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Cuba Called Socialist 'Showcase'

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The first American official to visit Cuba since 1960 said yesterday that 15 years of U.S. attempts to isolate Cuba have failed and the country is on the verge of making itself a socialist showcase in the Western Hemisphere.

Pat Holt, chief of staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said a U.S. trade boycott instituted in 1960, several months before President Eisenhower broke relations with the government of Fidel Castro, is a complete failure.

Holt, in an 11-page printed report to the committee made public yesterday afternoon, said Cuba's economy is doing well, its people seem to have a high standard of living and its government seems popular.

He said a shift from the policies of the Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon administrations "is urgently needed and a new one should be devised.

"It is my conclusion," Holt said, "that the Cubans are correct when they say that the U.S. policy of isolating Cuba has been a failure. If this is so, then it follows that a new policy should be devised."

There was no immediate comment on the report from either the White House or the State Department.

Holt, who speaks Spanish fluently and was "reluctantly" authorized by Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger to go to Cuba June 29 to July 8 as a committee representative, said:

"With the help of massive assistance from the Soviet Union and high world commodity prices, the Cubans are on the verge of making their system work — that is to say, of constructing a socialist showcase in the Western Hemisphere."

Official Cuban figures show a per-capita annual income of \$1,587, by far the highest in Latin America except for Venezuela, Holt said.

"Even if these figures are exaggerated by a factor of two or three ... they are supported by impressionistic observations of the Cuban standard of living over a period of 10 days travel in both urban and rural parts of the island," he said.

He said the Cubans also are gaining confidence in their political system, and are in the process of electing local governments that will control day-to-day decision-making independently of Havana for the first time since Castro seized power in 1959.

The once-feared Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs), which formed the spy apparatus of the Havana regime against counter-revolutionaries in its own population in the early 1960s, have largely been converted into social welfare organizations, Holt said, and the atmosphere of repression has declined markedly.