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Cuba

AT THE CROSSROADS

*The Visit of Pope John Paul II
& Opportunities For U.S. Policy*



Staff Report of the

**U.S. Senate
Committee on Foreign Relations**

**U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on International Relations**

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

March 4, 1998

The Hon. Jesse Helms, Chairman
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Benjamin Gilman, Chairman
Committee on International Relations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Helms & Chairman Gilman:

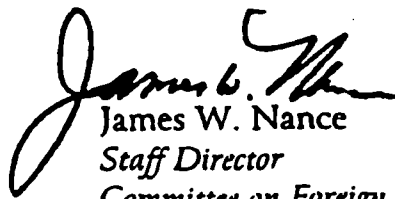
Attached is a staff report prepared by Roger Noriega and Marc Thiessen of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff, and Caleb McCarry of the House International Relations Committee staff, on the Visit of Pope John Paul II to Cuba. The data and observations contained in this report were compiled during a ten-day investigation trip to Cuba, from January 21 to January 31, 1998.

The report provides a comprehensive analysis of the current situation in Cuba, as well as detailed discussion of the impact of the papal visit, and the ensuing opportunities for the U.S. policy makers to help the Cuban people gain their freedom. The report also addresses the performance of the U.S. Interests Section, and other foreign missions in Havana (particularly the European Union), and contains a number of policy recommendations.

We hope this report will be helpful to you as Congress considers how to respond to the Pope's historic pilgrimage to Cuba.

Very respectfully,


Richard Garon
Staff Director
Committee on International Relations


James W. Nance
Staff Director
Committee on Foreign Relations

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the most striking — and little-noted — moment of Pope John Paul II's visit to Cuba took place during the Holy Father's open air Mass in Havana's "Plaza Jose Marti."

As the Pope began his homily, he thanked Cardinal Jaime Ortega for his welcoming remarks, to polite applause from the audience of one million Cubans. He then thanked the Cardinals and Bishops who had traveled from all around the world, and all the bishops of Cuba — again, to polite applause. He thanked the priests and the religious men and women who had come out in such numbers to greet him — again, applause.

Then, he acknowledged the civil authorities, thanking "The President of Cuba, Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz," who was seated in the front row, for his cooperation with the papal visit.

Silence.

We looked around from our spot in the middle of the throng of one million. Over the loudspeakers, we heard tinny applause coming from the VIP section up front. But all around us, average Cubans stood silent.

People looked first at their shoes, then each other. And then they began to snicker, as they suddenly realized what they had just done. With their silence, one million Cubans had just denounced the regime; one million Cubans had just voted with their hands against Fidel Castro's rule; one million Cubans had just committed the largest "acto de repudio" (act of repudiation) in the history of the Cuban revolution.

With their silence, one million Cubans had just committed the largest "acto de repudio" in the history of the Cuban revolution — against Fidel Castro.

The moment soon passed, and it was barely noted in the press coverage of the Holy Father's visit. But it spoke volumes to us.¹

1. This was not an isolated incident. Several Catholic bishops told us the same thing had happened the day before during the Pope's Mass in Santiago de Cuba, when the Holy Father welcomed Cuban Vice President Raul Castro to total silence from the crowd — the same crowd that had just given a standing ovation to Santiago's Archbishop, Pedro Meurice, after he had delivered bold welcoming remarks in which he had denounced Marxism-Leninism.

Land of Myths

Cuba is a land of many myths. One myth holds that Fidel Castro remains personally popular, using the U.S. embargo to stir up Cuban nationalism and, thus, solidify popular support for his regime. Everything we saw during our 10-day stay in Cuba indicates otherwise.

Neither the Cuban regime nor Fidel Castro himself enjoy any discernable depth of public support. Quite the opposite: the very mention of Castro's name evoked reactions of anger or fear from most Cubans we met. Indeed, most Cubans dare not speak his name, instead stroking imaginary beards to refer to him silently.

And Castro has not succeeded, despite four decades of indoctrination, in engendering anti-American sentiment among the Cuban people. Wherever we went, we were welcomed with open arms by average Cubans. At every encounter, we introduced ourselves as staffers from the U.S. Congress, and, in two of our cases, specifically as staffers for Senator Jesse Helms (a household name in Cuba, thanks to relentless government propaganda). We expected to encounter at least some hostility. To our surprise, not one single Cuban we met over a 10-day period reacted to us with anything other than friendliness (except for the stiff regime functionaries who met us in formal meetings).

Fidel Castro rules by fear, intimidation and deprivation. Cuba is a nation with some of the warmest, kindest people we have ever encountered. It is also the most brutal police state any of us had ever visited. A few dissidents and independent journalists struggle for space, but they are routinely harassed and intimidated. Even among ordinary Cubans, we heard story after story of mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers who had been jailed or had lost jobs for the slightest expression of "counterrevolutionary" sentiment. There is virtually no functioning civil society in Cuba — practically no independent institutions of any kind.



Pope John Paul II has planted the seeds of liberation in Cuba. - The Pope is greeted by one million Cubans before Mass in Jose Marti Plaza in Havana on January 25.

And yet, this culture of fear is showing signs of cracking. Even while expressing hesitation or fear of reprisals, many Cubans were indeed willing to risk talking to us. Some did so openly, almost defiantly. One man declared he was not afraid to be seen with us because, he said, "I am a free man — in my heart and in my mind!" Others we met on the street or at Masses asked us to visit them later at more private locations. One mother, a devout Catholic, told us she did not dare baptize her two children (now fully grown, and, to her dismay, atheists) for fear of religious persecution. Today, she hangs a large painting of Jesus Christ in her living room.

Seeds of Liberation

Indeed, one of the lasting effects of Pope John Paul II's visit may well be a breakdown in this culture of fear. The Pope's message — "Be Not Afraid" — struck a chord with many Cubans we met. (As one Cuban told us triumphantly, "He (the Pope) can say what he wants, and they can't touch him.")

The Church is seen by many as a safe haven, an oasis of freedom.

The Pope has planted the seeds of liberation in Cuba. The challenge to the Cuban people — and to those Americans who wish to help them — is to find ways to cultivate those seeds.

Indeed, we have heard that other Christian denominations are more active and independent than ever since the 1959 revolution, as Cubans seek spirituality. This increasingly independent community of faith could serve as the nucleus for "civil society" that does not now exist.

The extent to which a civil society — social, political, cultural, and religious institutions — is established in Cuba will determine whether the inevitable end of the Castro era is peaceful or violent. Cuba is, quite literally, in a race against time to build a civil society. The Pope's visit may be the watershed event that sparks this process.

Just as he did in Poland, and dozens of other dictatorships he has visited, Pope John Paul II has planted the seeds of liberation in Cuba. Now, the challenge to the Cuban people — and those American policy makers who wish to help them — is to find more creative and proactive ways to cultivate those seeds.

This was the purpose of our visit to Cuba: To witness the pilgrimage of John Paul II, to assess the impact of his visit on Cuban society, to assess the work of the

U.S. Interests Section and other foreign missions in supporting democratic change, and to find ways for Americans to do more to help the Cuban people capitalize on the opening created by the historic papal visit.

We spent 10 days roaming through Fidel Castro's tropical gulag. We visited three major cities — Havana, Camaguey, and Santiago de Cuba — and attended two of the four papal Masses (the "youth mass" in Camaguey and the final Mass in Havana). We drove more than 13 hours back and forth across the Cuban countryside, stopping along the way to speak with average Cubans. During the course of our travels, we were welcomed into numerous private homes by random Cubans we met, both on the street and at the various papal Masses.

In this way, we met with a wide swath of Cuban society, including ordinary Cubans, political dissidents, the families of political prisoners, independent journalists, doctors, relief workers, Vatican and Cuban church officials, independent restaurant owners, university professors, and even street hustlers. We also spoke with foreign diplomats and Western reporters based in Havana as well as several Cuban government officials.

Every ordinary Cuban we met was eager to send word back to the powers that be in America about the true conditions of their existence.

In fact, the only segments of Cuban society we were unable to meet with were members of the military and political prisoners themselves — in both cases because the Cuban government denied specific requests for such meetings.

Virtually every ordinary Cuban we met was eager to send word back to the powers that be in America about the true conditions of their existence. They urged us to "go home and tell the truth about this place." That is what we have attempted to do in this report. What follows are our impressions from our many official and unofficial meetings, and policy recommendations based on our observations of the Cuban reality. We hope these observations and recommendations will be useful as Congress works to respond to the Pope's visit and to help the Cuban people win their freedom.

Roger Noriega, Marc Thiessen & Caleb McCarry
March 2, 1998
Washington, DC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY FINDINGS

Fidel Castro's revolution is not surviving, it is dead, and Castro has little popular support. The most striking image of our visit was the spontaneous repudiation of Castro by one million Cubans who refused to applaud him at the January 25th papal Mass in Havana. At both Masses we attended (in Havana and Camaguey), the crowds took advantage of these unprecedented assemblies and their large numbers by responding to virtually any call for change or criticism of the regime with loud, sustained, and often raucous applause. There is great hunger for change in Cuba. And, Castro must be conscious of his unpopularity. His invitation to the Pope was a desperate bid for legitimacy that will backfire as more Cubans overcome the fear that keeps the regime in power.

Castro retains power solely by force, fear, and deprivation. While the hunger for change in Cuba is palpable, there is also enormous fear. Most Cubans told us they felt powerless to bring about change because the regime uses imprisonment, exile, and murder to strangle dissent. The delegation heard dozens of stories from ordinary Cubans of abuse and recriminations they or their loved ones had suffered for alleged "counterrevolutionary" activity.

There is no functioning "civil society" in Cuba. The lack of a civil society increases the likelihood that the inevitable post-Castro transition could be violent or the resulting government undemocratic. The state deals harshly with dissident groups and has permitted virtually no independent institutions — political, economic, or cultural — to exist on the island.

The Pope's visit has begun to undermine the culture of fear that grips Cuba, creating a historic opportunity for change. The Roman Catholic Church and its affiliated charities represent the only *national*, independent institution in Cuba today. Pope John Paul II's visit has created an unprecedented opportunity for the Church, its relief agency *Caritas*, and other denominations to claim greater space in Cuban society. The Catholic Church can serve as an umbrella to protect and nurture a budding civil society, but realizing this potential will require much more boldness on the part of the Cuban Church and of the friends of a free Cuba in the United States and around the world.

Castro uses his position as the nation's sole employer as a weapon to maintain social control. In Cuba's statist economy, virtually everyone works for the state, at wages set by the state (earning one-tenth the average wage in Haiti). The regime keeps most Cubans on a starvation diet, using of termination of state employment as a weapon to discourage dissent.

Castro manipulates the supply of food and medicine to siphon hard currency out of private hands and into state coffers. Cubans do not complain that there is no food and medicine on the island. Rather, they complain that such items, which are widely available, can only be purchased in dollar stores, putting them out of reach of most Cubans. We saw pharmacies stocked with medicines, markets full of meats and fresh produce, and stores overflowing with bread — all available only for U.S. dollars. (In the case of the best dollar clinics and pharmacies, which cater exclusively to foreign tourists, even Cubans with dollars are excluded.) Indeed, Castro is so brutal in his quest for hard currency that he sells *Cuban-made products to his own citizens for U.S. dollars*. Castro then uses these dollars to fund the state security apparatus, which keeps the people in line and the regime in power.

Castro's statist policies have impoverished Cuba. Most ordinary Cubans we spoke with blamed the Marxist-Leninist economic system, not the U.S. embargo, for their daily hardships. Virtually all of those who said the U.S. embargo should be lifted said they felt this way because it would take away Castro's excuse; but they added that it would not change their access to food and medicines.

Castro is seeking, and is prepared to profit from any relaxation of the U.S. embargo. Castro uses the U.S. embargo as a scapegoat for Cuba's problems, but he is desperate to have it lifted to reap the financial and propaganda benefits. (While some argue that Castro's tyranny would be washed away by free trade, those doing business in Cuba today are actually *attracted* by Castro's ability to coerce labor; therefore, they have a stake in the regime's survival.) On February 2, Castro publicly endorsed an initiative in the U.S. Congress (sponsored by Rep. Esteban Torres, D-Calif. and Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn.) to *loosen* the embargo "as a step in the right direction." A senior Cuban official privately referred to the Torres initiative as "our bill." The Cuban government is prepared for any loosening of the U.S. embargo, having placed hard-liners at choke-points in the economy (employment services, commercial services, sugar industry, telecommunications, etc.) so that it can reap the benefits of any relaxation while controlling any liberalizing effects.

Despite the lifting of the U.S. embargo on medical sales to Cuba in 1992, the Cuban government finds excuses not to purchase such supplies from U.S. companies, and it lies to the people about the reason for medical shortages. Castro lost an excuse for the lack of medicine in 1992, with the passage in the United States of the Cuban Democracy Act. Yet, in meetings with dozens of Cuban doctors, health care providers, and relief workers, virtually none of these people was aware that the Cuban government can purchase medicine and medical equipment from the United States. Most told us that the regime blamed medical shortages on the U.S. "blockade;" they expressed disbelief when we told them that this part of the embargo had been lifted six years earlier. (In fact, U.S. officials have told us that they have approved dozens of licenses — the vast majority of applications — for medical sales to Cuba since 1992.)

We challenged two senior Cuban government officials — Vice Foreign Minister Carlos Fernandez de Cossio and Vice Minister of Health Ramon E. Diaz Vallina — to provide us a list of all medicines and medical equipment that they say Cuba has been unable to buy from the United States so that we could investigate why licenses had not been granted. Despite repeated requests, Cuban officials failed to provide such a list, leaving the distinct impression that, (a) there is no list, or (b) they prefer the problem to the solution. The fact is, the regime opts not to buy sufficient supplies of medicine — from the United States or anywhere else.

Jockeying for power in post-Castro Cuba has already begun. During a surprise meeting with the delegation, National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcón discussed the post-Castro transition with startling candor. He downplayed the significance of Fidel Castro's reference to his brother, Raul, as his successor at the July 1997 Fifth Party Congress. When asked whether Vice President Raul Castro would serve out the remainder of Fidel Castro's term if he succeeded him under the constitution, Alarcón replied that the president serves at the pleasure of the National Assembly and could be removed at any time. He also referred to Raul Castro as a "brother of lesser historical significance." Several sources told us that Raul Castro would not last long as a successor, because he lacks charisma and is despised by the military as a person of notoriously poor moral character. For his part, Alarcón left us with the distinct impression that jockeying to succeed Fidel Castro is well underway and that he is interested in the job.

Castro may be "leading his prisoners along with an unloaded gun." The vaunted internal security apparatus appears to be threadbare. Although police agents were well in evidence during the papal Masses in Camaguey and Havana (they were the dour men in new sneakers and floral shirts), the infamous block committees ("Committees for the Defense of the Revolution," CDR) appeared moribund in many of the neighborhoods we walked through. One former CDR president — actually a fierce critic of the regime — explained that many neighbors merely go through the motions to satisfy party militants. However, the *perception* of an omnipresent security apparatus, and the routine, shameless use of brute force keeps the population in fear and in line.

Increased humanitarian donations would provide relief to needy Cubans and undermine the regime's excuses. Americans, particularly Cuban exiles, provide more aid to Cuba than the rest of the world combined. These donations have the indirect affect of undermining the deprivation that Castro uses to control the population. We discussed with dissidents, ordinary Cubans, and relief workers proposals to *increase* U.S. aid to needy Cubans — possibly including U.S. government assistance — through the Church or other independent groups. This idea was greeted with almost universal enthusiasm. We believe that such increased donations would respond to the Pope's visit, help the relief groups expand their influence, deliver aid to those who cannot afford to buy food and medicine, and neutralize Castro's excuses — *while maintaining the embargo on the regime.*

Most diplomatic missions in Cuba are doing little or nothing to support political dissidents or to defend human rights. We found no evidence to back up the Clinton Administration's repeated assertions that the European Union (E.U.) has increased activities in support of human rights and democratic change in Cuba. To the contrary, dissidents told us that most foreign missions do little to support them. In fact, with the change of governments of France and the United Kingdom, some diplomats told us they anticipate an *even less robust* implementation of the E.U.'s Common Position on Cuba.

Foreign investors in Cuba employ virtual "slave labor" and provide massive cash subsidies directly to the regime. Foreign investors do not hire or pay Cuban workers directly; they get their workers through "*CUBALSE*," a government agency run by the Ministry of Interior. Investors pay the regime enormous sums (as high as \$10,000 per worker), but the regime pays the Cuban workers a few hundred Cuban pesos (virtually worthless in Cuba's dollar economy) and pockets the difference.

Cuban doctors say that the regime employs a policy of coercive abortion to eliminate "social risk pregnancies." Cuba has the highest abortion rate in the Western Hemisphere — as high as 40 percent — and several doctors confirmed that Cuba has a state policy of coercing abortions from certain categories of women. One doctor told us that all pregnant women younger than 20 and older than 35, who already have three children, who are from poor or rural families, or who have genetically determined illnesses (such as sickle-cell anemia, diabetes, and even hypertension), are categorized as "social risk pregnancies" and coerced into induced abortions. One doctor told us that they "use lots of underhanded techniques," including lying to women about birth defects, to coerce abortions.

Cuba has become a major destination for sex tourism, as women (including doctors, lawyers, and teenagers) turn to prostitution to survive. The drive to survive in Cuba's failed state-run economy has led many Cuban women and girls to prostitution, which in turn has become a major tourist attraction. While prostitution is rampant in many poor countries, what is unique about Cuban prostitution is that it encompasses professional women — often doctors and lawyers — who are forced to sell their bodies to foreign tourists, because they cannot earn enough through their professions to feed their families. Cuba is also a favored destination for pedophiles seeking teenage prostitutes. The Cuban government, which cracks down on all forms of so-called "counterrevolutionary" behavior, turns a blind eye to prostitution because it attracts tourists and helps vacuum up tourist dollars.

Castro maintains a blockade on information available to the Cuban people about the outside world. By controlling access to all information on the island, the regime attempts to blame the nation's problems on "North American aggression" and sows fear of change. Broadcasts by Radio Marti are jammed but are heard by many Cubans. Still, Cubans have little access to independent news and information. Nevertheless, the regime has

failed to convince Cubans that the embargo is the cause of their suffering, engender hatred of America or Americans, or produce visible support for the regime.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The United States should maintain its policy of economic and political isolation of Castro. Fidel Castro, like most dictators in history, responds only to pressure or force. The Clinton Administration should be pressed to enforce the U.S. embargo more vigorously to deny Castro hard currency, which is the only thing that keeps him in power today. Any relaxation of the U.S. embargo — particularly the short-term results of lifting the U.S. tourist travel ban — would serve as an important new source of hard currency to the regime and provide Castro with a major political victory.

We recommend a coordinated campaign to channel increased humanitarian assistance directly to needy Cubans. This program would contribute to several important goals, including:

- Provide food and medicine to the Cubans most in need — those who cannot possibly afford to buy these necessities — thus undermining the deprivation that the regime uses as a means of control;
- Strengthen those institutions delivering the aid by giving them resources to expand their reach, thus nurturing a civil society;
- Undermine the regime's policy of denying dissidents work and access to basic necessities; and,
- Neutralize Castro's propaganda that blames the U.S. embargo for Cuba's hardships.

Increased aid should be delivered *through the Church and other genuinely independent non-governmental organizations*, subject to monitoring. This program should emphasize *donated* food and medicine and could include material support purchased with U.S. government funds. Legislation should be proposed to authorize: (1) direct humanitarian flights (not passenger flights) to transport aid from the United States to Cuba; (2) use of U.S. government funds for these humanitarian activities; and (3) the issuance of general licenses for NGO's delivering this aid directly to the people.

Such a campaign should encourage private individuals and groups to donate material. And private businesses — particularly members of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and others pushing Congress to lift the embargo with grand humanitarian rhetoric — should be challenged to *donate* food and medicine to needy Cubans who cannot possibly afford to buy it. The success and impact of this program also would depend on a stepped up effort to

communicate its objectives to the Cuban people as well as safeguards to prevent its manipulation by the Cuban regime.

We recommend an information campaign in the United States and Cuba if Fidel Castro continues to refuse additional humanitarian aid to the Cuban people. Castro has thus far rejected such humanitarian donations, in speeches on February 3 and February 24. If he continues to do so, the U.S. government should mount an information campaign to explain to the Cuban people that Castro is denying them food and medicine.

We recommend that the U.S. government do a better job explaining the facts behind the denial of food and medicine in Cuba. Specifically, the State Department and White House take a proactive step of writing each Member of Congress and communicating with foreign governments and the media to inform them of the facts behind the supply of food and medical supplies in Cuba.

The United States should press the Cuban government to provide us a list of the medicines that they seek to purchase from the United States. The United States should disprove the Cuban government's excuse that the U.S. licensing requirements prevent it from obtaining needed medical supplies. We recommend a campaign to inform the Cuban people and U.S. drug companies that U.S. law allows the sale of medicines and medical equipment to Cuba. If necessary, Congress should earmark funding for the Treasury and Commerce department offices responsible for processing such licenses so that Castro cannot point to artificial barriers.

We recommend that the U.S. government work with friends in the international community, and with private organizations, to increase communication with the Cuban people. The United States must find new ways to reach the Cuban people to overcome the climate of fear that allows Castro to cling to power. We must devise and implement new programs to provide a steady, repetitive diet of accurate, unvarnished, and balanced information. We should maintain adequate funding for Radio Marti and Television Marti, which should emphasize unbiased news reports so that Cubans can rely on them as a trustworthy alternative to Castro's propaganda machine. The Administration should treat support for democracy and human rights groups as a higher priority. U.S. grantees should seek more creative ways to channel their informational materials directly to the Cuban people.

We strongly urge additional investigation into the policy of coerced abortions that is apparently practiced by the Cuban regime. If this practice is indeed as widespread as we were told by Cuban doctors, we strongly urge pro-life organizations — particularly the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which has expressed concern about U.S. policy toward Cuba — to raise their voice to condemn this state policy.

The U.S. Interest Section should take greater care in monitoring the cases of potential political refugees and pressing for "exit permits" for Cubans holding U.S. visas. We recommend that USINT routinely cross-reference human rights reports and articles with its case files in order to record new abuses in order to ensure prompt and just consideration of asylum applications. We also recommend that USINT be allowed to initiate a pilot program to interview persons in Cuban prisons for the purposes of considering refugee applications; such a program is not uncommon in the world. We believe this would be a logical component of a robust in-country processing program to prevent a person — particularly one with *prima facie* case who is in ill-health — from languishing in Cuban jails.

We recommend that Congress hold hearings on the Clinton Administration's failure to enforce U.S. law. Congress should scrutinize: (1) the President's repeated suspensions of Title III of Helms-Burton (by which he denies Americans the right to sue foreign companies exploiting their stolen property in Cuba); and (2) the weak enforcement of Title IV, which is the responsibility of the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. We also recommend that the authors of "Helms-Burton" be prepared to support a challenge in U.S. courts of the President's repeated suspensions of the right of action under Title III, inasmuch as such decisions cannot be justified within the intent of Congress.

We recommend that Members of Congress announce that, in light of the woefully inadequate support for democratization in Cuba by the European diplomats in Havana, there is no good faith upon which to base continued E.U.-U.S. "Helms-Burton" talks. (These talks are aimed at getting Europeans to sanction "trafficking" in confiscated properties in exchange for a modification of Title IV of "Helms-Burton," which denies U.S. visas to foreigners trafficking in stolen U.S. property in Cuba.) Cynical Europeans who are willfully violating their own "Common Position" on Cuba cannot be trusted to abide by an agreement with the United States. American labor leaders and diplomats should encourage European trade unions to press their investors to either respect workers' rights in Cuba or abandon their ventures there.

Regarding Title IV enforcement, we believe the State Department should immediately notify suspected "traffickers" in stolen U.S. property in Cuba that they will forfeit their U.S. visas unless they prove that they are not using American property. State Department officials have reversed the burden of proof in roughly 40 "trafficking" cases currently under review, making it more difficult to sanction foreign companies under Title IV. The Department should abide by its own regulations and enforce this sanction promptly and fully. We recommend that the U.S. Interests Section in Havana assign an officer to be responsible for investigating violations of the U.S. embargo and to generate and document cases of "trafficking" in stolen U.S. property. The Treasury Department's enforcement office should be assured additional resources so it can take more proactive measures to target activities by front companies of "specially-designated" entities (Appendix J) as well as investment funds that generate indirect financing for ventures in Cuba.

DISCUSSION

FIDEL CASTRO RETAINS POWER BY FORCE, FEAR, & DEPRIVATION.

During our 10-day tour of Cuba, we were struck by the palpable fear that is part of the everyday lives of the Cuban people with whom we met in various settings, circumstances, and cities. *Two Eastern*

European diplomats told us in separate meetings that Cuba today is reminiscent of the Soviet Union under Josef Stalin (a significant remark, coming from those whose countries lived under Stalinism). One cited the state's use of "terror" to control the population. In just the last

Two Eastern European diplomats each told us that Cuba today is reminiscent of the Soviet Union under Josef Stalin.

three years, Castro has moved swiftly and brutally to squelch any organized dissent: He cracked down on the group "Concilio Cubano" in February 1996 to preempt a mere meeting of reform-minded Cubans, and, he arrested the leaders of the "internal dissident working group" in July 1997 for seeking international attention for their nascent movement.

Suspected dissidents are branded enemy agents and treated to "actos de repudio" (acts of repudiation), in which security agents incite mobs into brutal attacks. Although there is no large opposition organization, *per se*, it is important to note that on virtually a daily basis courageous dissidents, acting alone or in small groups, risk life and limb to speak the truth against the regime. It is extraordinary that these defiant acts are rarely if ever reported in the mainstream U.S. media. (See Appendices A, B, and C for reports of recent human rights violations.)

Fear and 'Mutual Control'

In meetings and casual conversations initiated on city streets, most Cubans were afraid to even utter Fidel Castro's name. Instead they stroke their chins silently to symbolize the *comandante's* beard. In Spanish, they refer to "él" (him) when speaking of the government — not as an institution, but as a man. A Cuban employee of the U.S. Interests Section even censors his chats with a long-time coworker "because neither one of us knows who the fink is."

Routinely, common Cubans would whisper to us in their own living rooms; one sent her mother out of the room to minimize the risks associated with having a candid conversation with us. They used gestures to silently describe the costs of the

slightest dissent: literally choking their throats or clutching or crossing their wrists to depict possible arrest.

A family in Camaguey invited us into their home and, even after we identified ourselves as staff members of the U.S. Congress and the famous "Senator Helms," engaged us in a friendly debate on U.S. policy. But, only when we rose to leave did the head of the family worry aloud if he would lose his meager wage if his neighbors raised questions about our extended conversation, or if the children studying in the living room accidentally said something to their classmates about our visit.

A stranger approached one of us discreetly to say, "I don't know who you are, sir, but you're being followed by the 'secret police.'"

One woman we met in a private restaurant told us she "hated" the United States for "doing nothing" to end Castro's regime. She boldly described the unjust arrest of her two sons for separate, peaceful acts of defiance. But, even this proud and outspoken woman choked back her angry words after strangers walked into the restaurant and sat down at a nearby table.

A bright, outgoing man in Camaguey said he was not afraid of speaking with us, saying, "I am a free man — in my heart and in my mind." But he preferred not to dine at our hotel, "because they know who you are." Indeed, a stranger approached one of us discreetly to say, "I don't know who you are, sir, but you're being followed by the 'secret police.'"

Two young men approached us in Havana's *Plaza de Armas* to ask if we needed directions to a good restaurant. When they discovered we were Americans, one asked in halting English, "Are you socialists or capitalists?" After hearing our response, they shook our hands enthusiastically. One said that he was receiving money from his mother in the United States, who insisted that he study English rather than work. He added that the simple fact that he was not working meant that the "chief of sector" in his hometown could have him jailed for "*peligrosidad*" — a catch-all charge of "dangerousness." As he crossed his wrists to demonstrate arrest, we immediately warned him to be careful because we were probably being watched. Both boys turned on their heels and scurried away quickly, glancing back with anxious smiles as they rushed into the crowd.

Another woman we met at one of the papal Masses invited us to her home rather than talk to us in the presence of Cuban strangers. Indeed, on several occasions undercover police pressed in around us to overhear conversations of Cubans who approached us at that Mass. One Cuban estimated that 3,000 secret police were dispersed in the crowd at the papal Mass in Santiago; another speculated that the number was much higher. Still another Cuban told us that plain-clothes Ministry of Interior agents were "tailing" foreign camera crews, eavesdropping and putting themselves in the line of sight of the Cubans being interviewed.

The ambassador of an Eastern European country described this widespread fear as part of a system of "mutual control." Rather than rely merely on paid police agents, the regime demands individual Cubans to "inform" on their neighbors. Another diplomat explained that through a sophisticated cross-referencing system, the regime is able to determine which co-worker, neighbor, or classmate reported an act of dissent and, more importantly, which did not.

We note that, although police agents were well in evidence during the papal Masses we attended in Camaguey and Havana, the vaunted internal security apparatus appears to be threadbare. The infamous block committees ("Committees for the Defense of the Revolution," CDR) appear moribund in some neighborhoods through which we walked. (One former CDR president — actually a fierce critic of the regime — explained that many neighbors merely go through the motions to satisfy party militants.) All of the police watch booths along the stretch of the primary national highway between Havana and Camaguey were unattended. Police cars (mostly Russian *Ladas*) are in a state of disrepair. However, the *perception* of an omnipresent security apparatus, and the routine, shameless use of brute force keeps the population in fear and in line.

*We have doubts as to what
the rank-and-file of
Cuba's stratified military
would be willing to do
to suppress widespread unrest.*

Clearly, the Castro brothers believe they can count on the internal security machine and military to put down any widespread unrest. (We have doubts as to what the rank-and-file of Cuba's stratified military would be willing to do to suppress widespread unrest.) If and when large numbers of Cubans lose their fear of the decrepit regime that enslaves them, it is predictable that some may choose to test this proposition.

Political Dissidents and 'Prisoners of Conscience'

Castro holds 3,000 to 4,000 political prisoners, according to Freedom House; Amnesty International places the number of "prisoners of conscience" at around 600. During the papal visit, Vatican officials reportedly presented a list of several hundred prisoners to the Cuban government to petition for their release. This month, Cuban authorities announced the release of dozens of prisoners on the Vatican's list of more than 270 prisoners — claiming that over 100 had already been liberated for humanitarian reasons. Experts tell us that less than one-third of the freed persons are genuine prisoners of conscience. Moreover, it is unclear whether these dissidents will be reintegrated into Cuban society, as the Pope requested. We have heard reports that dozens of the roughly 70 to 100 genuine prisoners of conscience would be forced into exile. Government officials have been clear that those who are allowed to remain in their homeland will not be allowed to resume their dissident activities. The Communist Party organ, *Granma*, stated on February 13:

The Revolution is generous, but is also firm. There will be no impunity by enemies of the fatherland or by those who wish to destroy Cuba. To defend the people, their independence, their revolution, and their security and social achievements is the primary and most sacred duty of all Cuban patriots.²

Cuban Foreign Minister Roberto Robaina made clear that the prisoner release was not intended as a move to broaden political rights in Cuba, stating publicly that "the pardon was not done with the intention of stimulating internal dissent activities."³ Regardless, the fact remains that hundreds or thousands of political prisoners *remain* in Cuban jails.

Systematic Repression

Article 62 of the Cuban constitution states, "None of the freedoms which are recognized for citizens can be exercised contrary to ... [the] decision of the Cuban people to build socialism and communism." According to the State Department's 1997 human rights report on Cuba, "The

"None of the freedoms which are recognized for citizens can be exercised contrary to ... [the] decision of the Cuban people to build socialism and communism."

Article 62, Cuban constitution

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2. Ministry of Foreign Relations Communique printed in *Granma*, February 13, 1998.
 3. "Cuba: Freeing Inmates Is No Open Door for Dissent," *Miami Herald*, February 17, 1998.

authorities routinely invoke this sweeping authority to deny due process to those detained on purported state security grounds.... The authorities routinely engage in arbitrary arrest and detention of human rights advocates, subjecting them to interrogations, threats, and degrading treatment and conditions for hours or days at a time."⁴ (See Appendix C.)

An Amnesty International Report⁵ issued during the papal visit underscores the continued systematic violation of human rights, stating, in part:

In the past few months at least 24 government critics have been imprisoned as prisoners of conscience. Most have been convicted but some are still awaiting trial. Some have been charged with offences against state security, such as "*propaganda enemiga*," "enemy propaganda," while others have been charged with offences against authority, such as "*desacato*," "disrespect," "*difamación*," "defamation," "*desobediencia*," "disobedience," or "*resistencia*," "resistance," or other kinds of common law offences. In some cases, the charges are believed to have been fabricated in order to discredit them or their organization. Trials in political cases generally fall short of international fair trial standards, particularly with regard to access to defense counsel.

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4. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1997*, Report Submitted to the Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives, and the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, by the Department of State, January 1998.
 5. See Appendix B for the entire text of Amnesty International Report, AMR 25/01/98, "New Cases of Prisoners of Conscience and Possible Prisoners of Conscience," which states, "Amnesty International is concerned at a recent increase in the number of critics of the Cuban Government who have been brought to trial and imprisoned because of their peaceful attempts to exercise their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. Over the past two or three years, hundreds of members of unofficial groups of different kinds, including human rights defenders, have been detained for short periods and threatened with being brought to trial if they do not give up their activities or go into exile.... During this period, the detainee is often subjected to psychological pressures, including threats against his own physical integrity or that of members of his family, and coerced into signing false statements or agreeing to leave the country. In cases tried in municipal courts, the hearing can take place within a day or so of arrest and, while in theory being permitted to appoint a defense lawyer, the detainee often does not have the opportunity to do so in practice. Lawyers who take on the defense of political prisoners often face reprisals themselves for having done so...."



LIBERTAD — Cubans at the Papal Mass in Havana remember 600 prisoners of conscience in Castro's prisons. Some experts report that as many as 3,000 to 4,000 political prisoners languish in jails, some without ever being charged of crimes.

'Internal Dissident Working Group'

We petitioned formally to visit dissidents Martha Beatriz Roque, Felix Bonne Carcasses, Rene Gomez Manzano, and Vladimiro Roca Antunes, who were arrested last July and have since been held in prison without charges. The Cuban government did not respond to our formal request, and a verbal request made directly to National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcón was rebuffed.

The State Department described this case in its 1997 human rights report on Cuba (Appendix C), "In May and June, the group sought international support for its political positions and nonviolent dissent from the Government's policies. The working group also made a public appeal to citizens to exercise their legal right to abstain from participating in upcoming national elections. It held two well-attended press conferences with foreign journalists. During the second press conference, the group presented 'The Homeland Belongs to All,' a paper that outlined a moderate response to the platform document of the Cuban Communist Party's fifth party congress."

The Department's report continued, "On July 16, state security agents launched coordinated raids against the working group members' homes and took the four members to police stations. State security officers searched their homes and seized books, papers, correspondence, and personal articles such as typewriters and computers.... At year's end, there were still no indications whether the Government would put the group on trial on charges of disseminating enemy propaganda."

We met with a representative of the dissident working group, who has also been detained on at least three occasions in the last eight months and pressured to testify against the leaders of the group. According to Amnesty International, Rafael Garcia Suarez, Horacio Casanova, Odilia Collazo Valdes, Ruben Martinez Armenteros, Nancy Gutierrez, and Alfredo Ruiz, members of the Support Committee of the dissident working group, have been subjected to short-term detentions, house searches, restriction on movement, and threats of imprisonment.

'Agreement for Democracy'

On the eve of the papal visit, 17 political organizations on the island joined 30 exile groups in signing an "Agreement for Democracy" that outlines the obligations of a "provisional or transition government" in Cuba. [See Appendix D for full text of the agreement, including signatories]. Among the measures prescribed are: "universal, direct, and secret voting;" "general amnesty for the liberation of all political prisoners;" "independent, impartial, and professional judiciary;" "freedom of press, of association, of assembly, of peaceful demonstration, of profession, and of religion;" protection against "arbitrary expulsion from their homes as well as against all forms of detention, search, confiscation, or arbitrary aggression;" "immediately legalize all political parties and other organizations and activities of civil society;" etc.

'Varela Project'

We met with a representative of the "Varela Project," which proposes political reforms for "the improvement of society" and "to open spaces for the free and responsible participation of citizens in the political and economic life of society." This project, named for early 19th century Cuban independence leader (and candidate for sainthood) Fr. Felix Varela, is unique in that it proposes a series of legal reforms within the framework of the current constitution. Among the reforms contemplated under the Varela Project are the right of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and freedom of association.

For example, on December 10, 1997, Cuban citizens under the Varela Project presented a petition to the National Assembly of People's Power requesting a revision of Cuba's electoral law to allow the direct participation of citizens in *nominating* candidates for public office. In other words, this project tests the vaunted notions of "direct democracy" about which Fidel Castro routinely brags.

Under current practice, candidates for public office are nominated by exclusive "candidate committees" and "municipal assemblies." Cuba's voters have the choice

of confirming each or all candidates or returning a blank ballot; "no" votes are not accommodated. The Varela Project's petition to the National Assembly asserted that, "The Electoral Law obstructs the constitutional right of the citizens to elect and be elected, with regard to election of delegates of the provincial assembly and of the National Assembly.... In these cases, it is not the people that nominate." The Varela Project requested that, "the National Assembly (conduct) an immediate review and transformation of the Electoral Law so that it does not obstruct the rights consecrated in the Constitution and guarantees the exercise of popular sovereignty."

The government ignored this petition. Sham elections were held in January in which 98.5 percent of Cuba's eligible voters were said to have participated, merely confirming the nominated candidates in a process Fidel Castro rationalized as a "united vote." Citizens were escorted to the polls. One Cuban told us that a "ballot" was brought to her home for her infirm mother, who was required to fill it out. Leaders of the Varela Project told us their efforts will continue.

THE VISIT OF POPE JOHN PAUL II WILL UNDERMINE WIDESPREAD FEAR THAT HAS KEPT MOST CUBANS FROM TAKING THE FIRST STEPS TOWARD CHANGE.

The visit of Pope John Paul II may be the most important single contribution to breaking the climate of fear in Cuba. The papal Masses we attended in Camaguey and Havana were vivid evidence that believers and non-believers alike are hungry for the Pope's message of "peace, hope, and truth." Multitudes stood for hours in the scorching sun for the services to commence. (In Havana overcast weather brought relief from the heat.) Well over 10 percent of Cuba's population attended one of the four Masses (in Santa Clara, Camaguey, Santiago, and Havana); the atmosphere of the Pope's pilgrimage grew to a crescendo at the Havana mass.

***The visit of the Pope
may be the most important
single contribution to
breaking the climate of fear
in Cuba.***

We heard from some experts that the Pope's visit has launched a psychological revolution, although no one predicted radical short-term change. One diplomat told us that this is the first exposure to different ideas that Cubans have enjoyed since the

1960's, although he opined that the Pope had watered down his message too much out of concern for how the regime would react. Despite the efforts of the regime to manipulate the Pope's message, that diplomat predicted that the Cuban people will gradually become more conscious of their strength and the Church will "broaden its space and freedom of action."

Some observers have noted that Cuba's clergy have been too timid in the past in confronting the regime. More boldness on their part could prove crucial. Others noted an ongoing change in the attitudes and activities of the Catholic Church in recent decades that have drawn it closer to the people than it was in the past, when it was considered a "foreign" church by many Cubans. One Church elder told us that he expected reprisals from the state for some of the liberties taken during the papal visit, saying, "there have always been reprisals."



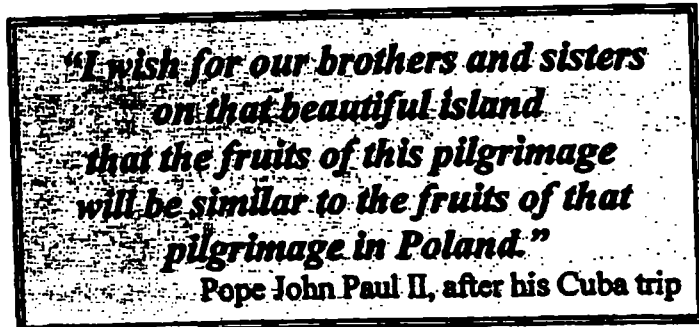
'Be Not Afraid' - A Cuban family at the Mass in Havana pore over a book of the Pope's writings that we distributed to eager pilgrims during our visit.

A senior Cuban government official with whom we spoke could only bring himself to describe the papal visit as "peaceful, normal, organized, and orderly." Indeed, in the weeks since the Pope's visit, the regime has taken no irreversible steps toward reform or liberalization, neither toward the Church nor society in general. We were told that just one day after the Pope had left Cuba, university students were being admonished that "it is forbidden to repeat the words of the Pope."

We cannot overstate how important it is that the international community hold the Cuban regime accountable for allowing or denying the Catholic Church more space. (We cite the Catholic Church, without prejudice to other faiths, because it is the largest, most independent, *national* institution in Cuba today.) Moreover, we believe that friendly governments should seek opportunities to actively help the Cuban Catholic Church and other denominations to expand their reach and to become stronger and more independent.

Revisionism

Castro has attempted to put a positive spin on the Pope's visit, stating on Cuban television before the Holy Father's arrival that the Pope was finished with his critique of communism and is now taking on capitalism. Many U.S. news organizations spent most of their time focusing on the U.S. embargo. Indeed, when we met a well-known reporter from a major TV network at the Mass in Camaguey, we asked if his network was covering the event live. "No," he replied, "we're just here to get the soundbyte of the Pope denouncing the embargo."⁶



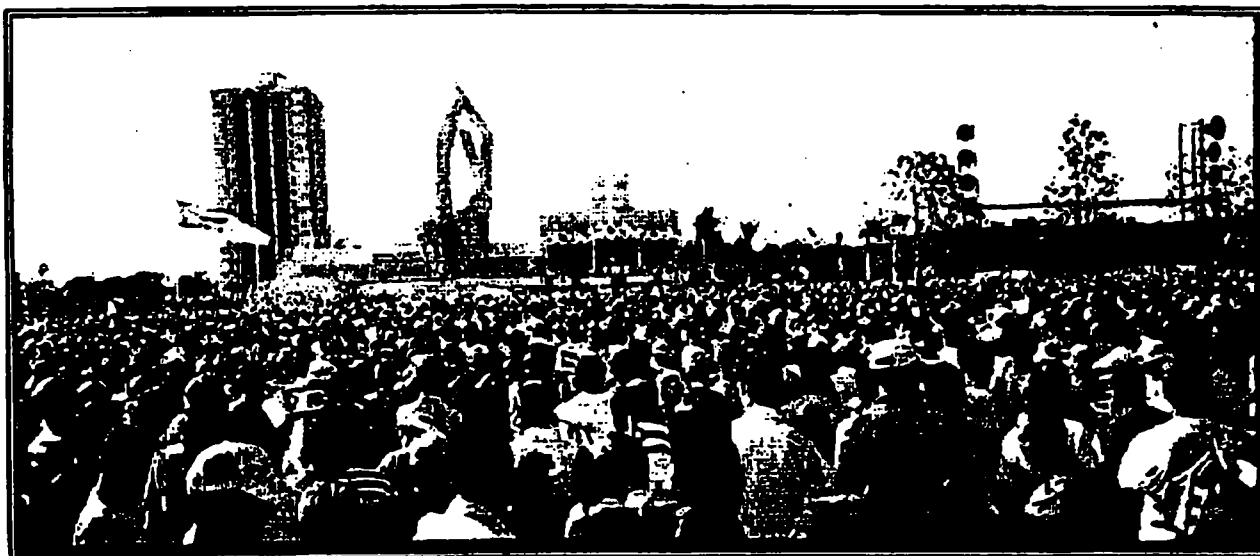
For his part, the Pope was not the least bit ambiguous about the goals of his Cuba trip. Upon his return to Rome, he told his general audience in the Vatican on January 28, "I wish for our brothers and sisters on that beautiful island that the fruits of this pilgrimage will be similar to the fruits of that pilgrimage in Poland," referring to his June 1979 visit to his Polish homeland that many credit as sealing the fate of the communist dictatorship. Despite "Marxist, materialist, and atheist" ideology, Cuban culture retained its "Christian inspiration," the Pope said.⁷

We are shocked by the revisionism of the papal message by some in the media that began before the Pope departed Cuba, and which has continued in earnest by Castro himself since the visit. One theme played in the international media is that Cubans did not understand the Pope's sophisticated or elliptical messages.

Perhaps it is the media that did not comprehend the pontiff's message. But we stood among hundreds of thousands of Cuban pilgrims, the vast majority of whom strained to hear each of the Pope's words, occasionally admonishing their neighbors to mute their cheers lest they miss his next declaration. The crowds applauded feverishly with each mention of "freedom," "respect for human rights," and "truth."

6. *Washington Times* reporter Tom Carter observed in a February 23 article, "For years, getting permission to report in Cuba has been coveted like a brass ring, visas awarded only to reporters deemed reliable by the Cuban government. And, some reporters, hoping to make return trips, purposely tailor their coverage so as not to offend anyone in government."

7. "Pope Likens Cuba Trip to Poland Stay," Victor L. Simpson, Associated Press, January 28, 1998.



Papal Mass -- Tens of thousands of Cubans attended the papal 'youth' mass in the central Cuban town of Camaguey on January 23.

According to an analysis by the Center for a Free Cuba, Pope John Paul II's statements referred to "Jesus Christ" or "God" 129 times, "truth" 74 times, "freedom" 53 times, "Fidel Castro" or "president" 4 times, and "embargoes" once.⁸

Archbishop Pedro Meurice of Santiago de Cuba made particularly blunt remarks during the papal Mass on January 24:

A growing number of Cubans have confused our nation with a single party, our country with the history lived in recent decades and our culture with an ideology.... The Church...achieved its greatest splendor and Cuban voice in the 1950s. Later, as the fruit of state-sponsored ideological confrontation with Marxism-Leninism, it once again was impoverished of resources and clergy but not of the Holy Spirit....

Our nation lives here and it lives in the diaspora. Cubans suffer, live, and hope here, and also suffer, live, and hope abroad. We are one people, plying all the seas, we will continue to seek a unity which will never be the fruit of uniformity but of a common soul that shares our diversity....

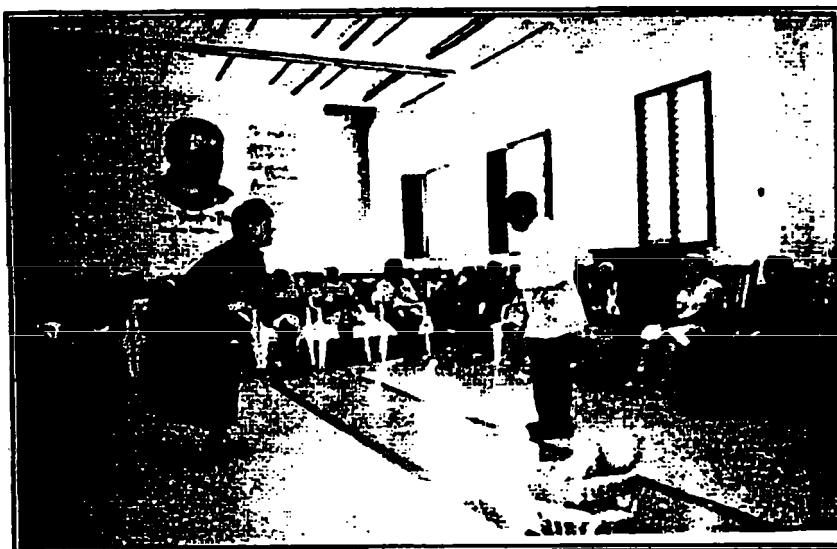
The poorest among us are those who do not possess the prized gift of freedom....

8. "What Did the Pope Say in Cuba?" statement of Center for a Free Cuba, Washington, D.C., January 28, 1998.

Caritas

Since 1991, the Catholic relief organization "Caritas" has been operating in Cuba; the Caritas agencies are decentralized, independently affiliated with each of Cuba's Catholic diocese. (Caritas officers have won praise for their role in helping to organize the mammoth logistical arrangements of the papal visit.) Caritas carries out humanitarian relief, institutional development, and public outreach projects. The delegation met with Caritas leaders and volunteers in Havana and Santiago and visited a senior citizen day care center and free pharmacy in Havana.

Caritas has successfully made space for its work in Cuban society, filling space left vacant by the government by providing a variety of social services. Among the services Caritas provides through a network of 4,000 volunteers nationwide are aid to diabetic children, the elderly, pregnant women, and lepers. Caritas also operates "soup kitchens" and pharmacies to dispense donated medicines to persons who lack the money to fill prescriptions. And Caritas played an unprecedented role in facilitating the delivery of humanitarian supplies donated in large measure by Miami's exile community in the wake of the Hurricane Lili disaster.



CARITAS - At a private Caritas senior citizens center we visited in Havana, a volunteer doctor coaxes an elderly man to dance in a group activity designed to encourage exercise and alertness. This center prepares hot meals for shut-ins and distributes free medicines.

Caritas has also leaped at any opportunity to nurture the tiny private sector in Cuba. Operating completely independent of the Cuban government, Caritas carries out self-help income-generating projects, and agricultural projects to help the handful of Cuban farmers who own title to their land⁹.

9. According to Caritas officials we spoke with, about five percent of Cuban farmers own title to their land. They are required to give 60 percent of their produce to the government, but are free

Caritas also receives donations of medicine and distributes them to clinics, pharmacies and hospitals. (The organization has been granted access to these facilities to verify and control these donated goods.) However, Caritas leaders in Havana note that it is impossible to meet all of the needs of the hospitals. Caritas also has expressed willingness to monitor U.S. medical sales to Cuba if the government chooses to make such purchases.

The U.S.-based Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is one of the organizations that supports Caritas, donating over \$10 million worth of medicine, food, clothing, and other aid since 1993. According to CRS, Caritas is the direct consignee of all donations and uses its national infrastructure of volunteers to directly oversee the delivery of donated goods. Caritas officials who met with the delegation praised CRS for their able assistance, noting that their effectiveness is rooted in the fact that they are absolutely apolitical.

**CASTRO'S STATIST POLICIES HAVE WRECKED CUBA, & HE
MANIPULATES THE SUPPLY OF FOOD & MEDICINE TO CONTROL THE
PEOPLE & VACUUM U.S. DOLLARS INTO HIS COFFERS.**

In the 30 years Fidel Castro was receiving a \$5-6 billion annual Soviet subsidy, shortages of basic goods were common and Havana was crumbling around his ears.¹⁰ It should come as no surprise that he is failing miserably in his attempts to retool the economy to compensate for the lost Soviet aid. His reform half-measures (i.e., foreign investment liberalization, farmers markets, etc.) have produced little more than fodder for U.S. academics eager to tout his resilience. At the current meager rate of two percent annual growth, Cuba's economy will recover its 1989 levels around the year 2009. In fact, Castro keeps Cubans on a "starvation diet" so most of them must spend their day simply trying to survive rather than challenging the regime.

***"The state organizes, directs,
and controls the economic life
of the nation...."***

Article 16, Cuban constitution

to sell the remaining 40 percent. Caritas has been active in nurturing these entrepreneurs.

10. Compared to that massive Soviet subsidy of Cuba, *the combined* U.S. economic assistance to all of *two dozen* countries in the Western Hemisphere exceeded \$2 billion in only seven of the last 38 years.

Marxism-Leninism Has Impoverished Cuba

The Cuban constitution makes clear where the responsibility lies for the economic conditions of the island and the welfare of everyone on it. Article 16 states plainly, "The *state* organizes, directs, and controls the economic life of the nation according to a plan that guarantees the programmed development of the country...."

According to a State Department report issued in January (Appendix E), "Cuba was a relatively advanced country in 1958, certainly by Latin American standards and, in some areas, by world standards. The data appear to show that Cuba has at best maintained what were high levels of development in health and education, but at an extraordinary cost to the overall welfare of the Cuban people. These include access to 'basics' such as adequate levels of food and electricity, but also access to consumer goods, the availability of which have increased significantly in other Latin American countries in recent decades."

The report continues, "It is true that Cuba's infant mortality rate is the best in Latin America today, but it was the best in Latin America — and the 13th lowest in the world — in pre-Castro Cuba. Cuba also has improved the literacy of its people, but Cuba had an excellent educational system and impressive literacy rates in the 1950's."

"On the other hand," the report states, "many economic and social indicators have declined since

the 1959 revolution. Pre-Castro Cuba ranked third in Latin America in *per capita* food consumption; today, it ranks last. *Per capita* consumption of cereals, tubers, and meat are today all below 1950's levels. The number of automobiles in Cuba has fallen since the 1950's — the only country in Latin America for which this is the case. The number of telephone lines in Cuba also has been virtually frozen at 1950's levels.



Farmers Market — One of Castro's famous reforms — the farmers market — allows Cubans to pay for home-grown products in U.S. dollars. Cubans who can afford to depend on these markets, to supplement the meager rationing system.

Cuba once ranked first in Latin America and fifth in the world in television sets *per capita*. Today, it barely ranks fourth in Latin America and is well back in the ranks globally."

One respected Cuban told us that the years of Soviet support "had failed to create a basis for development." He observed that the loss of that aid "left public health services, schools, and factories operating at a minimal level." He explained further that Castro's repression and the failed economy have driven many of the most talented and productive Cubans to leave the country.

It is also clear to us that the welfare of the Cuban people takes a back seat to the security apparatus. For example, the Cuban military consumes roughly four percent of the country's gross domestic product, twice that of South American countries that are facing armed insurgencies, border conflicts, or both. Cuba's roughly 235,000 men under arms (active duty and reserves) is 2.1 percent of the population — *more than three times* that of Colombia, a country which is fighting a well-funded narcoterrorist insurgency.

Comparison of Cuban Military Expenditures			
Country	Military Expenditures as a Percentage of GDP*	Size of Armed Forces** (Includes Active and Reserves)	Size of Armed Forces as a Percentage of Total Population
Cuba	4.0%	235,000	2.1%
Chile	3.5%	139,700	1.0%
Colombia	2.8%	207,000	0.6%
Ecuador	2.1%	157,100	1.3%
Guatemala	0.8%	79,400	0.7%
Mexico	1.5%	475,000	0.5%
Peru	1.9%	313,000	1.3%
* SOURCE: <i>World Factbook 1997, Central Intelligence Agency</i>			
** SOURCE: <i>The Military Balance 1996/97, International Institute for Strategic Studies</i>			

Slave Labor

Virtually all Cubans who have jobs (either with domestic or foreign enterprises) work for the state and their wages are set by the state. The average monthly salary of

200 pesos translates to about \$2.20 per week, or just over a nickel an hour. By comparison, Bangladeshis make an average of 31 cents an hour; Haitians, 49 cents; Salvadorans, \$1.38; and Canadians \$9.88. The Cuban Institute of Independent Labor Studies has calculated that workers on the average 200 peso salary must labor 116 hours to purchase one kilogram of powdered milk, 70 hours for one kilogram of chicken, 13 hours for one light bulb, and 500 to 1,700 hours for a pair of shoes.¹¹

In light of the pathetic picture painted by these data, it is shocking that *Forbes* magazine's 1997 list of the "World's Richest People" reports that Fidel Castro is as wealthy as U.S. magnate (and, occasional Castro host) David Rockefeller: \$1.4 billion. *Forbes* attributes Castro's wealth to "nickel, sugar, investments."

'Savage Capitalism'

In Cuba, foreign investors do not hire or pay Cuban workers directly; they must go through a government employment agency, CUBALSE. Investors pay the regime enormous sums (often as high as \$10,000 per worker per year). The regime in turn pays the Cuban workers a few hundred Cuban pesos (virtually worthless in Cuba's dollar economy), and pockets the difference. Under this

***"The Cuban government
has used the exploitation of working people
and the absence of freedom of association
as a lure to attract investors..."***

AFL-CIO Report, February 1995

system, foreign investors in Cuba are taking advantage of what amounts to slave labor, while providing large cash subsidies directly to the Cuban government.

The delegation recounted to Vice Foreign Minister Carlos Fernandez de Cossio how shocked average Cuban families were when we told them how much foreign investors pay the government per worker (because they knew how little the workers are paid). De Cossio not only confirmed this practice, he defended it, claiming that the government uses the money "to import powdered milk" for children. (We did not ask him what had happened to all the cows in Cuba's agricultural economy.¹²)

11. All of these data are extracted from the publication, "Update on Foreign Investment in Cuba: 1996-97," by Maria C. Werlau, p. 24.

12. "The cattle industry finds itself in a 'terminal' crisis, lacking feed, urea, fertilizers, protein supplements, agricultural machinery, etc.... Cattle biomass continues to fall, and deaths from lack of food and water will continue to rise. The country's cattle herd, which barely reaches 4 million

The American labor movement has been a leader in shedding light on what at least one U.S. labor leader calls "slavery" in Cuba. A report of the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) observed, "The growing number of partnerships between foreign investors and Cuban government agencies has not improved the lot of workers or provided them with greater autonomy. Instead the Cuban government has used the exploitation of working people and the absence of freedom of association as a lure to attract investors, often to the detriment of workers in neighboring countries."

Continuing to quote from the AIFLD report, "According to workers in the tourist industry, the salaries for their services are paid by the foreign firm to the contracting agency in dollars. The agency, in turn, pays the workers in Cuban pesos at the artificially low official exchange rate. The result, workers say, is a massive transfer of workers' wages to the Cuban government, while workers and their families face growing hunger and poverty."¹³

Former Polish President Lech Walesa, who led a workers' uprising to overthrow a Communist regime, issued a statement after the Pope's visit calling on "the labor movement around the world to mobilize its resources, just as it was done in support of Polish *Solidarnosc* and the Polish workers, to express their support for Cuban workers and to monitor labor rights" on the island.¹⁴

Dollar Stores

We saw food and medicine readily available in stores in the three cities we visited; however, in most cases, these stores accepted only U.S. dollars. In many instances, we witnessed Cuban-made products being sold for dollars. Selling food in dollar stores forces Cubans to surrender hard currency to the regime. Even one of the famous "farmers markets" that we visited in Havana charges U.S. dollars for chicken, pork, vegetables, and other home-grown products. We also found a bakery in Havana selling locally baked bread for U.S. dollars.

head (compared with 7.7 million head in 1966) is heading toward extinction in a few years, since the lack of feed does not permit its reproduction." — *Cuba Monthly Economic Report*, DevTech Systems, Inc., December 1997.

13. "Foreign Investment in Cuba: Oiling the Machine of Repression," AIFLD Report, February 1995.

14. "Statement of Solidarity and Cooperation," February 20, 1998, at Center for a Free Cuba, Washington, D.C.



Dollars Only — Cubans depend on farmers markets for staples like vegetables, pork, and chicken, but they are forced to pay dollars in this Havana market we visited.

Ordinary Cubans explained to us that their lives are spent struggling to earn pesos in order to buy dollars so that they can purchase basic staples. One Cuban told us: "We survive by selling anything we can get our hands on." In fact, Cuba is a country rife with corruption. While the regime spares no effort to crush dissent, people within the regime steal anything they can from the state to sell on the black market. A number of Cubans lamented to us that communism has turned everyone into thieves. For example, people steal beer and sell it for lower than retail prices. Stolen and knock-off cigars are available on the black market at a fraction of the retail price. The regime apparently tolerates this because, in the end, it provides relief to low-level loyalists and soaks up the hard currency generated in the underground economy through its dollars stores.

By charging dollars for the most common necessities and even domestically produced goods, the regime is able to collect hard currency into its coffers. One owner of a *paladar* (a small privately operated restaurant) explained that she spent her life "gathering dollars from foreigners to give them to Fidel."

American Humanitarian Aid

No country does more to assist the people of Cuba than the United States. Americans have provided \$2.4 billion in licensed humanitarian donations since 1992, not including an estimated \$200-300 million in family cash remittances per year.

American Humanitarian Donations to Cuba Since Passage of the Cuban Democracy Act, October 23, 1992 through July 31, 1997 (in thousand U.S. dollars)								
Yr	Total	Parcels	Meds.	Clothes	Food	Educ.	Shelter	Misc.
92	28,017	28,000	17	0	0	0	0	0
93	559,787	527,024	12,219	8,750	3,161	7,016	1,410	207
94	517,497	475,683	39,197	352	2,131	133	0	0
95	526,264	401,989	113,773	2,337	3,759	3,529	425	451
96	538,611	511,710	20,954	2,318	3,436	64	128	0
97	207,068	161,925	42,560	501	810	322	850	100
Tot	2,377,244	2,106,331	228,719	14,260	13,298	11,065	2,813	758
(SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Export Administration, August 4, 1997)								

Initiative to Increase Humanitarian Donations to Undermine Castro's Control

In an effort to counter the regime's policy of denying food and medicine as a means of control as well as to strengthen the Catholic Church, Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) endorsed an initiative to increase the delivery of humanitarian aid — including U.S. government aid — directly to needy people in Cuba through nongovernmental organizations such as Caritas. This initiative was announced by the Cuban American National Foundation on January 29, 1998.

Just four days later, on February 2, Fidel Castro rejected this proposal to increase humanitarian aid while leaving the U.S. embargo in place. "How can Cuba accept humanitarian aid from those who daily stick deeper and deeper the killer knife to impede our economic and social development," Castro remarked in a marathon four-hour television address on February 2. We note that Castro has done something that not even the North Korean dictatorship has been willing to do: Refuse humanitarian donations to his needy countrymen.

However, Castro did endorse legislation introduced in the U.S. Congress by Representatives Esteban Torres (D-Calif.) and Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.) to weaken the U.S. commercial embargo. Castro called this bill "a step in the right direction" and described it as "a noble and well-intentioned effort that deserves recognition and respect." During our visit, a senior Cuban official referred to the Torres legislation as "our bill." (A similar bill has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn.)

*Referring
to it*

Rather than weaken the embargo, which would do nothing to ensure more food for Cubans, we believe it is preferable to increase material aid directly to those who need it but cannot buy it.

Such an initiative is an appropriate response to the visit of Pope John Paul II, which will help nurture a civil society by strengthening independent, nongovernmental institutions in Cuba.

Increased U.S. donations delivered directly to needy Cubans through the Church — possibly including U.S. food aid — would place the blame for Cuba's problems squarely on Castro's shoulders while keeping the embargo on the regime firmly in place.

Rather than weaken the embargo, which would do nothing to ensure more food for Cubans, we believe it is preferable to increase material aid directly to those who need it but cannot buy it.

Some Cubans suggested to us that, while lifting the embargo would benefit Castro, it was worth it because lifting the embargo would "take away his excuses." This proposal takes away his excuses, while maintaining the embargo. If Castro refuses to allow delivery of donated food and medicine from America, it will be clear to all Cubans who is responsible for their suffering. And if Castro does allow these donations reach the Cuban people, then we will be strengthening the Church and undermining Castro's policy of control-through-deprivation.

THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT FAILS TO PURCHASE ADEQUATE MEDICAL SUPPLIES, AND CASTRO USES 'SHORTAGES' AS A CYNICAL PROPAGANDA TOOL.

Cuba has a centralized, socialist medical establishment. With the exception of a handful of octogenarian physicians who have kept pre-revolutionary private practices, all doctors, nurses, and administrators work for the state. They are poorly

paid at the peso equivalent of \$20 per month. They also endure shortages of medicines and equipment that breaks down for lack of spare parts. We came away with the impression that many health care professionals in Cuba are dedicated to their work. However, the state's commitment to their work is very much in doubt.

Policy of Neglect

Cuban officials are adamant in blaming the deteriorated state of health care in Cuba on the U.S. embargo, which they refer to as a "blockade." As outlined below, the information gathered during our visit strongly suggests that the Castro regime's stated commitment to Cuban health care is hollow. Like everything else in Cuba today, medical care is being sacrificed by Fidel Castro in order to make a buck and to win a Pyrrhic victory in his propaganda war against the American embargo.

We discovered that the Castro regime has opted not to purchase some medical products and has even impeded the delivery of some medical donations. Cubans privately acknowledge that the current widespread shortages of medicines can be traced back to the loss of the huge Soviet subsidy in the late 1980's. Today, hospitals need almost every type of medicine and medical supplies (not just U.S. products). We conclude that the chronic medicine shortages are due to the fact that the state either lacks sufficient resources to buy these items, does not treat the purchase of such goods as a priority, or both. Worse yet, during our visit we discovered three separate examples in which U.S. Catholic bishops and a U.S. congressman organized the donation of millions of dollars worth of American medicines, only to have Castro turn them down.

Comparison of Medical Imports, 1993-1995 (in million U.S. dollars)					
Country	1993	1994	1995	3-yr Total	3-yr Total, <i>per capita</i>
Cuba	29.8	29.1	38.9	97.8	\$8.89
Bolivia	20.4	23.5	28.5	72.4	\$9.41
Costa Rica	(est.)90.0	98.4	103.5	291.9	\$83.40
Guatemala	79.9	90.7	106.0	276.6	\$23.93
(SOURCE: United Nations Trade Data System. Population data from CIA World Factbook 1997.)					

In 1995, Cuba imported \$2.8 billion in goods, spending only \$40 million (less than 1.5 percent of all imports) on medicine and medical equipment for its 11 million

citizens. That same year, the Dominican Republic spent \$208 million on medical imports for its 7.5 million citizens.¹⁵ The preceding table compares Cuba's medical imports to those of several other Latin American countries. These data show that Cuba imports about one-tenth of the value of medicines *per capita* as Costa Rica (which, besides Cuba, runs the most socialized health care system in Latin America). Indeed, in the 1994-95 period, Cuba imported a mere \$70 million worth of medicine, while it actually exported \$235 million worth of medicines from its biotechnology industry in that same period.¹⁶ These figures confirm our conclusion that Castro's desperate need for hard currency is the sole reason that average Cubans lack adequate medical supplies. (See Appendix F.)

The Regime Exploits Myth of an American Embargo on Medicines

The Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 allows the sale of U.S. medicines and medical equipment to Cuba. Pharmaceutical companies must merely obtain licenses through the Treasury Department to ensure that the delivery of such goods will be monitored so that they will not be reexported by Cuba or used for psychological torture. (For example, the Catholic Church group Caritas can conduct such end-use monitoring.) The Treasury Department has approved 40 of 42 license applications since 1992. One unusually knowledgeable Cuban with whom we spoke in Havana cited several specific cases in which licenses have been granted and/or end-use monitoring has been arranged, but the Cuban government chose not to purchase these U.S. goods.

All of the two dozen Cuban doctors with whom we met during our visit seemed genuinely surprised to learn from us that Cuba has been able to purchase U.S. medicine since 1992. There is reason to doubt the Castro regime's interest in buying American-made medical supplies. When we asked several Cuban physicians if they would be ever specifically request needed *American* medicines or equipment through the Ministry of Public Health, they said "no." One doctor was very blunt: "No one

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15. "The U.S. Embargo and Healthcare in Cuba: Myth Versus Reality," U.S. Department of State fact sheet, August 5, 1997. An excerpt of this fact sheet appears in Appendix F.
 16. According to the U.S. Department of State fact sheet, "The U.S. Embargo and Healthcare in Cuba: Myth Versus Reality," Cuba exported \$110 million worth of medical supplies in 1994 and \$125 million in 1995. An excerpt of this fact sheet appears in Appendix F.

would dare ask that. You'd be connecting yourself with the United States. They'd tell you are making counter-revolution."

Cuban officials complained that the U.S. licensing requirement is bureaucratic and causes unreasonable delays in sales to the island. Officials of the U.S. Interests Section told us that licenses are usually issued within a week; these officials have repeatedly invited their Cuban counterparts to notify them if any urgent shipment must be expedited. (With respect to unreasonable delays, it is interesting to note that one well-informed person told us that Cuban customs authorities have taken upwards of one month to clear some *donated* medicines.)

Upon our return, about 20 minutes of research led us to the simple Commerce Department guidelines and one-page application for selling medical supplies to Cuba (Appendix G). The Treasury Department accepts a simple letter requesting a license.

Calling Their Bluff

On repeated occasions during our visit, we challenged officials of the Foreign Ministry and the Vice Minister of Public Health to give us a list of medicines that they have been unable to purchase from the United States, because of delays or refusals by the U.S. government to grant licenses. We offered to inquire why licenses were delayed or denied. However, the Cubans authorities failed to provide such a list before our departure and have not produced such a list since our return. In the words of one U.S. official in Havana, "The Cuban government prefers the problem to the solution."

Vice Minister of Public Health Ramon E. Diaz Vallina also showed us several letters, most of which were four or five years old, from European pharmaceutical companies declining further sales to Cuba because their companies were bought by Americans. We challenged him to show us letters from the Cuban government to these companies correcting this misperception, or any communications to the U.S. Interests Section seeking help to explain the law. Vice Minister Diaz did not respond.

Foreign Ministry officials, in response to our insistence that the sale of medicines and medical equipment is allowed under current U.S. law and our offers to help facilitate licenses, immediately changed the subject to inquire if the United States would be willing to extend credits for medical purchases. It is clear that the shortages of medicines and medical supplies available to Cubans are caused almost exclusively by Castro's refusal to assign adequate hard currency for this purpose.

Foreigner-Only Pharmacies

As a matter of state policy, simple prescription medicines are sometimes available only to foreigners or to those *who can pay dollars* for these necessities — confirming our theory that shortages are due to the fact that the regime selfishly guards hard currency for its own priorities. A tour of a peso drug store in Havana turned up a laboratory marketing local herbal remedies, while over-the-counter medicines are sold primarily in dollar stores.

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In short, the regime treats foreigners and party officials with commercial medicines while forcing homeopathic pseudo-medicines on ordinary Cubans. The country's top two clinics, the "Cira Garcia" and "Villa Tarara," are off-limits to ordinary Cubans — even if they can pay in dollars. This fact irritates ordinary Cubans.

We dropped by the aging "Johnson's" pharmacy in Old Havana, which specializes in "natural medicines" for use by Cubans. The clerk told us that some items infrequently donated by the European Union, notably condoms, are also distributed from this store, but more sophisticated medicines are not available. At another peso pharmacy, a clerk explained that foreigners have access to such medicines at a separate pharmacy. When we asked what type of medicines that facility stocked, she said she did not know because, as a Cuban, she is not even allowed to enter that pharmacy. When one of us asked why a pharmacist could not enter a pharmacy, she replied with resignation, "We don't make those decisions, sir."

Heath-Care for Dollars and 'Medical Apartheid'

The best medical care in Cuba today is available only to ranking party officials and to foreigners who pay in dollars. Dr. Hilda Molina's story illustrates how the Castro regime has sacrificed the country's health care system in its lust for hard currency.

Dr. Molina was the founding director of the International Center for Neurological Restoration, a Havana facility noted for its treatment of Parkinson's disease. A one-time member of the National Assembly of People's Power, Dr. Molina

was also a dedicated medical professional who worked to create a world-class facility for treating neurological disorders. She was a trusted member of the Communist Party who was allowed to travel to the United States to lecture on her Center's findings. Originally, the Neurological Center operated 136 beds for Cuban patients.

In 1992, Dr. Molina told us, she reluctantly followed the instructions of the Ministry of Public Health to set aside 20 beds *for foreign patients paying in dollars*. This step produced \$7 million annually, which provided enough money to cover the Center's operating expenses and return a profit to the regime. (Incidentally, Dr. Molina told us, this flagship neurological center never suffered from a lack of medicines or equipment.)

Dr. Hilda Molina was ordered to evict her Cuban patients from their beds and dedicate all of the Center's beds exclusively to foreigners paying in dollars.

On February 26, 1994, Dr. Molina was ordered to evict her Cuban patients from their beds and dedicate all of the Center's beds *exclusively* to foreigners paying in dollars. When she refused, she was told that she was a "counterrevolutionary." Dr. Molina handed the Ministry officials the keys to the Center, and she resigned her position, Party membership, and seat in the National Assembly in protest. In her words: "The Center was like a child that I had to raise by myself and when she reached the age of 15, they came to rape her."

Apparently, many members of the original staff subsequently left the Center — some as rafters trying to reach the United States. Although the facility has deteriorated to "mediocrity," and beds go empty, the regime still refuses to treat Cubans at the Center. Dr. Molina has become a dissident and suffers raids and harassment from the state security apparatus — her phone service has been interrupted and her computer confiscated. Molina has founded an independent medical school and attempted to raise the consciousness of her profession; she told us that Cuban doctors "had never even heard of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;" when she gave them copies they concluded it was a "subversive document." She is not allowed to leave the country to visit her family and is told that her "brain belongs to the government."

Dr. Molina, who the regime once hailed as a product of the Revolution, now scorns a medical system in which the "dollar is an idol."

Effects of the End of the Soviet Subsidy

In 1991, the Soviet Union ended its \$5-7 billion annual subsidy to Cuba. The Soviet Union's largess toward Cuba for serving as a political and strategic base 90 miles from the continental United States included transfers of hard currency. During our visit, a number of physicians told us that the Cuban state used some of this hard currency to buy medicines from Germany, Great Britain, Italy, and Japan. *We were told that prior to the end of this massive subsidy, there were no widespread shortages of medicines in Cuba.* In fact, Cubans became accustomed to easy access to medicines and, as occurs in many Latin American countries, developed the bad habit of "self-prescribing" medication.

Culture of Mediocrity

Cubans, like people in other Communist societies, are active black marketeers. There is a culture of stealing from the state which affects the health sector as well. One professional told us that linens delivered to a hospital will invariably show up on the black market within a week. There is also an active black market in medicines, presumably originating from the well-stocked dollar clinics for foreigners. There is also culture of mediocrity which pervades Cuban society, including its medical profession. One professional pointed out that university professors, for example, allow poor students to pass lest they themselves fail to respond to the state-set quotas.

THE REGIME USES COERCION TO ENCOURAGE ABORTIONS AMONG POOR, RURAL CUBANS AND OTHERS WHO FALL INTO A CATEGORY OF 'SOCIAL RISK.'

Cuba has the highest abortion rate in the Western Hemisphere — 40 percent. *In short, for every 10 live births, Cuban doctors induce 7 abortions.¹⁷*

A doctor told us of a widespread practice of coercing abortions in women who are younger than 20 and older than 35, have more than three children, are single, are from poor or rural families, or suffer from genetically determined illnesses (such as diabetes, hypertension, sickle-cell anemia, etc). This physician told us that such

17. The State Department cited this number in its fact sheet, "Excerpt of Zenith and Eclipse: A Comparative Look at Socio-Economic Conditions in Pre-Castro and Present Day Cuba," February 9, 1998.

persons fall into a category of what are called "social risk pregnancies." A "committee of specialists" is expected to pressure them to terminate their pregnancies. This doctor explained that doctors would "use lots of underhanded techniques" — such as tricking the mother into thinking that the fetus was deformed or diseased — in order to coerce a pregnant mother into getting an abortion.

We were also told that doctors are expected to encourage abortions in these social risk groups, and these specialists meet on a weekly basis to compare statistics on how many "social risk pregnancies" had been coerced into abortions. "If the mothers do not have an abortion, the doctors are not meeting the objective of the program," the doctor said; and if any physician "refused to be part of the program, they would be suspended or lose their pay." The doctor was not aware of any physician who is resisting this program.

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In a characteristically cynical charade that demonstrates that the Pope's anti-abortion message cut to the bone, Fidel Castro spoke out *against* abortion in his February 25th "inaugural address" to the National Assembly, saying, "We don't like abortion. Abortion should not be used as an anti-birth method." U.S. media carried Castro's sanctimonious declarations without mentioning his pro-abortion policies.

As early as the mid-1980's, Sergio Diaz-Briquets¹⁸ shed light on this use of "therapeutic" abortions in the Cuban state's bid to reduce infant mortality. Diaz-Briquet posed a series of troubling, prescient questions in a 1986 journal article on the Cuban health care system. "If in fact, 'therapeutic' abortions can contribute to infant mortality declines," he asked, "how have countries like Costa Rica and Panama, where even abortions for medical reasons are illegal (although many are performed anyway) been able to reduce infant mortality nearly as much as Cuba?"

Diaz-Briquet continued, "Another interesting question follows from the above. In a county where the prevalence of induced abortion is so high and pressures to reduce infant mortality so prevalent, *is induced abortion used as a medically justifiable intervention in other situations?* Cuban physicians frequently note maternal and child

18. Sergio Diaz-Briquets authored, *The Health Revolution in Cuba*. His quotes here are drawn from his article, "How to Figure Out Cuba: Development, Ideology, and Mortality," from *Caribbean Review*, Spring 1986.

health is negatively affected by births *to very young or very old women, or to women who have had many children*. It follows abortions might be frequently performed for *preventive needs*. If so, abortion further contributes to infant mortality decline.”
[Emphasis added]

CASTRO MANIPULATES THE U.S. EMBARGO ISSUE TO SERVE HIS ENDS IN AND OUT OF CUBA

Castro uses the embargo as a scapegoat for Cuba's problems, but he is eager to have it lifted for the financial and propaganda benefits. However, we question the logic of some Cubans that lifting the U.S. embargo would hurt Castro by denying him an excuse for scarcities. The fact is, on February 2, Castro publicly endorsed an initiative in the U.S. Congress to *loosen* the embargo “as a step in the right direction.” Also, the regime has begun to place hard-liners at choke-points in the economy (employment services, commercial services, sugar industry, telecommunications, etc.) so that it can reap the benefits of any loosening of the U.S. embargo.

It is important to note that the repressive arm of the regime will be among the first beneficiaries from any increased trade. The Armed Forces and Interior Ministry operate farms, tourist hotels, and other enterprises to generate hard currency and to be able to care for their own (including paramilitary personnel) and to provide an efficient means of producing staple products rather than depend on the vagaries of other state-run enterprises.

Tourism Trap

Tourism is a safe bet for Castro: He tolerates the relatively small return on his investment because the proceeds go almost exclusively to the state and because he can easily contain any liberalizing effects. Thus, the Cuban state continues to build tourist hotels in Havana and at beach resorts, despite the fact that occupancy rates rarely exceed 50 percent. (Typically, package tours take foreigners to isolated tourist enclaves that are off-limits to Cubans — greatly limiting the social interaction that outsiders claim as a benefit of such travel.) For Cubans, this sort of parasitic tourism is a cruel trap.

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Cuba expert Maria C. Werlau explains the high-cost of tourism to the Cuban economy and its people. "The tourism industry was officially reported as Cuba's largest dollar earner in 1996.... 1996 net revenues are noted inconsistently by different sources — reports range from 26 percent to 30-35 percent. Yet, if tourism generated *net revenues* of 26 percent, this would represent a mere \$338 million, which is low given the size of the population and the needs of the economy." Werlau notes that Cuba's tourism industry is highly dependent on foreign imports (70-80 percent) to provide quality services to satisfy foreign tastes.

Werlau also reports that, while the number of tourists increased 19 percent in the first quarter of 1997, gross earnings rose only 7 percent; in fact, Cuba reported a *loss* of \$3 million in the first four months of 1997. A low repeat rate (10 percent) suggests that Cuba must dedicate even more resources to upgrade its services and facilities to remain competitive.¹⁹ Such capital investment would reduce tourism's net profitability even further in the short-term.

Unfortunately for the Cuban people, tourism has generated very few direct jobs (perhaps 70,000 in a workforce of 4.5 million). Also, because an estimated 70 percent of hotel rooms are located outside of Havana in isolated resorts, the multiplier benefits for the general population are quite limited.

Tips are an important source of income for some lucky Cubans. (A Cuban we encountered who worked at a beach resort was candid, describing Canadian and European tourists as tightwads). Still, the state has managed to rob Cubans of even this source of hard currency, requiring employees to surrender up to 75 percent of their tips to be converted to *pesos* at the official exchange rate.

Sexual Tourism

The drive to survive in a failed state-run economy has led many Cubans to prostitution, which has, in turn, become a tourist attraction for unscrupulous Canadian, European, and Latin American tourists. While prostitution is rampant in many poor countries, what is unique in Cuba is that it encompasses professional women — doctors and lawyers — who are forced to sell their bodies to foreign tourists, because, in Castro's economy, they

***"We eat very badly.
There are no vitamins.
We are beautiful
because we are dying."***

***Cuban doctor/prostitute
in New York Times Magazine***

19. "Update on Foreign Investment in Cuba: 1996-97," Maria C. Werlau, p. 23.

cannot earn enough through their professions to feed their families. According to a February 1 article in the *New York Times Magazine*, "Prostitution, which as scarcely visible (if only for security reasons) five years ago, is pandemic now: the tourist hotels are filled with Cuban teenagers reddening their lips with children's crayons."²⁰



Waiting for the Pope -- In the center of this crowd are two Canadian tourists embracing young Cuban prostitutes, waiting in Old Havana for the Pope's motorcade to pass.

The *New York Times Magazine* article's author recounts this exchange with a Cuban doctor/prostitute: "'What is the secret of Cuban beauty,' I ask.... The doctor says, 'We eat very badly. There are no vitamins. We are beautiful because we are dying.'"

The magazine quotes Tom Miller, author of *Trading with the Enemy: A Yankee Travels Through Castro's Cuba*, as saying, "I don't think many Americans go to Cuba with sex as their primary reason, as Mexicans, Spaniards, Bahamians and Italians do." According to the *New York Times*, "The Spanish Embassy in Havana runs a matchmaking service. Cuban girls bring their photos to the embassy to be forwarded to Spanish men wanting to meet Cuban women. Other Europeans have got the word on Cuba's latest export, but for the Spanish, something more is involved. They would like to recapture Cuba, once their colony, woman by woman."

The Internet is abuzz with Cuba as a destination for sex tourism. One particularly callous review notes, "You can pick a different girl each night.... Sometimes the girl needs to go home during the day, *because she has a child to take care of*, but she may want to come back later. The best time to go to Havana seems to be during the last week of June, July, and parts or maybe all of August.... Schools have

20. "Picking the Flowers of the Revolution," by Andrei Codrescu, *The New York Times Magazine*, February 1, 1998.

recess, and high school girls from Oriente come to Havana to make a buck during the summer."²¹ (Emphasis Added)

Another Internet entry reports, "The whole island is a brothel, possibly the cheapest one in the world. It is right now the most popular sex travel destination for Germans and Spaniards, who arrive in chartered flights...."

The state uses Cuban youth to attract tourists and to vacuum up tourist dollars. We are compelled to state it plainly: For the love of money, Fidel Castro has become a pimp for Cuba's schoolgirls. Moreover, a Cuban physician confirmed that the incidence of venereal disease has increased sharply. In point of fact, the health of young Cubans is being consciously sacrificed by the regime for hard currency. The existing American travel ban is, at least, an obstacle to allowing some U.S. citizens to partake in such predatory tourism and, therefore, could spare us the hatred of a generation of Cubans.

FIDEL CASTRO'S LONGEVITY AND ABILITY TO TRANSFER POWER TO A SUCCESSOR IS BEING QUESTIONED BY REGIME INSIDERS.

The legacy of Castro will be that of a ruthless dictatorship that wrecked a healthy economy, enslaved millions of people, courted nuclear holocaust, and caused the death of thousands of innocent people. Today, the revolution is dead and the regime is bankrupt, reduced to a survival strategy in which it bullies Cubans into abject poverty and subjugation. It strikes us as grotesque, therefore, that some in the regime believe that they stand to "inherit" Castro's power or can preserve his threadbare regime.

Raul Castro would not last long because he "lacks charisma" and is despised by many in the military as a person of notoriously poor moral character.

Nevertheless, Ricardo Alarcón, president of the National Assembly, is among those regime insiders who have begun to position himself for a post-Castro transition, publicly and privately acknowledging interest in serving as Cuba's president. During a brief impromptu meeting with us, Alarcón downplayed the significance of Fidel Castro's recent reference to his brother, Raul (First Vice President of the Council of

21. "World Sex Guide," December 12, 1997, from the Internet.

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State and Defense Minister) as his successor during the recent Fifth Party Congress. Alarcón told us that President Castro had only repeated what was in the Cuban constitution — that the first vice president succeeds the president. When asked whether Raul Castro would serve out the remainder of Fidel Castro's term under such a transition scenario, Alarcón replied that the president serves at the pleasure of the National Assembly, and could be removed at any time. He also referred to Raul Castro as a "brother of lesser historical significance." Alarcón left the distinct impression that jockeying for position to succeed Fidel Castro was well underway, and that he is interested in the job.

One Eastern European diplomat predicted that the transition would be "rigid" if Raul Castro and military hard liners assume the leadership in a post-Fidel era. Several sources note that Raul Castro would not last long as a successor because he "lacks charisma" and is despised by many in the military as a person of notoriously poor moral character.

Although some of Castro's cronies are so out of touch with reality that they are musing about succession scenarios, we believe that a much more likely chain of events will produce a brief interregnum that *may* provide them sufficient time to escape into exile. It is clear that the regime has already begun to crumble around Fidel Castro. We predict that those who are dreaming about succeeding him will instead find themselves washed away by a swift, perhaps violent, transition.

CASTRO MAINTAINS A BLOCKADE ON INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE CUBAN PEOPLE AND TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD ABOUT CUBA.

Blockade on Information on the Island

In the 1950's, Cuba had 58 daily newspapers of differing political hues and ranked eighth in the world in number of radio stations, according to a recent State Department report (Appendix E). Today, the Cuban state has absolute control on the content of all of the few newspapers and radio and television stations that remain on the island. Cuba has a handful of national and weekly publications, all organs of the state or Communist Party; the only independent publications in the country are the diocesan bulletins of the Catholic Church, which have very limited distribution.

The Castro regime's Department of State Security takes extraordinary precautions to restrict access to information. Foreign tourists have ready access to U.S. television (particularly Cable News Network), however the vast majority of

Cubans can never see such broadcasts; satellite dishes are prohibited. Internet links are strictly regulated, limited to government officials or trusted academics. Electronic mail messages are monitored and subject to government censorship.

Although Castro brags about his country's literacy rate (which was relatively high even in 1958), his regime takes great pains to deny any but approved written material to the people; for example, the Cuban government has formally accused American diplomats of "distributing enemy propaganda" for merely discarding a copy of the *Miami Herald* in a public place.

The government constantly tries to jam the signals of Radio Marti and Television Marti, particularly in Havana. (TV Marti is converting to UHF signals in an effort to make Cuban jamming more difficult.) Most Cubans with whom we met cited Radio Marti as the only source of outside information; others mentioned Voice of America. Cubans we met said they preferred straight, unbiased news programming rather than hard-edged commentary. (Radio reception depends on climate; driving between Camaguey and Havana we briefly heard a private Miami radio station.)

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Sowing Fear of Change

Virtually all of the news available to Cubans is controlled by the regime. In a technique that one Eastern European diplomat characterized as "Stalinist" "primitive propaganda," events in Cuba are distorted to exaggerate the achievements of the revolution and to blame any problems on external aggression. The United States — particularly, the exile community — is misrepresented by the regime as a threat to the well-being of average Cubans by "foreign conquerors." News of the outside world is twisted to be universally negative; events in the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries are distorted into cautionary tales of a democratic transition. Cubans are told that they will lose their homes, education, and health care under a democratic transition.

Controlling Information About Cuba

Castro made a veiled threat to international journalists covering the Pope's Cuba visit, saying in a January 12 speech, "We will observe how they do their work,

with what level of objectivity, and if they publish any detail unfavorable to the revolution." Indeed, the regime excluded a number of journalists from Cuba during the papal visit because their coverage had displeased the regime, including David Adams of the *St. Petersburg Times*; any reporter from the *Miami Herald*; three Argentine journalists whom Castro called "mercenaries"; and *Newsweek* correspondent Peter Katel.²² Some observers told us that some international reporters based in Cuba practice self-censorship in order to prevent their ouster from the island for reporting information that offends the regime.²³ Others have noted that the presence of the CNN bureau has emboldened reporting of other journalists in Cuba.

Persons who speak to independent Cuban or foreign journalists risk prosecution and jail. Independent Cuban journalists who report on events for publication outside the island are repressed.

Persons who speak to independent Cuban or foreign journalists risk prosecution and jail. The delegation met with the wife of Dr. Desi Mendoza, who is serving an eight-year prison term for speaking to international reporters about an outbreak of hemorrhagic dengue in Santiago (see pages 55-56).

Independent Cuban journalists who report on events for publication outside the island are repressed vigorously. We met with an independent journalist who was detained last fall by State Security officials, who confiscated the reporter's typewriter as well as files and books; the journalist reported that Cuban authorities have detained him several times and warned him that he faced imprisonment if he did not cease his activities. In another case, the State Department's 1997 human rights report on Cuba notes, "On May 31, four men attacked independent journalist Joaquin Torres at his home in Havana; the men then led an act of repudiation against him as police stood by without intervening."

22. The Committee to Protect Journalists, in its January 20 letter to Castro, noted that denial of Cuban visas to journalists was a violation of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

23. See reporter Tom Carter's article on foreign press coverage of Cuba (quoted in footnote No. 6 on page 21), *The Washington Times*, February 23, 1998.

The Committee to Protect Journalists, chaired by Walter Cronkite, highlighted additional cases in a January 20 letter²⁴ to Fidel Castro:

- Bernardo Arevalo Padron, correspondent with *Linea Sur 3* news agency in Cienfuegos, was sentenced to six years in prison on October 31, 1997, for "lack of respect" of Castro and Carlos Lage, a member of the Council of State, for a story about meat being transported by helicopter to Havana from a town whose inhabitants went hungry;
- Lorenzo Paez Nunez, of the Cuba's dissident Independent News Bureau, was convicted of defamation on July 12 and sentenced to an 18-month prison term after he published a story about police misconduct in Pinar del Rio;
- Jorge Luis Arce Cabrera faces imminent arrest because of his independent reporting; he has been detained 23 times and beaten three times since 1994. He has been falsely accused of assaults after being attacked twice in October by a retired employee of the Ministry of Interior.

U.S. Efforts

We met with several diplomats to discuss ways in which to intensify international support for the Cuban people. However, it is clear to us that the United States is alone in the world in what it is willing and able to do to overcome the blockade of information that Castro maintains on the Cuban people. We applaud efforts being undertaken by USINT in Havana. For security purposes, we will not discuss these initiatives here. However, we will continue to encourage all U.S. government agencies to step up efforts to open direct channels of information to the Cuban people in order to promote an end to the dictatorship.

VERY FEW DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN HAVANA HAVE MADE A SERIOUS EFFORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS.

Dissidents with whom we spoke singled out the diplomatic missions of the United States, Spain, the Czech Republic, and the Netherlands as the most helpful to the cause of democratic reform and defense of human rights in Cuba. In the words of

24. Letter from William A. Orme, Jr., Executive Director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, to Fidel Castro, January 20, 1998. Amnesty International denounced these and other cases in its August 1997 report, "Renewed Crackdown on Peaceful Government Critics."

one dissident, "They are willing to help us without wanting anything in return." We are proud to note that dissidents singled out the USINT human rights officer, Tim Brown, for his professionalism and dedication.

Several European diplomats told us that the E.U.'s collective activities are "reduced to the lowest common denominator" — hardly an auspicious commitment. In light of the election of left-of-center governments in France and the United Kingdom, one European envoy told us that he anticipated an *even less robust* implementation of the E.U.'s Common Position. A Havana-based European diplomat also told us that the policy of engagement championed by the Canadians today had already been tried by the Spanish two to three years ago and had *failed miserably*. "'Constructive engagement' proved to be wrong," he said.

Pathetic Performance

Although the European Union adopted a "common position" on Cuba over a year ago, the prominent dissidents we met told us they have received very little support from the E.U.²⁵ We met with a representative of the "internal dissident working group," whose leaders were jailed last July (and are being held without charges to this day) after inviting E.U. diplomats to a briefing the week before. Most dissidents and others agree that the failure of all E.U. representatives to attend that briefing had the effect of declaring "open season" on these courageous dissidents. A recorded conversation on July 7 between leaders of the "internal dissident working group" captures their fear and frustration at being abandoned by the Europeans and other embassies in Havana:

The failure of all E.U. diplomats to attend a dissident briefing last June had the effect of declaring "open season" on these courageous activists.

Ruth Montaner (activist supporter in Miami): What countries were there [at the briefing]?

25. "The European Union Common Position on Cuba," No. 72/96, December 3, 1996, states, in part, "The objective of the European Union in its relations with Cuba is to encourage a process of transition to pluralist democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.... The European Union considers that *full cooperation with Cuba will depend upon improvements in human rights and political freedom*. The European Union will intensify the present dialogue with the Cuban authorities and with all sectors of Cuban society in order to promote respect for human rights and real progress towards pluralist democracy...." [Emphasis added]

Dissident Leader Martha Beatriz Roque: No one other than [U.S. Principal Officer Michael] Kozak and [U.S. officer] Tim Brown. No one else was there!

Montaner: Why not?

Roque: Well, we think because of pressures. This is a lack of respect. Because I think that all of these countries are defenders of human rights.... All of these countries ask us what we are going to do to solve our problems, and none of them showed up there....

[Later in the same call] Dissident leader Felix Bonne Carcasses: We're hurt by the countries that did not attend.

Pedro Llabre: Some people were missing, no?

Bonne: Many, many, many. We're grateful to (U.S.) Ambassador Kozak (*sic*) and Tim Brown -- that they were there.

Llabre: What other countries were there?

Bonne: Not a single other.... These diplomats tells us to do this or that, and now we can say to them, "But it is like this with you: when we try to get you to move, you don't move."

Business as Usual

Last April, France signed a bilateral accord on the protection and mutual promotion of investments with the Cuban government. At the time, French trade minister Franck Borotra reassured the Castro regime that "France and the European Union will continue to fight the 1996 Helms-Burton law." We note that Air France inaugurated its first direct Paris-to-Havana Concorde route, which regime officials said was crucial to "promote travel to Cuba from European nations, including Britain, France, and Germany." About 40 representatives of large French companies, including the automakers Peugeot and Renault, met Fidel Castro in Havana on April 17, inaugurating several joint ventures and announcing a \$16 million renovation of a Cuban electric power station near Santiago de Cuba.²⁶

In December 1997, Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Patrizia Toia traveled to Cuba to sign a cooperation agreement in the tourism sector, an agreement for exchange of air transportation services, and a joint declaration on the elimination of double tariffs in bilateral trade. Toia stated, "In addition to the agreements that

26. "France Snubs U.S. on Cuba Trade Issue," LatinoLink News Services, April 25, 1997.

were signed today, we created the foundations for future work." She cited "a lively bilateral dialogue based on a common interest in resolving concrete problems to do with trade, investment, and culture."²⁷

Last November, German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Helmut Schaefer traveled to Cuba. He failed to criticize Cuba's human rights record but, rather, attacked U.S. policy. He also noted that "a large number of German businesses" were interested in Cuban ventures and speculated that his government *could extend financial guarantees* to those businesses this year.

Europe's cynical "business as usual" policy is motivated by the mere pennies to be made in Castro's Cuba today.

Schaefer was quoted in the German media as saying that "Castro's charisma has not diminished," and that he has remained "an idealist."²⁸

Further compelling evidence of the E.U.'s determination to press forward with investment in Cuba is a "call for proposals for a project to promote the development of economic links between European and Cuban small and medium-sized business," which was published in the January 27, 1998, edition of the *Official Journal of the European Communities*. The journal explains that the purpose of the project, *inter alia*, is to "promote business relations between Europe and Cuba" and to "encourage European investment in Cuba," including a "seminar with Cuban authorities to discuss ways of attracting investment in Cuba by European" businesses.

In sum, the E.U.'s performance has been little talk and even less action. We believe that the initiatives described above are in violation of the letter and spirit of the E.U.'s stated policy of conditioning relations with Cuba on "improvements in human rights and political freedom." What is shocking to us is that this cynical "business as usual" policy is motivated by the mere pennies to be made in Castro's Cuba today. Moreover, we predict that the short-term advantages being sought by Europe's amoral investment strategy will evaporate as a representative government takes over in Havana and moves to repudiate "sweetheart" deals with the Castro regime.

27. "Agreements Signed During Italian Minister's Visit," Radio Havana, December 25, 1997.

28. "Germany: Official Criticizes U.S. Embargo Against Cuba," DDP/ADN, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, November 23, 1997; "Germany Wants Cuba Embargo Lifted," *Agence France Presse*, November 22, 1997

We believe that the Clinton Administration's unjustifiable "suspension" of U.S. law has served as a "green light" to the Europeans. The Administration's policy of ignoring Helms-Burton to placate the E.U. has won them only contempt. Rather, this cynical Administration strategy has merely ceded the moral high ground to unscrupulous Europeans.

THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION SHOULD ENFORCE U.S. LAW.

US Interests Section

In our meetings with USINT officials it became apparent that enforcement of the U.S. embargo is not a priority. One senior officer even said that he thought that the President's waiver of Title III of the *Libertad* Act ("Helms-Burton") somehow suspended the prohibition on activity in Cuba by American subsidiaries — confusing two entirely unrelated provisions of U.S. law. In addition, it is clear that USINT personnel are not proactive in seeking and documenting cases of "trafficking" in stolen U.S. property despite their *in situ* presence, instead, merely taking action in response to infrequent tasking cables from the Department's "Helms-Burton" enforcement unit.

Suspending Title III of the Libertad Act

Title III of the *Libertad* Act creates a right of action in U.S. courts for Americans to sue foreigners "trafficking" in their stolen property in Cuba. President Clinton has repeatedly suspended this provision, abusing very narrow "waiver" authority provided by Congress. While the President has publicly stated that he intends to continue suspending Title III indefinitely as a means of quelling European criticism of the law, he putatively bases his decisions on international efforts to support democracy in Cuba. For example, his January 16 suspension statement reads, in part:

The President's repeated suspensions of Title III of the Libertad Act have made a mockery of U.S. law.

In the past 18 months, we have worked with our allies and friends to support concrete measures that promote peaceful change in Cuba. The international community is more united behind the cause of freedom in Cuba, and Fidel Castro is more isolated than

ever before.... The E.U. and its member states have strongly urged the Cuban government to release imprisoned dissidents and stop the harassment of those who seek peaceful democratic change.²⁹

As we have illustrated in the preceding pages, the claim that the "international community" has made any meaningful effort to bring about change in Cuba is absolutely without foundation. The President's repeated suspensions of Title III make a mockery of U.S. law, and could invite a legal challenge from Americans whose right to sue is being arbitrarily denied.³⁰

Failure to Fully Enforce Title IV of the Libertad Act

Title IV of the *Libertad* Act denies U.S. visas to persons "trafficking" in property stolen from U.S. nationals in Cuba. The Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs has apparently changed the standard for sanctioning companies under this law. Under regulations drafted and published by the State Department, the standard for determining "trafficking" was established as "facts or circumstances ... that would lead the Department *reasonably to conclude*" that a company was covered by Title IV.³¹ The process established by the Department contemplates an "advisory letter" to warn a suspected foreign trafficker that he will forfeit his U.S. visa unless he provides information within 45 days to refute the Department's findings.

The Department has been reviewing two to three dozen companies, apparently being aware of "facts or circumstances" that lead them "reasonably to conclude" that trafficking is taking place. In these cases, we believe that the Department's own

29. Letter from the President to Senator Jesse Helms and Representative Benjamin A. Gilman, January 16, 1998.

30. The Statement of Managers filed with the conference report on H.R. 927, the *Libertad* Act (P.L. 104-114) states with respect to the "suspension" authority (subsection 306(b) of the Act), "The formula included in the conference substitute requires the President to determine two separate and distinct matters before suspending the right of action: first that suspension 'is necessary to the national interests of the United States,' and second that suspension 'will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.'... In particular, the committee believes that it is demonstrably not the case that suspending the right of action will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba, inasmuch as suspension would remove a significant deterrent to foreign investment in Cuba, thereby helping prolong Castro's grip on power...."

31. "Guidelines for Implementing Title IV of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act," (*Federal Register*, Vol. 61, No. 117, June 17, 1996).

guidelines compel officials to send an advisory letter to these companies, *shifting the burden of proof* to the companies to demonstrate to the Department's satisfaction *that they are not trafficking* under Title IV.

Despite numerous inquiries from the Congress, the Department has never justified its sluggish enforcement of Title IV. We are left to conclude that the Executive Branch is pulling its punches under the law in order to placate European governments whose companies have engaged in joint ventures with the Castro regime.

CUBANS WITH U.S. VISAS AND POLITICAL REFUGEES SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO EMIGRATE WITHOUT DELAY.

We met with U.S. consular and refugee officials to discuss the backlog of Cubans who have been granted U.S. visas but have not received Cuban exit permits and to raise specific cases in which refugee applications have been denied.

Lottery for Immigrant Visas

USINT conducted "lotteries" in 1994 and 1996 to create a pool of immigrant visa applicants to meet the obligations under the May 1995 migration accord to grant 20,000 immigrant visas annually to accommodate the "safe, legal, and orderly departure" of Cuban emigrants; 438,000 Cubans have applied under these two lotteries. Another such lottery is planned for October 1998 to replenish the pool of qualified applicants.

Lottery winners are not automatically deemed eligible for immigration to the United States; they must otherwise qualify under U.S. law, be 18-35 years old, and have at least two of the following characteristics: three years work experience, high school education, or family in the United States. According to USINT, about 70 percent of lottery winners eventually qualify for immigrant visas.

Lottery winners are notified by "certified mail" through the Cuban postal service. (USINT personnel said they were aware of 10 alleged cases of harassment of lottery applicants, which have been protested formally to the Cuban government.) Lottery winners must complete visa applications. Once a U.S. immigrant visa is issued, the person normally has four months within which he or she must enter the United States; this presents a problem for a relatively few persons who have been unable to obtain a Cuban exit permit within that period of time. For eligible refugees in need of special assistance, the State Department will lend them money to travel;

the Department also funds programs operated by Catholic Relief Services and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency to assist refugees who need assistance for the first six-months to resettle in the United States.

Immigrant Visas and Refugee Paroles for Cubans			
Category	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997
Family Members of American and Lawful Perm. Resident	5,672	2,620	2,866
Family members of American with non-current petitions	4,919	238	0
Parole of Family Members of Visa Holders*	3,387	1,427	622
Lottery Winners	2,250	3,000	3,408
Family Members of Lottery Winners	3,148	4,490	5,296
Fiances of Americans	79	94	68
Refugees	6,998	3,831	3,639
TOTAL	26,453	15,700	15,899
<i>*One-time figure for a backlog in preference cases (i.e. applicants in various categories related to resident aliens and relatives of American citizens other than spouse, parent, or child such as siblings). These cases were treated as paroles. (SOURCE: U.S. Interests Section, Havana)</i>			

Exit Permits

Cubans who receive U.S. visas are required to obtain an exit permit in order to leave the country. (The Cuban government will not issue such "exit permits" to professionals, such as physicians.) The fee for this transaction is \$600, paid in U.S. currency or travelers check: \$400 for a required medical examination, \$50 for a passport, and \$150 for the "exit permit." (Medical examinations must be obtained through the public health service or a "private" physician who has had a medical license since before the revolution.) Under an agreement reached with the Cuban government, the fee for the "exit permit" and medical examination is supposed to be reduced by half for up to 1,000 destitute persons annually.

USINT has sent 10 separate diplomatic notes to the Cuban authorities to request exit permits for individuals who have not received them after considerable delay. Of the 265 cases raised in these notes, 203 (77 percent) have since received their exit permits and have traveled to the United States. *However, as of January 29,*

1998, 62 persons had yet to receive their exit permits from Cuban authorities, suggesting that the government is violating the spirit of its agreement in such cases.

USINT has sent four separate diplomatic notes to the Cuban authorities to request a discount in the exit fees for eligible persons. Of the 1,446 cases raised, 583 (40 percent) have traveled under the discounted fees; 403 (28 percent) traveled without the discount; and 460 (32 percent) have not yet traveled. *It should be noted that the Cuban government has not granted the discounted fee to any prospective traveler since September 1996, suggesting that the government is violating the spirit of its agreement in such cases.*

Non-Immigrant Visas

According to USINT, there is about a 75 percent denial rate in applications for non-immigrant visas. In calendar year 1997, 23,368 persons applied, 6,219 (27 percent) were issued and 17,149 were refused. Typically, about half of the successful applicants wish to visit family in the United States, and the others plan to participate in seminars or exchange programs. (The denial rate in the U.S. consulate on the border city of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, averaged 32 percent in the last three years.)

In-Country Refugee Processing

According to the U.S. Interests Section, nearly 35,000 Cuban refugees have been admitted to the United States under its in-country refugee processing program since 1987. About 4,000 Cubans were admitted under this program in 1996 and 1997. Since October 1994, INS has maintained a permanent office in Havana to process refugee cases.

Priority attention is accorded to former political prisoners; persecuted religious minorities; human rights activists; forced labor conscripts during the 1965-68 period; persons deprived of their livelihoods or discriminated against for their political or religious activities; and others who have a credible claim under the Refugee Convention. Refugees must be able to demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, in accordance with the 1967 UN Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, which was incorporated into the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act in 1980.

The process works in the following manner: (1) An applicant contacts USINT and completes and submits a questionnaire; (2) American caseworkers review the

questionnaires, interview worthy applicants, and refer "eligible" cases to the INS officer for a decision; (3) INS officer interviews "eligible" persons, and the INS makes a decision on the application; (4) Refugees approved by the INS must obtain a medical examination and an "exit permit" from the Cuban government.

USINT personnel reported that they take into account a number of factors to determine if an applicant meets the statutory requirement of having "a well-founded fear of persecution." The process employed by USINT systematically takes into account the number of times a person has been questioned by the police, house searches, loss of telephone service as a form of harassment, detentions, formal police warnings, *actos de repudio*, denial of job or self-employment license, physical injury, denial of medical care, loss of a good job, etc. Interviews are conducted by U.S. citizen professionals; decisions are made according to strict Department of Justice standards by a full-time, experienced INS officer.

We raised a number of cases of Cubans whose refugee applications had been denied. In most of these several cases, the U.S. officers were unaware of recent instances of repression that each of these persons had suffered, some of which had been reported recently in the media or by Amnesty International. In each instance, the U.S. officials noted that "cases are never closed" and were eager to take additional information into account in order to weigh these refugee applications further. We respect the good faith efforts of these officers, but we recommend that USINT be granted additional personnel to ensure that instances of repression do not escape the attention of the refugee unit.

An Example: The Case of Dr. Desi Mendoza

We met in Santiago de Cuba with a family member of Dr. Desi Mendoza Rivero, who was president of the Independent Medical College and district coordinator of "Concilio Cubano." In February 1997, Dr. Mendoza told journalists of the outbreak of hemorrhagic dengue, noting that 15 persons had died of internal bleeding after treating themselves with aspirin for this type of dengue fever. Dr. Mendoza was arrested on June 25, 1997, for distributing "enemy propaganda" (including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and for speaking to journalists about the dengue epidemic.

According to Mendoza's family, the regime reacted angrily to Mendoza's warnings in the international press due to the potential impact on foreign tourism. (After Mendoza's arrest, the government recognized the epidemic, which killed over two dozen people.) In December, Mendoza was tried for distributing false

information; he was convicted and sentenced to an eight-year prison term. His relative told us that Dr. Mendoza has been jailed with hardened criminals and that he suffers from hypertension and renal problems. Amnesty International declared Dr. Mendoza a "prisoner of conscience" in its August 1997 report on the regime's crackdown on peaceful dissidents.³²

Mendoza's relative told us that his family has been subjected to harassment, including interruption of telephone service (if Mendoza's name is mentioned in *private* conversations) and an *acto de repudio* organized by the neighborhood Committee for the Defense of the Revolution. We were told that state security agents had searched Mendoza's home and confiscated publications he had obtained from the U.S. Interests Section, including magazines and pamphlets on democracy and a market economy. We raised Mendoza's case with USINT officials who are reconsidering his application for refugee status; Mendoza's application has been denied on two occasions prior to his conviction.

Cubans Working in the Consular Section

We raised the concern that Cuban citizens were processing refugee and immigrant visa applications. USINT officials assured us that Cuban citizens do not interview or make decisions regarding such applications and are supervised at all times by American personnel. We were told that these 20 Cuban citizens are necessary to assemble applications to ensure that all of the required forms and supporting documents are ready for review by U.S. officers.

32. "Renewed Crackdown on Peaceful Government Critics," Amnesty International, August 1997, AMR 25/29/97.