

Cubans anxious for better relations--but

Examiner News Services

Cuba.

WASHINGTON — The Castro government appears ready to improve relations with the United States, but it will be up to Washington to set the stage by lifting economic sanctions against

That is one of the conclusions reached by Pat M. Holt, chief of staff for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, following a 10-day visit to Cuba last month and meetings with

Premier Fidel Castro and his top government officials.

"Although no Cuban said so explicitly," Holt said in a report to the committee, "I have the clear impression that Cubans would welcome better relations with the

United States. Any initiative in improving relations, however, will have to come from the United States, and no substantial change can be expected without lifting the boycott."

Holt has concluded that

boycott must end first

the 12-year-old "U.S. policy of isolating Cuba has been a failure."

"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.

"It is my conclusion that the Cubans are correct when they say, as one did, 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."

Holt is the senior U.S. official known to have visited Fidel Castro's island since the U.S. trade embargo was imposed. He had been trying

to win official sanction for the trip since 1966 with the support of Sen. J. W. Fulbright, D-Ark., committee chairman.

☆☆☆ Section A Page 19
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