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Castro's Own Brand of Marxism-Leninism

Cuba, seen from within, looks very differently than from without. Food may be poor and lacking in variety, but there is enough to eat and no sign whatever of starvation; indeed one Latin American reporter, who had been all over the country in the past few months, told me he thought the poor people of Cuba were better fed today than in any other country of Latin America. I had been led by the U.S. press to expect to see a city slowly being strangled by blockade; instead the streets were lively, taxis plentiful and the number of private cars surprising for a country so dependent for its oil on a distant source of supply. The *guaguas* (buses) seemed decrepit and were terribly overcrowded in the evening rush hour—but that is hardly a condition peculiar to underdeveloped or socialist countries; bus commuters of the world everywhere are ready to unite. Finally, neither in the streets nor at the university, in the shops or restaurants, nor in their homes, do the Cubans seem a people cowed. The notion that Russian troops may be in Cuba to help Fidel hold his people down is the silliest delusion the U.S. government and press have ever encouraged. I saw no Russian soldiers and only an occasional Russian civilian in Havana, a city where everyone seems to be carrying a pistol, a sten gun or a machine gun. If the Cuban people and the Fidelistas were as permeated by discontent as Washington seems to think, they could shoot the place up and mow any stray Russians down any time they wanted to. Nowhere in the Soviet bloc are the people themselves armed as in Cuba.

We Speeded Up Cuba's Sovietization

Cuba, only 90 miles away, is today unmistakably a part of the Soviet world, and Havana is a Soviet capital. The newsstands carry only Soviet publications. The bookstores no longer display the works of heretical Communists like Victor Serge; the objective or hostile accounts of Communism one could still buy there two years ago have disappeared from the shelves. The young Cuban studying English, even when he wants to read Huckleberry Finn or Moby Dick, reads them in inexpensive Soviet editions I saw in bookstore windows. The movies show the same "Our Nikita" film as in Moscow; Polish, Bulgarian, and Chinese films have replaced Hollywood's. Partly this is our own fault. We have made dollar exchange available abroad in many countries for the import of U.S. magazines and books; we have been trying for years to get U.S. publications into Moscow. But in Cuba we shut off the export of U.S. publications and films by our trade embargo policies long before Cuba had become Sovietized culturally. If we think it would be good for U.S. policy and for better understanding to have the *New York Times* on sale in Moscow, why not in Havana? If we negotiate the entry of U.S. films into the Soviet Union, why not into Cuba? Alfredo

Cool—On All But Cuba

"As a man who does not ordinarily betray his emotions, President Kennedy presented a rather surprising televised figure when he visited the returned Cuban prisoners of war in Miami. His fire in declaring that they would deserve to march at the head of the column that should one day liberate Havana was hardly in keeping with the often-remarked Kennedy coolness. No one reading the speech would find in it any precise commitment. But the mood did, and it is a good bet that the exiles have taken it as an implicit promise of American help in the physical overthrow of the Castro regime by revolt. It is notoriously unwise of statesmen in a host country to whet the expectation of exiles for a triumphant return to their homeland. Previous U.S. Presidents should have learned that in their dealings with the Formosan Chinese. Certainly Churchill learned in World War II that exile armies and their labyrinthine politics can be vexatious. The day may come when President Kennedy will regret his fiery exuberance in his speech to the Cubans."

—San Francisco Chronicle, Jan. 1 (Abridged)

Guevara, head of the Cuban Institute of Art and Movie Industries, in a speech to the First National Congress of Culture, held in Havana while I was there, said "we are not the enemies of the artistic works of any country" and expressed a hope for North American films. The policy of pulling down an iron curtain of our own on Cuba, of non-intercourse and embargo, has fostered Sovietization in culture as in other realms. It has speeded up the liquidation of the American presence and of American influence in this lovely neighboring isle. A more self-defeating policy would be difficult to imagine. I am not speaking only in abstract terms. I suddenly felt jealous as an American to see none of our films advertised outside the movie houses. And I felt disturbed to notice the changed attitude toward Americans. I went out of my way everywhere to say I was an American, to see what the response would be. For the first time, the response was a chill. I was not treated rudely—the Cubans are too gentle a people for that—but nobody opened up to me, and the announcement tended not to encourage but to stop conversation. We have succeeded in making ourselves unpopular in one of the few places in Latin America where North Americans were genuinely liked in the past, even by those critical of us politically.

To say that Cuba is now part of the Soviet world is no longer the end but merely the beginning of political analysis. For the Soviet world is no longer monolithic and securely centralized as in the days of Stalin. In Cuba, one is at the very heart of the growing struggle between Moscow and Pe-

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king, a struggle as fierce but of far larger dimensions than that between Stalin and Trotsky. Then the instrument of state power was securely in the hands of one faction. Now each has its capital and a mighty country at its disposal. Of all the schisms that have rent world communism since 1917, this is the most momentous, for there are huge armies and resources—and fundamental national conflicts—on both sides. But Cuba is no mere passive bone of contention between these two giant rivals. On the contrary, just as Fidel Castro by sheer uncompromising verve and nerve has made this little island of less than 7,000,000 people the catalytic factor in the relations of two continents, of Anglo-Saxon North America and its Latin neighbors to the South, so he has made Cuba a positive and independent factor in internal Soviet bloc politics.

Why Cuba Is Popular in The Bloc

The split between Moscow and Peking, Khrushchev and Mao, is only the most obvious and sensational of the turbulent convulsions today in a Soviet world coming alive again from its Stalinist Ice Age. Less sensational but in many ways more important for the future is the tough rear guard action being fought by the "dogmatists"—the hard liners—against a youth whose appetite for freedom has only been whetted by the zig-zags of the Khrushchevite thaw. These liberal forces find their inspiration in Cuba. "The Albanians," one shrewd Soviet bloc observer told me, "are only tribal gangsters. They carry no weight elsewhere in the bloc. But the Cubans are another story. They are like early Christians. The honesty, the selflessness, the revolutionary purity of the leadership centered around Fidel Castro represent a new and thrilling phenomena for Soviet youth. They grew up in the stuffy atmosphere of bureaucracy and repression. They have never seen a revolution in its first and marvellous phase. A new and inspiring wind blows out of Cuba, and Fidel and Cuba are immensely popular everywhere in the bloc. For Khrushchev, China is a foreign policy matter. But Cuba is in a curious way a domestic matter. Mikoyan, you will notice, did not spend 23 days in China. He spent them in Cuba. This is a measure of its importance." Khrushchev cannot ignore Cuba's popularity at home in the Soviet Union because Fidel is popular with the same forces which see in Khrushchev their best hope of winning and widening the fight against neo-Stalinist dogmatism.

Interlocked with these divergent views on foreign and domestic policy are those controversies which center about "different roads to socialism"—the question of how much freedom shall be granted the various Soviet regimes and the

The Last Refuge of Romantic Illusion

"A frail and weak child, Romantic Illusion, roved homelessly over the earth. Hastily and maliciously businessmen stepped on it. Newspaper vendors, proclaiming their lies, in turn kicked it with their elbows. The howls of the twist and the outcry of atomic explosions terrorized it. There was nothing left but to pick nuclear mushrooms. It wanted to die.

"It did not die. It put its little feet into the water without breaking the reflection and went to a small island called Cuba. That frail child, Illusion, put on an olive green cap, the high boots of the soldier. It knotted around it, the two-colored fringe of the 26th of July and took a gun into its hands. And, in this the unromantic century of cybernetics, that small island transformed itself into a great continent full of romanticism, longing for battle."

—The Russian poet Yevtushenko in *Revolucion*, Cuba's *Fidelista* daily, November 29, 1962.

various Communist parties in the non-Communist world. One reason for the convulsions shaking the bloc is that considerable freedom and considerable polycentrism has developed; life stirs again in the bureaucritized corpse of Marxism-Leninism. Cuba, on the far periphery of the Soviet world geographically, not even fully accepted as genuinely "Marxist-Leninist" much less as a member of the Warsaw Pact, has become in a paradoxical way the cross-roads of Sovietism ideologically. Cuba is at the very centre of its decisive battles.

Cuba is the one nation in the Soviet world which is still not securely either in the Russian or the Chinese camp. It is the only place in the Soviet world where the full texts of both Khrushchev and Mao are regularly and impartially published. Castro, though dependent on Russia and the Russian bloc, said not a single word in praise of Khrushchev in his January 2 speech on the fourth anniversary of the Cuban revolution. On the contrary, he said very coolly, "The Soviet government, in search of peace, arrived at certain agreements with the North American government, but this does not mean that we have renounced this right, the right to possess the weapons we deem pertinent as a sovereign country. And for that reason we do not accept the unilateral inspection that they wanted to establish here with the only purpose, of the imperialists, to humble us. And there was no inspection and there will be no inspection. And if they want inspection, let them permit us to inspect them." This, in the Cuban context and atmosphere, was not just telling off Kennedy. It was also telling off Khrushchev.

"In No Country Have I Seen Such Intimacy Between A Leader and His People"

"In no country have I seen such an intimacy between a leader and his people. Everyone knows that Fidel Castro may appear anywhere and at any moment; it may be in a restaurant or it may be in an isolated village where his helicopter will set itself down. He is not adored as an inaccessible chief, but loved with an overwhelming affection. Let him appear, and people study his face, listen carefully to his voice: 'He is tired,' 'He is still hoarse.' And they shower him with advice: 'Fidel, you must rest,' 'Take care of yourself.' Everyone talks to him of his own case, tells him his troubles, complains of an injustice, compliments him on such and such decision, and each time—and this is the miracle—Fidel responds as if he knew personally each man who speaks to him. Hence his extraordinary popu-

larity.

"There is no question with which he does not occupy himself. In the middle of the most important problems, he will address himself suddenly to women in order to tell them they will soon again have the sandals with straps they love so much to wear. Several months ago he learned that the children of the Sierra Maestra had not yet forgotten the bombardments of Batista's air force; every time they hear a plane, they are seized with fright. Fidel thought it over and hit upon the idea of sending planes loaded with toys to be sent down by parachute. Thus the idea of death perhaps will no longer be associated in their minds with the flight of planes."

—From a Report on Cuba in *Le Monde* (Paris) Jan. 1