will understand better and we will be friends.

I hope so. Thank you.

Thank you.

voice over

In 1948, Fidel Castro lived in this house, in New York City. He told us about it on our last night in Cuba. He remembered the exact address: 155 West 82nd Street. He lived here for six months. He had just married and was considering studying at Columbia University. His ideas were already socialistic, but it was a long way to the revolution.

At dinner that night Castro said, "We are divided by politics and united by humanity." I said, "We disagree on Russia, China, the economy, Communism, Capitalism, and the United States. Other than that, we're okay."

He laughed. But I realized later that what we disagreed on most profoundly is the meaning of freedom. That's what truly separates us. Still, in the realities of the world today, there may be a time when Fidel Castro can come to the United States, and visit this house he left so long ago.

I'm Barbara Walters for ABC News. Good evening.

October 15, 1976. Crowds in Havana demonstrate their rage at the bombing of a Cuban Airliner by Cuban refugees based in Miami. All aboard were killed.

Sandra Levinson / Center for Cuban Studies

