

IN THE WORLD

Cuba seeks to ease tensions, entertains U.S. policymakers

By T.D. Allman
Pacific News Service

United Nations. The cocktail party, held in the U.N. enclave in New York, was not an unusual one. Guests included diplomats, journalists, university professors, foundation officials and several chic, thirtysix women.

In one corner, two Cuban diplomats were engaged in heated argument. They were arguing with each other, not with Americans. Whether the Cubans were aware of it, their amicable but lively debate had a highly favorable effect on other guests.

"I've visited many communist countries," one U.S. foreign policy expert said, "and you just never see a pair of Russian or Chinese officials disagree with each other in public. I find the Cubans likeable and impressive."

United Nations membership is important to Cuba, but Cuba's New York mission is vital to its growing dialog with Americans—a dialog more lively than ever despite the absence of diplomatic relations between the two countries for more than 15 years.

The objective of Cuba's New York diplomacy is so clear that not even Cubans make a secret of it. Though the official course of U.S.-Cuban detente has been blocked following Cuban military intervention in Angola, an unofficial, behind-the-scenes Cuban effort to promote renewed diplomatic relations is flourishing.

From the U.N. mission, Cuban diplomats armed with invitations to Havana have been seeking out Americans they believe will be influential policymakers.

►A small stream.

As a result, the trickle of important American visitors to Cuba—including legislative assistants and members of the major northeastern universities, think tanks and foundations—has grown into a small stream. Several small air-charter firms in Miami have even begun specializing in flying American visitors south across the straits of Florida to Havana.

The visitors tend to be personally conservative, even when they favor major liberalization in U.S. foreign policy, and therefore their personal reactions are especially interesting. Most such visitors dislike Cuba's austerity. But they are greatly impressed by Cuba's social accomplishments and they remark again and again about the absence of secret police, the lack of fear among Cubans, their friendliness and their frankness even in political discussions with foreigners.

Even during the darkest days of the U.S.-Cuban confrontation, Americans and Cubans retained much in common for the simple reason that historically no other Latin American country, not even Mexico, has been so close to the U.S. Cuba's America-watchers seem correctly to have recognized that they can only gain by giving Americans a largely unimpeded look at themselves and the socialist society they have built since Castro entered Havana in 1959.

Why, nonetheless, are Cubans so eager to re-establish diplomatic relations with a country that historically has exploited Cuba and which, since 1960, has done everything to it from blockading the country to conspiring to have its national leader assassinated?

►Cuba didn't do it.

Both Americans and Cubans point out that Cuba did not break off diplomatic relations with the U.S. or withdraw from the Organization of American States. Rather it was the U.S. that severed ties and attempted to ostracize Cuba from inter-American relations.

"They are also terribly proud of what they have done," said another visitor to Cuba, Richard Haas, who is an American Rhodes scholar and former legislative assistant to Sen. Claiborne Pell (R-R.I.). "Yet in spite of the total independence they now have from America, we are still terribly important to them. It is almost as though by re-establishing ties with Washington they would gain the final, ultimate legitimacy."

Cuban officials frankly state they would benefit from renewed trade ties with the U.S. and from access to American technology. And in return, high-ranking Cuban officials, in marathon conversations with visiting Americans, have offered the possibility of what once were some unthinkable concessions.

According to Americans recently returning from Cuba, these include an end to the propaganda war with the U.S.; some form of reconciliation with the Cuban exile community in America, which amounts to 10 percent of the entire Cuban population; an end to Cuban pressure at the U.N. and elsewhere for Puerto Rican independence, and even discussing the question of compensation for nationalized American holdings in Cuba.

Cuban officials, while strongly defending the Angola intervention, state that it was a product of unique circumstances, among them Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's own unwarranted hostility to Angola's MPLA. They point out that they have counseled the Angolan government to establish diplomatic relations with all nations, including the U.S.

The question cannot help posing itself: Is the Cuban eagerness for relations with the U.S. a function of the same dissatisfaction with the Soviet Union that has driven countries as diverse as Ghana, Egypt and China into better relations with Washington?

Conservative American visitors to Cuba state that the Russian presence, while very important, is discreet, respectful of Cuban sovereignty and in unusually frank discussions with Cubans no trace of irritation with the Soviet Union emerged. "Of course, they can never forget what [former Soviet leader] Khrushchev did during the missile crisis," one such American remarked. "But there also is the fact that Moscow itself favors Cuban-U.S. detente."

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IN SHORT

Cuba installs new assembly

Havana. Cuba celebrated Dec. 20 the 20th anniversary of the landing of Prime Minister Fidel Castro's guerrillas by parading its weaponry in Revolution Square and installing its first National Assembly since the 1959 revolution. The assembly elected Castro president of the new 31-member Council of State, meaning that he in effect would become Cuban president, prime minister, Communist party leader and commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

—Reuter

Opposition meets in Spain

Madrid. The Spanish opposition Dec. 1 challenged Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez to a test of strength by including a Communist in a group chosen to negotiate with the premier on the government's political reform program. The law legalizing formation of political parties last July after 40 years of Francoist dictatorship maintained a ban on Communists. A communique issued after a meeting of opposition leaders said the negotiating committee would consist of one Communist; one representative each for the Basque provinces, Catalonia and Galicia; one for the illegal trade unions; two Liberals, and one for Christian Democrats.

—Reuter

Italian CP in WEU

Paris. Italian Communist members of Parliament were applauded Nov. 29 when they took their seats for their first time in a Western European defense body, the Western European Union—a grouping of seven European nations—following their party's election successes earlier this year. The Italians immediately joined French Communist members to form a group of their own and demanded seats in key assembly committees.

—Reuter

International business stuck in slump

Top item on Carter's agenda

By Jan Austin
Internews

Berkeley, Calif. The slowdown in economic recovery in the major non-communist industrial nations is expected to be among top items on President-elect Carter's agenda when he takes office in January.

Business analysts are saying the question will require immediate attention and there are already predictions in Europe of an economic summit conference early in the Carter administration.

The slowdown dimensions were indicated in a new forecast issued in November by economists at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which groups all the major non-communist industrial powers. The experts scaled down their growth predictions in the 24 OECD countries in the first half of 1977 from 5.25 to 4.3 percent. The OECD had already lowered its growth estimates in the second half of this year from 5 to 3.5 percent.

The recovery, warned *Business Week* Nov. 1, is "stumbling in its tracks"—particularly in Western Europe and Japan—raising the "specter of a new, prolonged

slowdown abroad even before the debris of the last one, the worst in four decades, has been cleared away."

Why the unexpected slowdown? The standard explanation given by business journals and analysts is that the initial recovery was spurred by increased consumer spending, which isn't increasing as quickly as expected, and the replenishing of industrial stockpiles, (which has apparently been completed). But the key element, capital spending, never appeared.

"What is clear," *Business Week* said Nov. 15, is that "policies adopted by various governments have worked against restoring business confidence and stimulating capital investment."

►Go-slow approach.

Those policies, known as the go-slow approach, had been generally backed up by business. They are based on the view that the No. 1 problem is fighting inflation and the only way to do it is through restrained growth. With the U.S. in the lead, seven top industrial countries agreed at last June's economic summit in Puerto Rico to hold growth to 5.5 percent. Now it is clear the go-slow strategy produced even lower than its proponents had anti-

cipated, without eliminating high inflation.

Faced with these results, Western economists are putting the squeeze on the oil-producing countries, hoping to head off an expected hike in oil prices. The OPEC countries are expected to consider price increases of 10 to 25 percent when they meet in Qatar Dec. 15.

OECD economists reportedly believe the non-communist industrial nations could live with a price increase of 10 percent or less. Anything higher, they say, would require more drastic revisions in their forecasts for Western growth. The U.S. is taking a harder line, pressing publicly for no price increase at all.

So far, Carter has said he hopes oil prices will not be raised, but has resisted taking joint action with President Ford to prevent it—reportedly because he does not want to bear responsibility for a policy he did not develop.

Once in office, Carter is expected by analysts to advocate a policy sharply different from Ford's go-slow approach, seeking instead to stimulate the economy to grow faster—possibly with wage-price guidelines at some point to control inflationary effects. A similar strategy shift

was urged in early November at a tripartite conference of private economists from Western Europe, Japan and the U.S., sponsored on the U.S. end by the Brookings Institution. The conference concluded that "domestic economic policies geared to stimulate economic activity should be adopted by Germany, Japan and the U.S."

Carter's economic advisers apparently agree that growth in the three strongest economies will help pull others up by providing bigger markets for their goods.

►Obstacles ahead.

Among obstacles to such a shift in strategy are Western central bankers and the International Monetary Fund, which are firmly committed to restrained growth to fight inflation.

Carter would also have to persuade Germany and Japan to join in stimulating their economies. He would at the same time have to convince the governments of Britain, Italy and France that, while the stronger economies are gunning their engines and reducing domestic unemployment, those three must stick for now to strict anti-inflationary policies that are under growing attack from their own workers.

Half-million prisoners in 112 countries

For more than 500,000 persons in at least 112 countries, Dec. 10 is a day they may well long remember.

Dec. 10 is Human Rights Day, so proclaimed by the U.N., and this year it marks the opening of Prisoners of Conscience Year by Amnesty International, the international human rights organization. The year will conclude with a conference in Stockholm, Sweden, at which the abolition of capital punishment will be urged.

Those 500,000 persons in 112 countries are the "prisoners of conscience" that Amnesty is talking about—persons imprisoned anywhere for their beliefs, color, language, ethnic origin or religion. Amnesty speaks for all of them—provided they have not used or advocated violence.

Amnesty itself has grown since its founding in 1961 to 97,000 members (27,000 in the last year alone) in 78 countries, making it the largest nongovernmental human rights body in the world. It has consultative status with the U.N., the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Council of Europe; cooperative links with the Organization of American States and observer status with the Organization of African Unity.

At its recent policymaking session in Strasbourg, West Germany, its International Council expressed "indignation" at the assassination of Orlando Letelier, the former Chilean minister, and an aide in Washington.

More than half of the world's political prisoners are in Asia—the bulk of them in Indonesia and India. As many as

100,000 persons are in the 11th year of imprisonment in Indonesia. Many of them are former members of the Indonesian Communist party who were rounded up after Sukarno's downfall in 1965. In India, at least 40,000 (and perhaps 100,000) are in jail without trial for political reasons since Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's administration declared a state of emergency in June, 1975.

Another priority area for Amnesty is the "southern cone" of South America (Chile, Argentina and Uruguay), where military rule has led to virtual elimination of civil liberties.

Since mid-October, Amnesty has spotlighted these areas in particular:

•Amnesty welcomed the Nov. 16 announcement by the Chilean government of the release of about 300 political prisoners. Chilean authorities asserted the released prisoners represent the total held without trial under the country's state of siege. But Amnesty records show releases only affected detainees held in the officially recognized camps of Tres Alamos, Cuatro Alamos and Puchuncavi.

The announcement specifically excluded 18 prisoners detained in those camps. Puchuncavi prisoners transferred to another place of detention a few weeks before the releases are also excluded.

Amnesty has information that other prisoners not covered are held without trial under the state of siege elsewhere in Chile. A spokesman said the releases do not include political prisoners on trial or those who have been sentenced. These number more than 1,000, despite the release and exile of many prisoners over

the past few months. A subject of particular Amnesty urgency is the fate of 1,500 persons arrested since September, 1973, who have "disappeared."

•Amnesty published Nov. 14 a list of 167 trade unionists imprisoned or missing in 16 countries throughout the world. It said many are detained because of their membership in trade unions or for political activities associated with trade unionism in violation of Article 23(4) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which asserts the right of everyone to "form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests."

Many are held without charge or trial and some have been subjected to "torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" in violation of Article 5 of the declaration.

Amnesty emphasized that the list was confined only to those cases known to its research department as of Sept. 30 and was by no means complete as to numbers and countries.

"There are almost certainly more trade unionists detained in the world and equally certainly more countries that are holding trade unionists in custody," it said in an introduction to the list.

The 16 countries are Argentina, Bahrain, Brazil, Central African Republic, Chile, India, Indonesia, Mali, Morocco, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Rhodesia, Singapore, Tunisia and Uruguay.

Amnesty said international and national trade union organizations are being asked to intervene on behalf of the detainees.

•Amnesty reported in early Nov. that

its investigations indicate Iran supports perhaps the most repressive system of justice in the world.

According to Amnesty, the shah of Iran has abolished all of that nation's civilian courts, has imprisoned up to 100,000 citizens for political beliefs and has presided this year over the highest number of official executions on earth.

An Amnesty research team concluded, after talking to survivors of Iran's prisons, that systematic methods of torture used against Iranian inmates are "beyond belief."

Iran is the largest single recipient of U.S. armaments, the shah having purchased more than \$10 billion in American weaponry in four years.

The U.S. government recently agreed to assign 60,000 American advisers in Iran to supervise and train Iranian personnel in using sophisticated weapons being installed there.

According to Amnesty, the political activities of virtually every Iranian are being monitored by a system of 20,000 agents working for SAVAK, the nationwide intelligence-gathering police force that operates both in Iran and abroad.

•Amnesty Oct. 28 wrote to President Ahmad Hassan Al Bakr of Iraq expressing concern at the arrest, torture and execution of Kurds in Iraq since hostilities ceased in March, 1975, and despite the general amnesty announced then and extended until October, 1975.

•Amnesty said Oct. 24 that several hundred people suspected of opposing the government on Taiwan are detained there after secret trials by military courts. ■



Photo by Image Arts—SD

A young Vietnamese arrives in U.S. in 1975 following the Vietnamese victory.

Refugees everywhere

U.N. agency tries to help the displaced and exiled

Geneva, Switzerland. A temporary organization grappling with an eternal problem: this is the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

Temporary, because its mandate to protect and help men, women and children forced to flee their homes is valid for only five years at a time and has to be renewed by the General Assembly.

Eternal, for the evil it seeks to alleviate—persecution because of race, religion, nationality or political opinion—is as old as the world itself.

An intergovernmental body set up in 1951 to find homes for hundreds of thousands of Europeans uprooted by World War II, the office stretches a helping hand to victims of coups and conflicts in Africa, Latin America and the Far and Middle East.

It began with a staff of 13 and a budget of \$330,000. Today it employs 500 people, half of them scattered around the world, and last year it spent about \$30 million. Headquarters officials under the high commissioner, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, son of a multimillionaire, occupy 130 offices on the two top floors of a new wing of Geneva's sprawling labyrinthine Palais des Nations.

Documents that pass across desks inside portray a picture of misery, suffering, hardship and fear:

•Families fleeing from Indochina crammed in a leaky fishing boat, rescued from drowning by a passing freighter, then refused permission to land by authorities at a Southeast Asian port.

•Exiles from Chile and other Latin American countries living for months in hostels in Argentina in dread of assassination, kidnapping and torture as they wait for other lands to open their doors to give them shelter.

•One million Africans needing food, clothes, blankets, cooking utensils, farm tools and seeds as they return to village homes in Angola from which they were driven during anti-colonialist fighting and civil strife.

In the early days many imagined the organization would go out of business

after it had cleared the camps throughout Europe still housing war refugees and had found homes for people who fled countries at the height of the cold war.

But the Algerian struggle for independence from France, Africa's emergence from colonial rule and conflicts in Southeast Asia uprooted hundreds of thousands and it was to the office they turned for help.

The high commissioner's mandate extends to people who have left their home country and cannot or do not want to return because of well-founded fear of persecution.

It does not cover refugees receiving assistance from other U.N. bodies—such as the Palestine refugees in the Mideast for whom the U.N. Relief and Works Agency was created—or people still within boundaries of their own states although driven from their homes.

In this role of "humanitarian troubleshooter," as U.N. officials describe it, the high commissioner was able to assist half-a-million people returning to their homes in southern Sudan after 17 years of civil war between the Arab north and the black south.

Another such special operation was the transfer of 250,000 people in groups going from Pakistan to Bangladesh, and from Bangladesh and Nepal to Pakistan after the Bangladesh war of 1971.

In Laos and Vietnam, the office helped resettle hundreds of thousands who fled their homes during the Indochina conflict. In Cyprus the office coordinated help for islanders uprooted by fighting between Greek Cypriots and invading Turkish troops in 1974.

Officials say about four-fifths of office funds are contributed by 15 countries; Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Netherlands, U.S., Canada, Britain, West Germany, Japan, Australia, Switzerland, Belgium, Austria and Italy. Other contributors are New Zealand and France. East European communist countries assist mostly with aid in kind delivered directly. For example, the Soviet Union provided an aircraft to help with repatriation between Pakistan and Bangladesh. —Reuter