

Free Cuba News

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INSIDE LATIN AMERICA

PANAMA, CASTRO, AND KHRUSHCHEV

To a considerable extent, Panamanian politicians are the victims of their own statements, made at the outset of the Panamanian incident. Charges against the United States of "aggression," "brutality," and similar epithets have come back to haunt them. They now are being driven against the wall by Communist and extremist elements and forced to devise an antidote to their own charges -- drastic revision of the Panama Canal treaty. Chief mover of the agitation is, of course, a Soviet-propelled Castro. Yet, publicly at least, Panamanian officials have largely ignored and down-graded the part played by the Soviet apararat located in Cuba. There lies the real danger, for the ultimate objective of the Soviet-Cuban combine is to overthrow Panamanian constitutional democracy, not to support President Roberto Chiari in his dispute with the United States. Panamanian officials are well aware of these designs, yet have chosen to subordinate them to what they evidently believe to be more popular charges against the United States.

The words of Panama's Ambassador to the United Nations, Aquilino Boyd, best described that attitude, when he ignored the Soviet-Cuban threat and said:

"This was an explosion no one could foresee, and it would be a mistake to blame Communists for this."

The Associated Press also quoted him on January 11:

"If there are Communists in Panama, they are so few that they go unnoticed."

The record of aggression from Cuba and its connection with Panamanian terrorists over the past four years is impressive, and Panamanian authorities know it. On April 24, 1959, just four months after Castro assumed power, Panama was invaded by a group of Castro's barbudos (bearded ones). This was two days following Castro's address at the United Nations. Panama appealed to the Organization of American States, which dispatched an investigating team. On May 1, the Cubans surrendered to a combination of Panamanian troops and to members of the OAS team. It was established beyond doubt that the Cubans were ordered to Panama to overthrow the government. Incidentally, during the summer of 1959, Cuba invaded the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Nicaragua. The files of the OAS bear this out.

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BOB DOLE

In October of 1959, Cuban ambassador to Panama, José Antonio Cabrera, began to make trips to the Panamanian Province of Chiriquí. He recruited Castro followers in that Province, and exhorted the peasants "to march on the Panama Canal." In June of the same year, two startling events came to light. The Cuban Embassy in Panama was found to be training labor union and student leaders in the techniques of sabotage and political agitation. On the heels of this discovery, Panamanian police seized at Panama's national airport Castro propaganda destined for Castro-recruited agitators. In December of 1960, Cuban consul Adolfo Martí Fuentes was expelled from the country because he was training agitators.

In December of 1961, Panama broke relations with Cuba after the following events took place:

- January -- Panama demanded the expulsion of Cuban Ambassador Cabrera because of his "intervention in the internal affairs of Panama." He did not leave until early July.
- June -- A Cuba Aeropostal plane attempted to smuggle 18 cartons of Soviet literature into Panama. Panama classified it under its laws as "subversive."
- July -- The Cuban Chargé d'Affaires opened fire with a pistol against Panamanians demonstrating against Cuba's execution of anti-Castro patriots by firing squad.
- December -- Panama broke relations with Cuba after Castro publicly called Panamanian President Roberto Chiari insulting names, the most printable being "lackey of North American imperialism."

In testimony given before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on February 19 last year, CIA Director John McCone had this to say:

"Panama postal authorities are destroying on the average of 12 tons a month of Cuban propaganda coming into their land. In essence, Castro tells revolutionaries from Latin American countries: 'Come to Cuba; we will pay your way, we will train you in underground organization techniques, in guerrilla warfare, in sabotage and terrorism. We will see that you get back to your homeland. Once you are there, we will keep in touch with you... supply you with... funds and specialized demolition equipment.' Castro also probably tells them: 'If you succeed in establishing something effective by way of a revolutionary movement in your homeland, if your guerrillas come down out of the hills and confront regular armed forces, then we will consider more concrete forms of assistance'."

In Castro's speech on July 26 of last year, he not only made Mr. McCone a prophet, but implicated Russia openly in the Communist subversion of Latin America: "We know by experience, and by conviction, that every people that does what the Cuban people have done will have the decided support of the Soviet Union and all the socialist camp."

Ten Cuban-trained agents were captured the first day of the Panama riots, and Castro was abruptly summoned to Moscow. The prevailing opinion among official Washington circles is that Khrushchev wanted to remove his Latin leader from the scene as quickly

as possible in the belief that Soviet-Cuban complicity might result in charges against them. He could not trust a volatile Castro to remain in Cuba and represent Khrushchev's interests in something so delicate as the Panama Canal controversy, his stakes in Hemisphere subversion, and the unfrocking of the highly publicized Soviet "peace offensive" in 1964. During 1963 alone, 149 Panamanian subversives were trained in the Soviet-directed guerrilla camps in Cuba, and slipped back into their country to await orders. Significantly, they arrive through the Peninsula del Toro and a beach in the Province of Chiriqui. Arms and materials are shipped to them there.

What of subversion by Panamanians?

- Victor Avila, Secretary General of the Panamanian Student Federation: "This country like all of Latin America, will inevitably follow the road of Fidel Castro...."
- Radio Tribuna, Castro-supported, whose major voice is Thelma King, a Deputy of Congress: Date, October 13, 1963: "Let the uniformed corsairs know that revolution is inexorable... that revolutionary justice will bring them to task for their crimes." She spoke of the Panamanian National Guard. Their "crimes" are described in an official release from the government:

"Authorities in La Chorrera [village next to the Canal Zone] arrested Alcides Pérez and Victoriano Medina on October 11. They were in possession of large quantities of ammunition, arms and much propaganda material recently received from Cuba."

- Radio Tribuna. Date, November 11: Deputy Thelma King returned to Panama City today from Chiriqui Province, where she held talks with peasant and labor leaders...."

The United States has been dragged before peace negotiators of the Organization of American States (OAS) and indicted before the United Nations on the totally false charges of "aggression" against Panama. Current adverse opinion of the United States is largely the result of those false charges. Panamanian demands that the United States negotiate to settle the recent dispute should, it would appear, be met by firm U.S. demands that Panama publicly recognize the extent of Soviet-Cuban subversion of that country, and to make those charges at the same OAS and United Nations before whom the United States was falsely accused. President Lyndon B. Johnson has stated that the good neighbor policy of understanding and fairness is a two-way street.

Competent diplomatic observers in Washington and New York point out to Free Cuba News that should President Chiari choose to take that course, he would perform a service of great benefit to the democracies and deliver a long-delayed blow at the Soviet-Cuban combine. United States' -- indeed, the Free World's -- security is involved in the Panama Canal, and that security has been threatened by Soviet-Cuban subversion for nearly four years.

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THE SOVIET-CUBAN PROPAGANDA MILL

A well-equipped propaganda mill, to which Latin American Communists contribute, and from which their cadres draw free of charge, operates in Havana. Latin American political cartoonists sketch hundreds of themes under the direction of César Escalante, Propaganda Chief of Cuba's PURS (United Party of the Socialist Revolution). Escalante also directs the Soviet-Cuban propaganda effort in most of Latin America.

Arturo Ortega Maceda worked for the propaganda factory, called Consolidated Publicity Enterprise. Maceda, age 21, was interviewed in Miami where he explained how international Communist propaganda is given a nationalist flavor:

"One poster for Peru, for example, makes an appeal to Indian folklore and superstition. A Castro-type guerrilla with modern arms emerges in the shadow of a portrait of an ancient Indian figure which is armed with bow and arrow. The caption refers to Castro's claim that he will 'convert the cordillera of the Andes into the Sierra Maestra of South America.' They say this particular poster has been very successful, and hundreds of thousands have been printed, with subtle changes where appropriate, and sent to the Andean nations."

The propagandists always strive to use a paper and printing technique which may be peculiar to given countries. "In that way," said Ortega, "they try to give the impression that they were printed clandestinely inside the countries. This gives the local Castroites enormous prestige, to be able to print under the noses of the authorities. Their 'printing plants,' of course, are never discovered."

Ortega adds a new dimension to Venezuela's charges of aggression against Cuba:

"Hundreds of thousands of decals bearing the shield of the Venezuelan terrorist FALN, and 50,000 posters, some of them bearing the signatures of terrorist leaders, were printed and sent to Venezuela."

The propaganda is delivered clandestinely to each country through the same channels by which foreign graduates of Cuba's guerrilla camps are reintroduced into their respective countries.

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INSIDE CUBA

SALE OF BUSES UNDERMINES CUBAN RESISTANCE

Castro is in desperate need of public transport. The credit sale to Cuba by England of 400 Leyland buses is the latest in a series of break-throughs in the U.S. economic blockade. Others include the sale of Canadian wheat and the illegal shipment of replacement parts for Castro's crumbling industries.

The depth of Castro's desperation was revealed in his January 2 speech in which he said he was determined to buy trains, planes, taxis, and other items of equipment, which apparently cannot be obtained from the Soviet Bloc. He expects to buy them from Free World nations. Behind Castro's "determination" lies a history of equally determined and effective resistance and sabotage by transport workers in precisely those areas of Castro's greatest need.

On January 8, Radio Progreso revealed the regime's alarm over sabotage in Cuba's railways, and of measures being taken to halt it during the sugar harvest just commencing:

"An important meeting was held at the Cuban-Spanish [Communist] Friendship Society by the Railway Workers where agreements of the National Railway Council were approved.

"With respect to train wrecks, it was agreed to ask the State Railway Enterprise and the Ministry of Transport to punish those responsible. They should be punished uniformly and inflexibly with a one year's suspension of work without pay or benefit. After the year of suspension, they should spend another year earning a lower salary at a lower position than before."

The meeting pin-pointed the cause of train wrecks in the following resolution:

"Those implicated in a train wreck should be taken before the State Railway Enterprise, the labor union, and before the courts."

The government-controlled Railway Workers Union then admitted to the disappearance of essential parts, as well as to the resistance of porters:

"To combat theft, the State Railway Enterprise and the Union will both support action against the thief, including his final and complete punishment and indictment before the courts. It also was agreed to suspend and punish those porters who refuse to load baggage."

The action was taken following an unparalleled series of train wrecks during 1963 at sugar mills, and on Cuba's main trunk lines. During last year's sugar-grinding season, Cuba sustained no fewer than eight major wrecks in which train crews were arrested by "agents of the department of public order."

The result of sabotage and shortages of replacement parts in another important sector of public transport-- Cuba's bus lines -- is to be found in figures taken from the Communist official organ Hoy, published on March 27, 1963. Havana had 1,600 busses in operation in 1958. By 1963, said Hoy, Havana was serviced by only 800. The bulk of those were of Czech make, with manual transmissions, no air-conditioning, and no storage facilities for baggage. Ill-adapted to Cuba's terrain and climate, the Czech busses broke down and were easy targets for the sabotage visited upon them by their drivers, maintenance crews, and conductors. Passengers slashed the seats, and broke the doors. At the time of the Leyland bus sale this month, the Castro regime was reduced to the use of Soviet military trucks, equipped with make-shift benches and a small ladder extending down from the tail gate.

In 1958, many of Cuba's busses were owned by their drivers. Most of the vehicles were modern General Motors products, some of them air-conditioned, with automatic transmissions. Cuba boasted 303 urban, inter-urban, municipal, and provincial bus companies which operated a total of 4,459 passenger busses. Owner-drivers worked together in highly efficient and democratic cooperatives. The Communist regime seized the busses and incorporated them into state-run enterprises, thereby setting off a little-known struggle between the people and the state.

Former owner-drivers who were impressed into working for the state at 85 cents an hour, set about sabotaging the lines out of business. From 1961-on their exploits were documented in daily accounts of arrests in Revolución and Hoy. They published incidents in which drivers permitted passengers to ride free; missed bus stops; deliberately drove into crowds of Communist demonstrators, then pleaded that their brakes gave out; and in many cases actually set fire to the vehicles.

In February of 1963, Minister of Transport Omar Fernández publicly denounced Cuba's bus drivers as "the most counter-revolutionary element in our country." Hoy echoed the concern last May 18, accusing "drivers of running their busses onto curbs, thus destroying the tires."

Castro also needs taxis, and politically reliable drivers. Omar Fernández excoriated Cuba's taxi drivers who, like their colleague bus driver-owners, had been deprived of their autonomy and virtually of a livelihood. Speaking at the National Congress of Taxi Drivers last May, Fernández charged that their ranks "are filled with negative elements, bums, and delinquents." Those that refuse to transport passengers, he said, "will be severely punished."

The meeting was brought on by a resistance which Fernández described as "pure anarchy," and had led, a few weeks earlier, to the trial and imprisonment of nine taxi drivers for "displaying an uncooperative attitude and a failure to maintain revolutionary vigilance during the night hours." They were thought to be couriers for the Cuban resistance movement.

Last August 27, the Department of Public Order (Secret Police) issued orders which established "popular tribunals to judge those workers in the field of public transportation for their infractions against the state." The guilty were quickly sentenced and sent to the concentration camp of Guanahacabibes in Pinar del Rio Province. "Popular tribunals" also were empowered to judge those taxi and bus drivers who "drove crazily and without regard for their equipment." One militiaman was assigned to each eight transport workers to "observe their attitudes."

An important side effect to the shortage of transportation is the chaos it creates in industry. The decay in public transportation has made it easier for workers to find excuses for their spiralling record of tardiness and absenteeism.

It is clear from public statements of the Castro regime that it relates the breakdown in public transportation to effective sabotage by the Cuban people. It is equally clear that neither U.S. nor foreign firms can justify sales to Castro on the mere grounds that they are non-military in nature.

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CASTRO SELLS AID PACKAGES

Many Americans, Europeans and relief organizations sent packages for the relief of the victims of hurricane Flora. These packages have been confiscated by the Castro regime and their contents marked for the use of loyal Communist followers instead of the shoeless and hungry peasants of Oriente Province where the hurricane struck with the greatest devastation.

The story of Castro's perfidy is told by Fides Martín, age 23, who was an employee of the former Nestlé condensed milk plant in Sancti-Spíritus in Las Villas Province. Prefacing his comments with the observation that "thousands of Cuban peasants are without shoes and wrap their feet in jute sacks," Martín continued: "A supply delegate is appointed [by the Government] in each labor union. When two or three pair of shoes have been allocated to a union from gifts from abroad, he calls a meeting of about 300 of us. The delegate speaks and says that imperialism bears the blame for our not having anything, and the revolution is working to overcome the situation. He then asks who needs to buy shoes. Everyone raises his hand. However, a 'good' Communist is always awarded the shoes, and he marches forward and pays the delegate for them." They sell for from between \$70 and \$100 a pair, according to escapees.

Fernando Gómez, age 21, of Yateras in Oriente Province says: "The Government is trading with the supplies it gets from abroad intended as relief donations for the hurricane victims. The only aid which Castro has given the people where the hurricane struck is to authorize them to buy certain articles previously purchased only by the Communists. Castro is selling, at an enormous profit, the articles and food which international aid organizations are sending him."

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FORMER CASTRO AIDE IDENTIFIES VENEZUELAN ARMS CACHE

Ricardo Lorié, former Comandante (Major) in Fidel Castro's Army, has submitted testimony to Free Cuba News that the three-ton arms cache found by Venezuelan authorities on November 3 was purchased by him in 1959. Venezuela has formally charged Cuba before the OAS with "aggression," President Rómulo Betancourt has called for a blockade on arms sent from Cuba to Latin America, and has threatened to cease trade with all nations that trade with Castro.

Lorié was commissioned personally by Castro in February of 1959 to journey to Europe and purchase arms worth more than \$9 million. The contract with the National Factory of Arms of War, located in Liège, Belgium, was signed in April of that year. Lorié said that the arms "included 22,500 automatic light FAL rifles, 50 million rounds of ammunition, 70,000 anti-personnel, anti-tank rifle grenades capable of penetrating 13 centimeters of steel, and 30,000 anti-tank grenades which would penetrate 30 centimeters of steel." This was in early 1959 when there was no visible need for such weapons.

"The rifles," said Lorié, "were numbered from 1 to 22,500 to correspond to the purchases made. They also had the Cuban coat of arms engraved on them. Castro was furious that the rifles had been numbered and engraved. Then he abruptly asked me why

I hadn't contracted for 50,000 rifles, and why arrangements hadn't been made for the immediate purchase of a complete ammunition factory. I replied that to make such a factory economically feasible, it would have to produce nearly a million rounds of ammunition daily, requiring technicians and experts in the field of armaments not available in Cuba. He remained adamant, saying 'I know what I'm going to do with those arms.'"

Lorié continued: "What Castro was saying publicly about reforms and peace were very much at variance with his private actions, particularly with regard to arms. He returned again and again to numbering of the arms and the engraved shields, demanding that these 'details' be eliminated from the contract. They could not be, since it is universal practice of arms factories to supply rifles with serial numbers."

"I can definitely state," said Lorié, that from the information published on the arms cache found in Venezuela, that the details of the engraved shields and the serial numbers establish those arms as the ones I purchased for Fidel Castro in 1959." Venezuelan authorities found that numbers and shields had been filed from the arms. They were raised through the application of acid.

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ANTI-CASTRO GUERRILLAS ACTIVE

Reports from Cuban underground sources state that guerrilla activities have increased in the past several weeks (see Military Conscription Reveals Serious Internal Problems, FCN Vol. 2, No. 1, January 7, 1964). Escapees from Baracoa, Oriente Province, the second week of January spoke of the ruthlessness of the regime in trying to stamp out resistance in that area. Milton Hinjosa, age 27, and Hipólito Noa, age 22, both worked in the reforestation center in the mountainous section of Toa:

"People in the mountains have turned them into a kind of wonderland. They plant no crops, but try to hide this from the authorities who are not numerous enough to supervise them. The mountain people burn People's Stores, and harrass the Communists. Now, residents who buy from a particular government store are forced to guard it. If it is burned, the Communists say they did it or permitted their neighbors to burn it. The oppression is terrible, but they have not stopped fighting."

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