

CubaTimes

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Cuba and Drugs: The Real Dope

by John S. Martin

On November 15, 1982, a Federal Grand Jury in the United States District Court, Southern District of Florida, handed down indictments against 14 alleged drug traffickers charged with conspiring to import methaqualone tablets and marijuana into the United States. The indictments were the climax of a lengthy, elaborate Federal investigation, and the value of the drugs involved was reputed to run into the millions of dollars.

Far more sensational to the press than the millions in "narcobucks" were the identities of four of the indictees, all top officials of the Cuban government and Communist Party. The alleged conspirators included: *Rene Rodriguez Cruz*, president of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with Peoples, an agency responsible for solidarity relationships, study tours, and a host of educational and cultural exchanges between Cuba and other nations; *Fernando Ravelo Renedo*, former Cuban ambassador to Colombia; *Gonzalez Bassols Suarez*, former minister-counselor at Cuba's embassy in Colombia; and *Rene Baeza Rodriguez*, vice admiral of the Cuban Navy.

The Cuban officials have not been extradicted and will not stand trial in the U.S. because Cuba regards the charges as both insulting and laughable. The wide publicity given the indictments in the United States, however, has given rise to a whole new generation of accusations and rumors regarding Cuba's international policies.

The conspiracy story given by witnesses purportedly from the inside of a vast Cuba-controlled drug-and-arms smug-



Map printed in the Miami Herald to illustrate the route of the Cuban drug conspiracy.

gling operation paints a sinister picture. Briefly, the spy thriller-like tale can be summarized as follows:

Colombian marijuana and methaqualones allegedly traveled from Colombia to Cuba in ships owned or leased by Jaime Guillot Lara, an internationally notorious Colombian drug and arms peddler. As they approached the northern coast of Cuba, where the cargo of narcotics was transferred to smaller Cuba-provided vessels, Guillot's ships were protected from the U.S. Coast Guard by the Cuban Navy. The

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TO OUR READERS

In this issue of CUBATIMES we feature an exclusive investigative report by John S. Martin, "Cuba and Drugs: The Real Dope." This article examines the widely publicized accusations by the Reagan Administration that high officials of the Cuban government were involved in an elaborate conspiracy to smuggle drugs into the United States.

In researching this article for CUBATIMES, the author studied nearly 2,000 pages of Federal grand jury testimony and trial proceedings, proceedings of U.S. Senate and New York State Senate hearings, and other information on the alleged conspiracy. He found that there was no conclusive evidence of Cuban involvement in drug smuggling. The U.S. government's case was based on the testimony of three convicted drug smugglers, who received immunity from prosecution or reduced sentences in exchange for cooperation, as well as Federal funds and services under the Witness Protection Program. He also found the testimony of the key witnesses to be fraught with contradictions and inconsistencies, and to be uncorroborated by other sources.

The Reagan Administration has used the thinly-constructed drug conspiracy story to mount an effective and expensive public relations campaign (with public money), aimed at discrediting the Cuban government and bolstering the Administration's foreign policy objectives. It has also pointed the finger away from the real Cuban connection to the drug

business—the right-wing, Cuban exile terrorists based in Miami, with their ties to organized crime and the C.I.A.—a connection that has been well documented by the media and the courts. In our view, the media and the American public have been taken for a ride by this story. We hope that other reporters will also subject the Administration's assertions to the close scrutiny they deserve.

We are encouraged by the response to our new bimonthly format, now in its third issue, and have begun an extensive direct-mail promotion campaign to increase subscribers. If you know of a friend or an institution that might be interested in CUBATIMES, send their name and address and we will send a complimentary copy and subscription offer. In future issues, we hope to run more investigative reports, such as the story on Cuba and drugs in this issue. Our correspondents will also be traveling to Cuba to bring back special stories. Among those in preparation: a look at Cuba's West Indian community and an interview with poet Nancy Morejon about the work of the writers' union. We will continue to provide timely news coverage, a task made easier by our bimonthly format. We are interested in the comments of our readers on the content of CUBATIMES and would welcome any suggestions on topics you would like to see covered in the magazine.

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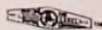
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drugs then went to Bimini, where they were moved to small yachts or speedboats and then smuggled into Florida.

For its services in providing safe harbor and vessels for the off-loading, Cuba was paid handsome fees by Guillot Lara. This money, in turn, was used to purchase arms for the Colombian insurgent guerrilla group known as M-19; Guillot arranged the smuggling of the arms back into Colombia. Jaime Bateman, an M-19 leader, is reputed to be a friend of Guillot.

Meanwhile, Cuba further promoted social disintegration in the U.S. by infiltrating agents during the Mariel "boatlift" of 1980. (Cuba permitted all who expressed a desire to leave, and who could find a way of doing so, to depart the country via Mariel harbor during April and May of that year; some 125,000 entered the U.S. at that time.) These agents, entering the country as presumed refugees, were responsible for distributing and selling the smuggled drugs.

According to this tale, top Cuban officials concocted and facilitated this entire web of criminal activity to accomplish two major foreign policy objectives: to undermine the social fabric of Cuba's greatest external enemy, the U.S.; and to foment revolutionary activity elsewhere in Latin America.

How The Story Broke

In fact, the Federal Grand Jury and trial proceedings, Senate hearings and a multitude of media reports reveal no conclusive evidence of Cuban involvement in any such plot. The U.S. government's case for charging the Cuban government with complicity in drug smuggling is based on the testimony of three key witnesses:

David Lorenzo Perez, a Cuban-American in his 20's, was allegedly responsible for distributing the smuggled methaqualones in Florida, and was one of the 14 original indictees. A Colombian lawyer and convicted marijuana smuggler known as *Johnny Crump* claimed to have arranged the agreement between Ravelo and Bassols, the Cuban ambassador and staffperson in Colombia, and the drug and arms trafficker, Guillot. A Cuban, *Mario Estevez Gonzalez*, also a convicted drug dealer, has claimed to be a former agent of the Directorio General de Inteligencia (DGI—the Cuban government's intelligence agency), who "infiltrated" the Florida drug trade disguised as a Mariel refugee. Crump and Estevez actually met in jail in Florida, both awaiting sentencing (presumably of 15 to 25 years apiece) on their drug convictions.

In exchange for their testimony, all three, who otherwise faced lengthy prison sentences, were given immunity from prosecution, reduced sentences on their other convictions, and the funds and services of the Federal Witness Protection Program.

Contradictory Testimony

These witnesses told their versions of different portions of the drugs-for-arms plot three times (aside from press interviews): to the Grand Jury which returned the indictments; during the February 1983 trial of some of the indicted individuals; before an April 30, 1983, joint hearing of the Senate Sub-Committee on Security and Terrorism of the Committee on the Judiciary, the Sub-Committee on Western Hemi-

NOV. 20, 1983

TROPIC



THE CASE AGAINST CUBA

Tropic, the magazine of the Miami Herald, showed photos on its cover of the three conspiracy witnesses, who had earlier testified hooded before government committees.

sphere Affairs of the Foreign Relations Committee, and the Senate Drug Enforcement Caucus. Mario Estevez also testified before a New York State Senate Select Committee on Crime on April 5, 1983. While press reports claimed that the witnesses corroborated each others' stories, in fact their testimonies disagreed in many ways, and witnesses changed parts of their stories from one occasion to the next. A few examples:

At various times Mario Estevez recounted a physically impossible number of international trips and activities during the month of August 1980, when the drugs-for-arms exchange was supposed to have been initiated. Before the New York State Senate Select Committee, Estevez recounted his supposed activities as a Cuban spy during that month. He claimed to be making two trips daily between the U.S. and Cuba, smuggling illegal Haitians and Colombians into Florida. But during cross-examination at the trial, Estevez claimed to have been making his contacts with the crew of the *Lazy Lady*, the boat to which drugs were off-loaded in Cuban waters, during August 1980; and also indicated that he made three international drug-smuggling trips during the same month. In later cross examination, Estevez said that he had spent the month in Bimini. (He previously had testified before the Grand Jury that the Cuban government first instructed him to go to Bimini in October 1980.)

At the trial, Estevez testified that he first entered the U.S. with the Mariel boatlift in May 1980. Before the New York Senate Select Committee, he said that he had been in the U.S. in 1978 to infiltrate the Cuban exile organization, Alpha-66. Although Estevez represents himself as a former DGI agent, his responses during cross-examination at the trial revealed ignorance both of key Cuban government

agencies and of details of exile groups he claimed to have learned of as part of his intelligence training.

Johnny Crump corroborated Estevez' story of participation in the drugs-for-arms exchange, in which Crump described himself as a key figure, on the grounds that (according to Crump) Estevez knew the names of the other smugglers and details of the operations. Crump and Estevez, however, did not actually know each other during the period in question, but became acquainted in jail later, awaiting sentence—at which time both agreed to cooperate with the U.S. government investigation of alleged Cuban government involvement in drug smuggling.

Estevez and David Lorenzo Perez also described in detail the Cuban torpedo boats which supposedly met them in Cuban waters. Estevez also added that, due to his military training, he knew that such boats were Soviet built. However, telephone conversations with U.S. Coast Guard and Navy spokespersons, as well as published sources on Soviet ships, indicate that there are no Soviet-constructed torpedo boats of the size and type described by the witnesses. The Cuban naval vessels known to the Coast Guard do not fit any of either Lorenzo Perez' or Estevez' descriptions.

Lorenzo Perez and Estevez, who both claimed knowledge of firearms, gave different testimony regarding a gun owned by Frank Bonilla, another indictee on the conspiracy charges. Both witnesses were questioned about a conversation aboard ship off the Cuba coast when the weapon was displayed. Lorenzo Perez said the gun was a 357 Magnum; Estevez described it as a .38 Special. Lorenzo Perez and Estevez also gave differing testimony as to the amount of drugs off-loaded onto the *Lazy Lady*.

Testimony countering charges of Cuba's official complicity in drug smuggling was offered to the Joint Senate Hearing on April 30, 1983. Francis M. Mullen, Jr., Acting Administrator of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, testified as follows in a prepared statement: "In the late 1970's U.S. and Cuban authorities initiated a cooperative program to interdict drugs in transit to the United States. As a result of this agreement, Cuban officials seized numerous vessels and aircraft and the personnel on board who violated Cuban territorial waters or airspace while engaged in drug trafficking. In late April 1982, Cuba renounced this agreement in retaliation for the U.S. decision to ban tourist and business travel to Cuba. There are, however, indications that Cuban authorities continued to seize vessels, airplanes and individuals reportedly involved in the drug traffic." According to a November 1982 statement by the Cuban government, since 1970 Cuba has arrested a total of 230 drug traffickers from the U.S., Colombia and other countries, capturing 36 ships and 21 planes that were operating in Cuban territorial waters or airspace. In 1981 and 1982 alone, Cuban officials captured 17 boats and planes, arresting 79 persons. In these operations hundreds of thousands of tons of marijuana were destroyed, along with large quantities of other drugs. Captured drug smugglers have been taken to court and given stiff sentences.

The agreement referred to in Mullen's testimony was concluded in 1978, and involved an exchange of information regarding terrorism and rescue operations, as well as drug smuggling. A teletype link was established between the Coast Guard in Miami and the Cuban Border Patrol. A 17-

year ban on the use of Cuban waters and airspace by the U.S. Coast Guard was ended. Since that time, U.S. media occasionally have reported the release from Cuban custody of U.S. citizens arrested by Cuban authorities on drug charges. Such release usually has resulted from the personal intervention of U.S. Congressional representatives or other officials.

Cuba in the Spotlight

The proceedings involving the three witnesses are fraught with irregularities which have generated increased public visibility for the U.S. government's allegations against Cuba.

For example, Johnny Crump appeared on the NBC-TV Nightly News program on September 29, 1982, talking about his supposed role as a drug smuggler with the Cuban government. Crump was, at that time, giving testimony to the Federal Grand Jury in Miami. The Justice Department seems to have condoned this breach of confidentiality during a Grand Jury proceeding.

Mario Estevez had his face hidden during his testimony both to the Joint Senate Hearing, and to the New York State Senate Select Committee on April 5, 1983, presumably for his own protection. Yet Estevez' picture appeared in the April 3, 1983, edition of the Providence, Rhode Island, *Sunday Journal*, accompanying an article headlined: "Cuba Takes a New Tack Against the U.S.: Smuggling Drugs." The article's author, Chuck DeCaro, writes that he conducted interviews with Estevez in "safe houses" in the Miami area. Yet a *New York Times* article the following day indicates that Estevez, as a potential witness in other narcotics trials, had declined to be interviewed and supposedly was being guarded by federal agents, and was expecting to be given a new identity and placed in the Federal Witness Protection Program. Estevez' photo also appeared on the front page of *Tropic*, the magazine section of the *Miami Herald*, November 20, 1983; an interview with Estevez and Crump appeared inside.

The Real Dope Pushers

The Grand Jury and trial proceedings, hearings and media reports are filled with hearsay assertions of Cuba's official complicity in the two-continent conspiracy. An interesting example from the Joint Senate Hearing: James A. Michel, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Interamerican Affairs, refers to an October 1982, "interview with Colombian journalists" in which Cuban President Fidel Castro supposedly described Jaime Guillot Lara as "a good friend of Cuba." A review of the major Colombian media for that month, however, revealed no mention of any such comment by Castro, or any interview with Castro by the Colombian press. In fact, Guillot had been arrested in Mexico in 1981 on drug and immigration-related charges and was released from a Mexican jail that month, extradition requests from both Colombia and the United States having been denied. He disappeared. (His whereabouts are still unknown.) The release, extradition denial and disappearance received front-page coverage in the Colombian papers. It seems unlikely, to say the least, that any comment by Castro

about Guillot at that time would have been ignored by the media in Colombia.

While no evidence to incriminate the Cuban officials has been uncovered, the involvement of many militantly anti-revolutionary, exile Cubans in the Florida drug trade is well documented by the local and national media and in Florida court and police records. Federal investigators estimate that illegal drug traffic accounts for \$10 billion a year in Florida business, and ranks as one of the state's biggest enterprises. In 1980, according to the *Miami Herald*, a secret Treasury Department report named a number of Miami banks where drug money was deposited, and which were consistent violators of Federal Reserve regulations for the reporting of desposits. A thorough and enlightening account of the relationship among narcotics dealers, Florida banks and the Cuban exile community can be found in the February 18, 1984, issue of *The Nation*: "The Miami Connection: Mafia/CIA/Cubans/Banks/Drugs," by Penny Lernoux. Henrik Kruger's book, *The Great Heroin Coup: Drugs, Intelligence and International Fascism*, describes in detail the narcotics trafficking of exile Cubans and their role in the Drug Enforcement Administration, and their ties to the Corsican and Sicilian Mafia, fascist movements and the CIA. Alfred McCoy, in *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, fingers a CIA agent—Lucien Conein, an operative of the DEA since 1976—who helped organize drug trafficking among the Meo tribespeople in Vietnam.

Keeping the Cold War Cold

The elaborate conspiracy story plays on themes which have been used over and over again in the U.S. to discredit Cuba: the concept of Cuba as an "outlaw" nation, an implacable, even vicious enemy of "democracy" engaged, with Soviet support, in "exporting revolution" to other parts of the Third World.

These themes have been promoted in publicity around the case, facilitated by, among others, some of President Ronald Reagan's strongest ideological supporters: Senators Paula Hawkins (R-FL), Jeremiah Denton (R-AL), Jesse Helms (R-NC), Dennis DiConcini (R-AZ), and Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY). Hawkins, who chairs the Senate Drug Enforcement Caucus, proposed the Joint Senate Hearing held in Miami on April 30, 1983, and the other senators were all present for that event. D'Amato co-pressed over the New York State Senate Select Committee Hearing.

Hawkins also sits on the Advisory Council of the Cuban-American National Foundation, a Miami business- and politico-backed anti-revolutionary organization formed the month Reagan took office. In October 1983, the Foundation issued an 88-page special report on the alleged conspiracy, entitled "Castro and the Narcotics Connection," with a preface written by Hawkins. This document, widely circulated in Congress and to the press, is a digest of media reports and of the hearings facilitated by the Administration ideologues. Only those sections of hearings and reports which support the position that the Cuban government is involved in narcotics trafficking are included.

The November 20, 1983 *Miami Herald* also claimed to have obtained a secret DEA intelligence report dated March 31, 1982, in which a "confidential informant" . . . "told

The Miami Herald
Miami drug smuggler ran guns for Castro to guerrillas, agent of Drug I
The Miami Herald
U.S. Links Drug Trader In Miami to Raul Castro
The Miami Herald
Cuba bankrolled drug run,
U.S. links Cuba with drug ring
The Miami Herald
Cuban officials co-conspirators, defendant says
The Miami Herald
Havana's Drug-Smuggling Connection
The Miami Herald
Cuba-linked trial
The Miami Herald
U.S. DRUG CHARGES CITE 4 CUBAN AIDES
The Miami Herald
10 Other Men Indicted in Miami in Large-Scale Smuggling

the DEA that high-ranking (Cuban) government officials discussed setting up a cocaine trafficking network to raise money for the Cuban government" as early as 1961. In a telephone interview, the DEA admitted that the report exists, is still classified, and had been prepared and given to Senator Denton as a member of the Senate Sub-Committee on Security and Terrorism. Neither the DEA nor the Sub-Committee could say how the *Herald* had obtained a copy.

Since none of the Cuban indictees will ever stand trial on the charges, and therefore guilt or innocence can never actually be proved or disproved in a court of law, the only tangible result of pursuing the case is that of propaganda. Through the Justice Department, financed by public funds, the Reagan Administration has been able to carry on an expensive and effective public relations campaign on behalf of its foreign policy.

All three key witnesses gained freedom and protection in exchange for their stories. They escaped prosecution for proven criminal offenses, while the Reagan Administration made political hay out of charges that can never be brought to court. ☐

1981 CENSUS

A Statistical Portrait of Cuba

by Jill Hamberg

The final results of Cuba's 1981 Census were released last summer, providing a wealth of detailed information on the country's population and housing. These statistics are contained in 17 volumes, one for each province and the Isle of Youth, and two volumes giving data for the entire country. The census was conducted in the week following September 11, 1981, and the data processed and released 22 months later.

Official figures indicate that the 1981 Cuban population reached 9,723,605, only 17,236 more than early estimates. Between 1970, the year of the last census, and 1981, the country's population grew only 1.1 percent a year, the lowest growth rate in this century. This was due to a sharp decline in the birth rate, especially after 1975, and migration abroad in the early 1970's and again in 1980 through the port of Mariel.

With the decline in births, the Cuban population is getting older on average. The median age in 1981 was 29.5 years, meaning that half the population was older than that figure and half younger. This contrasts with 27.0 years in 1970 and 26.1 in 1953, the last census taken before the Revolution. The number of people over 65 has almost trebled during the past 30 years. Similarly, there are fewer young children under 5 years old than there were 10 years ago. The net effect of these changes has been to make Cuba's age structure more similar to that of a developed country, with longer life expectancies and a lower birth rate. It also means that there is now a higher proportion of Cubans of working age as compared to the "dependent" population (children and elderly) they need to support with their labor.

In terms of marital status, there are a number of interesting trends. The divorce rate more than doubled in the late 1960's and 1970's, so as expected, there has been a substantial increase in the number of divorced and separated people. Twenty percent of the adult population (14 years or over) still maintain informal or "common law" marriages, a similar figure to that of 1970 and 1953.

The 1981 Census reported information not on race as such, but rather on skin color, utilizing categories from past censuses going back to the turn of the century. The figures for 1953 and 1981 are as follows:

PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION		
	1953	1981
White	72.8	66.0
Black	12.4	12.0
Asian	0.3	0.1
Mixed Ancestry (mostly Mulatto)	14.5	21.9

The apparent increase from 1953 to 1981 in the population of mixed racial ancestry can probably be attributed to a num-

ber of factors. One may be the difference in how census data was collected. Possibly more people chose to call themselves mulatto or mestizo in 1981—when self-identification was used—than the census takers identified in 1953. Probably more important were other factors. With the elimination of institutionalized racism, more people were willing to call themselves mulatto rather than white. Also, the higher birth rates of blacks and mulattos and the fact that those migrating abroad have been disproportionately white, have increased the nonwhite portion of the population. Racial categories in the Caribbean in general, and in Cuba in particular, are perceived somewhat differently than in the United States. Accurately reflecting these categories in a census is a considerable challenge, so much so, that when the 1980 U.S. Census was conducted in Puerto Rico, all questions on race were eliminated.

Slow Growth Rate of Havana

The City of Havana had by far the slowest growth rate of any major city or province in Cuba, and far below other Latin American capitals. But as can be expected there was nevertheless some continuing net migration to Havana from almost every province in the nation. An interesting, and perhaps surprising, finding of the census was that more people moved from the City of Havana to its surrounding province and the nearby Isle of Youth than moved to the capital from those provinces. In many parts of the developing world the trend is for people from the surrounding rural areas to move to the big cities, and not the other way around.

Seven out of 10 adult men over 15 years old were employed, while nearly a third of adult women were working outside the home. The unemployment rate was 3.4 percent, reflecting that part of the labor force actively seeking work the week before the census. Two-thirds of those working were employed in the productive sector of the economy, and the remainder in services, trade, public administration and other nonproductive activities. The vast majority of those in the labor force work for the government, with only 6.6 percent being self-employed small farmers or craftsmen (almost all of whom are men).

There are several basic ways to measure a country's educational attainment. Aside from the illiteracy rate—Cuba's is almost nil—the most common indicators are the percent of school-aged children enrolled in school and the average level of schooling attained by the population over six years of age.

In 1953 only 56 percent of all children between six and twelve years old were enrolled in school. By 1970 that figure was up to 88 percent and by 1981, 97 percent—that is, virtually every child eligible was studying in elementary school. Moreover, in 1981 more than 84 percent were in junior high schools or other kinds of secondary education, also a substantial increase from before the Revolution.

The average number of years of school completed by people over six years old in 1981 was 6.4 years, having more than doubled since 1953.

For both indicators, the most backward provinces in the eastern part of Cuba more than tripled their achievement, while in the more advanced areas, such as Havana, there was substantial but more modest improvement. Although there is still some difference in educational enrollments and attain-

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**Omega 7
Head
Indicted**

Two Federal grand juries have charged Eduardo Arocena, alleged head of the anti-Castro group, Omega 7, with manufacturing many of the bombs which were planted in four Miami businesses, four foreign consulates and at Lincoln Center in New York City. The juries, both in New York and in Miami, have charged Arocena with 47 separate crimes, ranging from possession of a machine gun, seven silencers and 12 bomb-time devices, to participating in 14 bombings or attempted bombings.

**Cooperative
Movement
Grows**

More and more of Cuba's small farmers are giving up their small plots and are joining cooperative farms. After the 1959 revolution, individuals could own up to 67 acres of land. During the 1970's, the cooperative movement began to really grow. From about 40 in 1975, the number of cooperatives has soared to more than 1400. Today, they employ 73,000 people and average about 1,000 acres in size.

**Ties
With
Argentina**

Cuba is seeking to strengthen its bilateral commercial ties with Argentina. Cuban Vice President, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez told Argentinian President Raul Alfonsin that Cuba plans to increase its purchases of Argentinian grain, oilseeds and edible oil in 1984.

**Majority
Opposed to
Terrorism**

In a telephone survey conducted by the Miami Herald in November 1983, 67 percent of the Cubans interviewed felt that bombing and other forms of violence by anti-Castro groups in the United States can not be justified. Among younger Cubans (18 to 29 years) only 17 percent supported violence, while 34 percent of those 60 or older supported it. 93 percent of the whites and 81 percent of the blacks interviewed felt that anti-Castro violence was not justifiable.

**Cubans
Reach
Depths**

In an unprecedented scientific feat for Cuba, a crew of Soviet pilots and Bulgarian and Cuban researchers reached an ocean depth of 608 meters in a minisubmarine. Exploring the drop of the island shelf near Punte del Este, at the southeastern tip of the Isle of Youth, the team discovered 35 species of fish and over a dozen deep-water organisms that had never before been reported in Cuban waters.

**OAS
on
Cuba**

A detailed 183-page report issued by the Organization of American States reported that after 25 years, Cuba is a tightly run totalitarian state. The OAS report admitted, however, that Cuba has made considerable progress in employment, health, education and social welfare. "Cuba is a totalitarian political system," the report says. "That system however, has shown itself to be notably efficient in meeting the basic needs of the population, especially those sectors that were most disadvantaged prior to the revolution."

(over)

NEWS BRIEFS

Anti-Castro Groups Go South

According to the Miami Herald, since 1980, alleged anti-Castro groups have been moving from New Jersey back to Miami, the original base of their operations. They do not seek publicity, as in the past, nor do they boast about their past or present ties to the CIA. They are considered a new breed of anti-Castro fighters which government prosecution has been unable to extinguish. The Herald said, "Today's suspected terrorist wear three-piece suits, hold responsible jobs, raise close-knit families and consult expensive lawyers."

New Zealand Sells Milk Products

In a move that it hopes will lead to continued trade, New Zealand sold 6,600 tons of skim milk powder to Cuba. It is the first sale of New Zealand dairy products to Cuba in 10 years.

Spain to Build Cuban Ships

The first contract that the Spanish shipyards received in 1983 came from Cuba. Under the agreement, Spain is to build eight merchant ships. In addition, orders for refrigerated vessels might be made in the near future.

Canada Trade Unbroken

Early in 1959, Canada's Progressive Conservative government, under Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, decided to continue diplomatic and trade relations with Cuba. Despite U.S. objections, those relations remain unbroken today. For Cuba, this trade has meant a steady source of U.S.-type modern equipment, as well as the ability to make loans through many of Canada's largest banks. Cuba and Canada have been successful in breeding Canada's high milk-producing Holstein-Frisian cattle with Cuba's hardy Zebu. Cuba also provides an ideal vacation spot for the more than 30,000 Canadians who visit there annually.

Subway System Planned

Construction of a Cuban subway system is high on Havana's list of projects for the rest of the century. Geological studies have shown that Havana has the conditions that would permit such a train line to be built. Underground lines could alleviate the city's inadequate transportation system.

Privacy in Posadas

The acute housing shortage has forced many Cubans seeking privacy to take advantage of posadas. The motel-like arrangements which traditionally were thought to cater to affairs are now being utilized by married couples as well. Posadas have been set up and regulated by the government. There are more than 50 posadas in Havana, and their rates, which are as low as \$5.00 for three hours, make it possible for couples living in crowded conditions, as well as couples who don't live together, to have a place to be alone. Their popularity has been marked by couples practicing another Cuban pastime....waiting in line.

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ment between different provinces and urban and rural areas, the gap has been steadily narrowed since the Revolution.

Housing Still a Problem

Housing still remains one of Cuba's most serious problems, although there have been significant advances. The number of houses and apartments has almost doubled since 1959, while urban slums have been virtually eliminated. After a steep drop in the number and proportion of the rural population living in *bohios*—wooden huts with thatched roofs—during the first decade of the Revolution, the number of such dwellings, and their share of the rural housing stock increased slightly during the 1970's. These, of course, are substantially better than the *bohios* of the past, with many now having cement floors, latrines, access to drinking water and even sometimes electricity. In fact, in Cuba as a whole, 83 percent of the housing units have electricity, including nearly all the dwellings in urban areas and nearly half those in rural areas. In 1953, only slightly more than half of all houses had electricity, and very few of these were in rural areas.

Along with the more widespread availability of electricity ownership of electric appliances has increased. More than half of Cuban households have refrigerators, television sets and sewing machines. Four-fifths own radios. ■

U.S.-CUBA

Ban on Cuban Nickel

by Elaine Fuller

One of the ways the U.S. government has been attacking Cuba lately is through its trade relations with other countries.

The United States, of course, maintains an economic embargo against Cuba and expects its allies to do the same. The degree to which they comply varies.

In July, the U.S. Treasury notified representatives of the Japanese ministries of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Industry that it would halt imports of Japanese stainless steel containing Cuban nickel. An official at the U.S. Treasury hinted to a London news publication that the purpose was to put pressure on Cuba because of its support for Nicaragua. The Japanese government, however, has taken no action and the firms concerned continue to import Cuban nickel. During the past two years, firms from at least six other industrialized countries have succumbed to explicit threats of retaliation by the United States, causing them to suspend negotiations with Cuba and even cancel contracts.

Cuba has been developing its nickel industry in recent years as one of its major exports. About half these exports go to the Soviet Union. In November, the Reagan Administration moved against Cuba by putting pressure on the Soviet Union. Under the Trading with the Enemy Act, the Treasury Dept. issued an order to ban imports of Soviet nickel—ingots, slabs, bars and other products—unless the Russians can guarantee that they contain no Cuban nickel. Treasury Assistant Secretary John M. Walker said the ban was aimed at Cuba "in order to bring about changes in that country's foreign policy, which is the exportation of armed violence in this hemisphere and other parts of the globe."

It is likely, however, that the ban was also motivated by this Administration's desire to cut trade with the Soviet Union and may have been initiated by business rivalry. The action came after Inco Ltd. of Canada informed the Treasury of the Cuban nickel content in Soviet exports. Inco would stand to gain the Soviet's share of the U.S. nickel imports.

The volume of U.S. exports to the Soviet Union is about 10 times higher than the amount of imports. However, exports have decreased since last year's total of about \$2.6 billion. None of this trade is presently considered to be trading with the enemy. ■

FEATURE

Puerto Ricans in Cuba: Part II

by Harriet and Vicior Alonso

Part I of this article spoke of the very small exile community of Puerto Ricans living in Cuba—their histories and their feelings about Puerto Rico and Cuba. Part I appeared in the January/February 1984 issue of CUBATIMES.

The Young Independentistas.

Julio Muriente: Quiet and informal, with a warm smile under his moustache, Julio Muriente doesn't seem the image of a radical activist expelled from the University of Puerto Rico for allegedly inciting riots.

Born in Brooklyn, Muriente was raised in Puerto Rico and as a college student there joined FUPI (The Federation of University Students for Independence), eventually becoming

head of the organization. After being expelled from the University, he worked for the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (P.S.P.) in the Fajardo-Vieques region of Puerto Rico. Then he completed his university degree in Mexico. For the past few years, he has been a member of the Central Committee of the P.S.P. and, more recently, its representative in Cuba.

He describes the Mission of the P.S.P. in Cuba as more than a political party office. "In many ways, since Puerto Rico is not independent, we perform the functions of an embassy, and our delegate here is like the ambassador of Puerto Rico. Really, all Puerto Ricans in Cuba can come to our office and feel at home here because we don't only relate to party members. We don't claim to have 'the truth,' that ours is the only way. We work with all Puerto Ricans who are pro-independence."

Understanding New York well, Muriente is able to make a comparison. "You know, North American society is so deeply hostile to Puerto Ricans, it's almost impossible for a Puerto Rican to integrate into it. Here you feel full acceptance; the children of Puerto Ricans easily became full Cuban citizens." Muriente also told me about the Puerto Rican student community in Cuba.

"There are perhaps 20 Puerto Rican students here who are on full scholarship, fully paid for by Cuba. They apply through our party to study here although they by no means have to be party members or socialists, though all do support Puerto Rican independence. They feel by studying here they are acquiring the skills that an independent Puerto Rico will need. They all come with the intention of returning to Puerto Rico to use their skills and work for independence. So far, all have done so. Though there hasn't been any trouble yet, we expect the U.S. government might try to deny the validity of their Cuban degrees and they may have to go to court to get the right to work in Puerto Rico."

The Marriage of Two Islands.

Maria Diaz: "I visited Cuba in 1978 because I was working in a travel agency, and I had always been curious about Cuba. I wondered what it was like. So I came to find out and then to sell vacations to my clients."

Maria Diaz is a young, lively Puerto Rican woman typical of a number of Puerto Ricans in having settled in Cuba for personal reasons. She remembers her first encounters with Cuba. "On my first visit, I met this Cuban man through a mutual friend, and we began writing to each other, but after a while we stopped. But then when I came with another tour group, we met again and became more serious. Then every chance I got, I came to Cuba. I made ten trips in one year. Finally, he said, 'I love you. I want to marry you, but you know I can't live in Puerto Rico.' And I understood that because he was raised in a socialist society, he could never like living in a capitalist one like Puerto Rico, so I moved here. My husband had worked four years in the microbrigade constructing the Alamar housing complex, so as a reward, we have this beautiful apartment with two bedrooms, a living room, dining room, patio and balcony."

"We were told there was hunger here and unrest. I found none of that to be true."

"You know, when I moved here, I was definitely *not* a socialist. I was for independence for Puerto Rico, but I grew up in a capitalist system where we got so much misinformation about Cuba. We were told there was hunger here and unrest. I found none of that to be true. Here everyone has their basic necessities and above all, a good education. I studied three years in a college in Puerto Rico, but I feel like I know nothing. I feel so uneducated next to the college students here. I really admire the educational system here. It is so complete."

Maria plans to finish her education in Cuba, but, for now she does volunteer work at the Mission of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party in Cuba. She sometimes misses her native

country, but she travels there several times a year, so far without harrassment by U.S. authorities. (In order to keep it that way, hers is the only pseudonym used in this article.)

The largest group of Puerto Ricans in Cuba are, like Maria, there for reasons of intermarriage. Several years ago, for example, José Luis, a boxing trainer for the Pan American games, traveled to Cuba as a boxer. There he was offered a scholarship to study physical education. He became a professor and boxing trainer and married a Cuban woman. It was only after working for a while and having a son that he decided to return to Puerto Rico, taking his family with him. Another Puerto Rican, Sylvia Barachal, ended up in Cuba through the marriage route. Sylvia met her husband when he was performing on a ballet tour of Puerto Rico. She returned with him to Cuba and lives there with their two children.

Similarities and Differences.

How would these Puerto Ricans of different backgrounds and ideologies compare Cuban and Puerto Rican cultures? Though most Puerto Ricans will agree that they fit very easily into Cuban society because of their similar histories, language and customs, there are distinct differences which distinguish the two: for example, different accents in Spanish, different historical heroes and, of course, a different political status—one an independent nation, one a colony.

For Julio Muriente, the biggest difference is in character. "Cubans, on the average, are more aggressive. Maybe this is because of the security they feel living in the Revolution. They speak louder and there is a great deal of informality in their relations. I think our culture has been influenced by the nature of 85 years of U.S. presence in Puerto Rico."

Maria Diaz agrees about the Cuban character. "Cubans say what they feel. Puerto Ricans are more reserved and formal. For example, if a Puerto Rican sneezes, everyone jumps to say, '*Salud*,' but in Cuba, you can sneeze all day long and nobody will say anything."

Maria also notes a world of difference in the security of the environment. "When I go to Puerto Rico now, I feel so strange because there is so much crime. I feel I have to hold on to my purse tightly and lock the car doors. And on many corners, you see drug addicts. I tell mothers here that they don't know how lucky they are. In Puerto Rico, you can't let a seven-year-old child out of sight for fear of kidnapping. Here in Cuba children are so free and independent. They travel anywhere on their own and you feel completely secure letting them go out to play."

Muriente feels that another difference between Puerto Rico and Cuba is racial. "The pure African, as opposed to Afro-Caribbean influence, is much greater in Cuba than in Puerto Rico, because Cuba was much more important economically to Spain than Puerto Rico and, therefore, needed more slave labor. Also, there is more of a presence in Cuba of Central Americans, Amerindian, Jamaican, Haitian and Chinese immigrants. Puerto Rico's ethnic composition is limited mainly to a mixture of white European, African and Indian." The main difference, adds Muriente, is that because racial segregation was maintained much more strictly in Cuba, African culture developed more fully and has a more prominent place in the society."

For Rosa Meneses, food is also a big difference. Cubans, for example, use *gandules*, the ubiquitous pigeon peas of

Puerto Rico, in salads, but not in rice. Cubans don't make *pasteles*, *asopao* or *alcapurrias*. Their pork is seasoned differently and *pinã coladas* don't exist. Last year, the Mission sponsored a Puerto Rican fiesta for their Cuban friends. The Cubans were reluctant, at first, to try the new dishes, but, as Meneses says, "were fascinated by them."

According to Muriente, the Cubans and Puerto Ricans are like the old saying, "*Juntos pero no revueltos*". (Together, but not scrambled up.) The many differences are small; the similarities are more important. Even the flags are the same with only the colors reversed. "None of the differences has an important effect on the relationship."

Yet, the Puerto Rican community does consciously maintain its uniqueness in a country where total integration is possible and easy. Rosa Meneses' daughter is raised like any other child in Cuba. She attends a Cuban school and participates in all activities open to her peers. However, in addition to this, her mother teaches her about Puerto Rican heroes, sings Puerto Rican songs and teaches her Puerto Rican dances. "I want her to feel love for Puerto Rico and to know about its struggle for independence."

Muriente points out that Puerto Rican children raised in Cuba usually have parents who are either socialists and/or supporters of the independence movement. Yet, the children are Cuban citizens and will serve in the Cuban armed forces when they grow up. Muriente feels that these children "become Cubans with a great consciousness of the situation of their homeland, Puerto Rico."

Most important to this small Puerto Rican community, however, is the solidarity for their people expressed by the Cubans. During this year's *Jornada*, a special evening of *nueva trova* music was presented in honor of the Puerto Ricans. Such notable performers as Silvio Rodriguez and Pablo Milanés appeared, along with a host of younger singers. In addition, the Minister of Culture of the Cuban government attended, as well as the Ambassador from Panama and the Cuban representative to the Decolonization Committee of the U.N. The feeling emanating at these events was one not only of political support, but of respect and deep affection. As Muriente said, "Cuban solidarity for Puerto Rico is a daily occurrence, and I consider it a privilege to be here." ■

HUMAN SERVICES

Reflections on the 25th Anniversary

by Ken Schulman

Gazing out into the expanse of a heavily populated park in the Vedado section of Havana, the elderly man remembered days passed. "There was a time," he lamented, "when I couldn't sit and relax like this—my life was too uncertain. I had no job, and never knew when, or what, I'd be eating next. But now things are different. No, it's not the best it can be, but I feel safe. I have a pension, a nice place to live and plenty to eat."

Selected standard of living indicators

Indicator	percentages		
	1953	1970	1981
Schooling	56.4	88.0	97.3
6th grade completed	20.1	31.6	61.0
Homes with indoor sanitary facilities	74.9	82.0	91.0
Homes with electricity	56.4	70.7	82.9
Radio sets	49.0	61.0	82.0
TV sets	6.0	17.0	58.0
Refrigerators	16.0	24.0	51.0
Sewing machines	—	40.0	50.0
Washing machines	—	—	28.0
Electric fans	—	—	35.0

Every so often the old man's words were punctuated by a ball kicked near us by frolicking children. After one shot zipped by, frighteningly close to my head, my new acquaintance touched me arm, laughed and said, "Do not fear, for they are just enjoying themselves. Before, these children, too, would probably have been hungry and poorly clothed. But now, instead, they are well-prepared for Cuba's tomorrow. And this is another reason why I can feel secure about today."

January 1, 1984 ushered in the 25th anniversary of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. And, as with the old man's thoughts on his country's quality of life, these first few months of this milestone year signal an opportunity to consider how the yesterdays of painful struggle have merged with the progress evident today.

In a December 18, 1983 article, "How the Average Cuban Lives," José M. Norniella writes for *Granma Weekly Review*, "In its 24 years of existence the Cuban Revolution has made a systematic effort to improve the people's living and working conditions. Less than five years after the triumph of the Revolution, the Moncada Program, whose main goals were to guarantee each citizen the right to work, health, education, culture and social security, had been put into effect."

As Fidel Castro stressed in a speech commemorating the 25th anniversary, Cuba can point to the substantial achievements made in realizing the original goals of the Moncada Program. To mention some of these achievements:

- There has been a marked increase in the number of Cubans who can read and write. The literacy rate has jumped from 76 percent in 1959 to nearly 96 percent today. Prior to 1959 20 percent of Cuba's population achieved at least a 6th grade education; currently, 61 percent have six or more years of schooling. And when only Cubans of working age are counted, over 79 percent have at least a 6th grade education.

- The quality of health care has dramatically improved. In 24 years, the infant mortality rate has dropped from over 60 per 1000 births to 17.1 today. Life expectancy, which was 50-55 years in 1959, is now 73 years. And, where there were no local polyclinics providing free and accessible community health care before the triumph of the Revolution, there are over 400 today.

• The Cuban diet, which is more than adequate, has become the basis for the reality of a well-nourished population. Whereas before 1959, 96 percent of Cuban farmers and agricultural workers ate no meat, only 1 percent ate fish, only 2 percent had eggs, and only 11 percent drank milk, today a rationing system guarantees the equitable distribution of foodstuffs (and many other goods) to everyone. The rationing of foods, even though it is now less extensive than previously, guarantees for every Cuban a diet of at least 2,300 calories and 60 grams of protein daily. In fact, the per capita daily consumption of calories in 1980 was 2,866 and the consumption of protein was 74.5 grams, far above that of millions of Latin Americans.

• Social security legislation has been enacted to promote the well-being of retired workers and pregnant women. Bereft of any truly systematic provisions, the pre-revolutionary social security program lacked universal benefits. Today, a universalized system covers all workers and provides highly progressive maternity benefits as well.

• And the government has built new housing, extended electricity to remote rural areas, increased the numbers of homes with indoor sanitary facilities, and provided radios and television sets to families who otherwise would not have had them.

In his article, Norniella sums up these advances in this way, "The Cuban people are building socialism, and in the 24 years since the victory of the Revolution they have eradicated begging, prostitution, unemployment, drug abuse and trafficking, illiteracy, many diseases and poverty. There are no hungry and neglected children or old people in Cuba."

While there is no question that further improvements will be made in the health and welfare of the Cuban people in the country's next quarter-century, the successes of a system that meets basic human needs are evident. The key element in this system is one of commitment to eliminating the concerns of survival that plagued Cubans at the time of the Moncada Plan's proclamation. And, in a relatively short period of time—a mere 24 years—it appears that here the Revolution has triumphed once again.

(Editors' Note: In future columns, various specific aspects of human services will be addressed. Contributions on current news concerning social welfare issues, health and mental health, related conferences here or in Cuba, visitors from Cuba who are involved in human services, or the like, are welcome. Please write with any pertinent ideas to Ken Schulman, Boston University School of Social Work, 264 Bay State Road, Boston, MA 02215.) ■

MIAMI

Cubans in Miami: The Success Image

by Bob Greenberg

The image of success that most people accept as a true description of the Cuban community in the U.S. masks serious problems. In fact, according to Professor Lisandro Perez of Louisiana State University, polishing the success image

blinds the Cuban community and prevents it from dealing with its lingering problems.

Using figures from the 1980 United States Census, Professor Perez finds that from 1970 to 1980 there has been a 250 percent increase in Cubans 65 years and older living in poverty. About 14 percent of all Cubans living in Dade County, which includes Miami and its suburbs, live in poverty, 6 percent more than their fellow white citizens. The median family income of Cubans is about \$19,000, as compared to \$24,000 for white Americans.

Writing for a special 44-page *Miami Herald* supplement on Cubans, Perez lists three problems that have been neglected by the Cuban community. First, the proportion of dependent elderly Cubans is increasing. It is already a much older community than the total United States population. While elderly Cubans were usually taken care of within the traditional three-generation extended family, younger Cubans are increasingly opting for the nuclear family of their adopted country. Consequently, more and more elderly Cubans will need housing, institutional care and special services. Already, 5,058 Cuban families in 1980 were composed only of people over 65 living in poverty.

Another problem is that Cubans are increasingly concentrated in South Florida. More jobs are needed in this area as well as more services for those who left Cuba over 20 years ago, in their 30's and 40's, and who are now nearing retirement age.

Finally, Perez points to growing family disorganization. The proportion of divorced and separated people is higher for Cubans than for the United States population, higher than any other Hispanic group except Puerto Ricans. Fully 14 percent of Cuban children do not live with an adult male.

Professor Perez reasons "that if only a portion of the same human resources that have been devoted to living up to the image of economic success were devoted to reorganizing and solving these and other problems, the Cuban community would be a better place for all, including the poor, the elderly, the children, the troubled and the powerless." ■

GRENADA

Cuban Prisoner on Grenada: Interview

by Jean Fraser

Mario Martin Manduca spent seven months in Grenada as a construction worker, specifically as a painter. CUBA-TIMES' correspondent, Jean Fraser visited him in Havana's Hermanos Amejerias Hospital, where he was recovering from gunshot wounds that have left him paralyzed from the waist down. The following is Mario's account of events that began on October 25, 1983, the day the U.S. invaded Grenada, when he was wounded and captured.

According to Mario, even when the situation in the Bishop government became known, the Cubans did not intervene. "In the orientation we received, we knew there were principles guiding us. Fidel had stated we were not to take part in

any of the internal situations in Grenada, because they were problems that only the Grenadians could solve," he said.

"On the morning of the 25th, at 6:00 A.M., we heard shots around camp and knew it was something against us. When we saw we were being directly attacked, we took steps, precautions, and we occupied our posts to defend ourselves. We saw it was an unequal battle and afterwards we found out it was the 82nd Division of the U.S. against 500 construction workers. There was a group stationed at the camp for the preservation of our safety, but the main bulk of people were construction workers."

The Cubans occupied their posts and began resisting. But according to Mario, "we couldn't resist very long. I wished we had more arms—they didn't have to be equal to the ones of the invaders—but with a few more weapons the situation would have been different. I have a long memory of what a few Cubans are capable of doing with a few weapons. But we would have needed more weapons than what we had. We were attacked from the ships, shelled by airplanes and helicopters with machine guns." The result of the attack is history. Mario expressed sadness that American soldiers are still in Grenada, using the airport that belongs to the Grenadian people.

Mario was hit while changing position at about 8 or 9 A.M. "I was thrown to the ground and lay there many hours. More than twice, American soldiers came to the place where I was lying to see if I was dead or alive." Mario lay on his face so they could not see him breathing. He pretended to be dead and believing he was, the soldiers left him. "I hoped the situation would change and the Cubans would come back to get me. I didn't want to fall in the hands of the American soldiers."

The soldiers returned three or four times to look at him. He remembers that one time, "they prodded my face with the tips of their boots to see if I was alive, and I heard a voice say in Spanish 'no, he's dead.' I don't know why they said it in Spanish." That night went by, then on the following day, about 4 P.M., an American soldier came by, and seeing Mario lying with his face up, realized he was alive. "I had lost a lot of blood, ants were biting me and I had a high fever. The soldier put the gun to my neck as if he were going to shoot me and said a profanity. Then the other one, who had a red cross on his cap, pulled me by my shirt to see the shot I had in my back. They just tossed me over. They asked me what I was doing in Grenada, and I answered I was constructing the airport. They asked, was it an airport so that the Soviet Union could have an advantage? I said no, this airport is being built for the Grenadian people."

According to Mario, a doctor came over, cut his shirt and saw where the bullet was—in his spine. He checked him over and gave him some water. The doctor treated him well, with respect, he said. He had been lying there for 32 hours. He was carried to a house right there at the airport that had been occupied by the Americans. This was where the Cuban military mission had stayed. Mario explained that he wears dentures and when he was wounded he took them out of his mouth—he always had the hope he would live, and was afraid he would suffocate on his teeth. He placed them on a tree nearby. When one of the soldiers asked him if those were his teeth, he said, "yes, but I don't want them." Mario said that one of them picked up his teeth and when they were



GRAMMA

Mario Martin Manduca, just after his return to Cuba.

examining him he was asked about his teeth. He told them he threw them out. "They said 'no, no, here they are on your bed.' I told them no, that can't be because I didn't sleep here, so they can't be mine. I slept in the G3 barracks. They didn't ask me anything else. They had put my teeth there just to try to link me with the military mission. If I had been a soldier I would have said it without any fear whatsoever, because that's an honor."

A tube was passed through his chest so he could breathe better, as one of his lungs had collapsed. He was put on a stretcher in a jeep and taken to the airstrip. "Lots of American soldiers were there, they were even working with our equipment—with the bulldozer and the crane. I was there for about 30 minutes. They put me in a helicopter and flew for about an hour; then they took me to a ship. The ship had a plane carrier, it had doctors and so on."

Mario was given a blood transfusion on the plane, and continued to receive transfusions for the four days he remained on the ship. There were Puerto Ricans on the ship, by Mario's account, and one of them spoke to him in Spanish. "Lopez was his surname. He said, 'Mario, nothing is going to happen to you here; whatever you want just ask me, I'll try to help you out.'" Mario said he noticed that every time he was examined, the doctors always laughed. He doesn't know if they were laughing at him, but he said, "it was a very disagreeable laughter, sarcastic. It gave me a very bad impression, because we are accustomed that when there

is a sick person, whoever he may be, whatever nationality he may have, we always try to respect and consider that person."

Guarded at All Times

After four days on the ship Lopez told him he was being transferred because they had no facilities there to cure him. He was put on a plane and taken to Roosevelt Base hospital in Puerto Rico. "From the very first moment I arrived in Puerto Rico I had a guard. A soldier with a club and a gun and a walkie talkie. Every two hours they changed guards, but I always had one. From the condition I was in there was no need for a guard. I had no movement from my waist down. Alberto Chatelain Vallin (the other wounded prisoner who was taken to Puerto Rico) was hit in the head and right leg and had transfusions, and when he went to the bathroom—he spent ten minutes everytime he went from the bed to the bathroom because he had to go with the transfusion—still he had a guard. Everytime he had to go to the bathroom, a soldier would get his weapon and stand at the door, afraid the man might escape. In his condition he couldn't escape, and where would he go anyhow? But it was always the concern of the soldier; he would stand at the door until he came out of the bathroom. They were following very strict orders because this happened after we were transferred from the Roosevelt Base to the hospital."

Mario spent two days at the base before being transferred to the Veterans Hospital in Puerto Rico. It was there that he was X-rayed, and according to him, he was well attended. He spent four days at the hospital. He said the nurses were around if he needed anything and they treated him delicately. He received whatever he asked for and the food was good. What Mario objected to was the guard. He felt badly about having one, even though they helped him if he wanted water when there was no one else there. He would say to the guard in English, "please, my friend, water." Sometimes, he said, they would call the nurse to help him.

He was visited by representatives of the International Red Cross, who talked to him about returning to Cuba. All of the other 57 wounded Cubans had already returned by this time. "I was losing hope that I would ever come back to Cuba," he said.

On several occasions he was told by representatives of the Red Cross that Switzerland and Havana were trying to get him to Cuba, but he tried not to appear emotional about it, afraid they would use psychological warfare on him. Finally, on November 15 at 1:30 P.M., he was taken by ambulance to San Juan, where a Cuban plane was waiting to bring him home. When he arrived in Havana, he was greeted by Fidel.

Though Mario is paralyzed, he is recuperating well, is happy to be back in Cuba and would have been released from the hospital by the time this article is published. ■

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HEALTH

Rice, Beans and Exercise

by Harriet Alonso

According to Miguel Diaz, the Public Relations Director of the National Institute of Sports and Recreation (INDER), there has been an increase in heart attacks in Cuba's relatively young population because of lack of physical exercise. (The average age on the island is 32; however, life expectancy is now over 70.) Larger numbers of cars, elevators and an increase in mass transportation, in addition to a starch-rich diet, have added both to weight gain and inactivity. The Ministry of Health (MINSAP) has found that 52 percent of the population is overweight, (10 percent over the ideal weight), and 22-25 percent is obese, (20 percent over ideal weight). In response to this, INDER has combined forces with MINSAP and with local groups and medical centers to educate people about diet and exercise.

Because of problems with food availability and old eating habits, Cuba seems to have had more success in promoting exercise than it has in changing eating habits. "We in Cuba are used to a Spanish-type diet of potatoes, rice and bread," says Diaz. According to nutritionist Dr. Delia Plascencia Concepción and internist Dr. Ignacia Macias Castro of MINSAP, the average caloric intake in Cuba today is almost 3,000 a day, mostly carbohydrates like beans and rice. Cubans do not like fish or eggs. In one study made by the MINSAP nutritionists, a workers' cafeteria offered a varied menu of beans, rice, fish, eggs and chicken. At the end of each day, the fish and eggs were still there. Dr. Macias Castro claims that people don't choose these foods because they do not feel full afterwards. This he insists, is a psychological habit that must be changed through education.

Medical clinics have become involved in the campaign through lectures and leaflets. Local CDR's (Committees in Defense of the Revolution) have organized nutrition and exercise classes on a block-by-block basis. Magazines carry articles, recipes and exercise instructions, and TV shows on

OBLIGARLO ES PROPICIAR LA OBESIDAD



"To force him is to promote obesity." *Bohemia magazine.*

health topics are becoming more frequent. One Sunday morning show, for example, instructs people on how to cook healthy meals in a few minutes. This is both popular and necessary to a population of workers and political activists. Even recipe books like "How to Prepare Vegetables" and "How to Cook Fish" are found in the local stores.

"We're working on changing these habits, but it can't be done in two or three days," explains Dr. Plascencia. "It's in our interest to sell sugar for export, not to eat it." Yet, Cuba's ice cream, Coppelia, is one of the richest in the world, laden with sugar and fat. (One can order a Copa Lolita and find oneself face-to-face with a large dish of flan covered with vanilla-fudge ice cream and marshmallow sauce!) In addition, the Cubans love to add sugar to plain yogurt or to eat sweet fruit yogurt, lots of fried foods and small eclairs.

"People don't like some types of vegetables," explains Dr. Macias Castro, "so they rot away in the markets. Cauli-



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flower, cucumbers, celery, eggplant, watercress and radishes are all ignored by shoppers. Only lettuce, tomatoes and avocados are purchased. In my home, I have to fight with my wife and with the other people who live with me to buy cucumbers because I love them and they don't." Lack of adequate refrigeration and the need to use fish for export add to nutritional problems. As one woman explained, "Often you have to buy the fish whole and clean it yourself. No one wants to do that. Also, it might be too big to use and impossible to keep fresh."

More Cubans Exercise

While efforts are being made to educate people about nutrition, the Cuban health officials realize that the changes will proceed slowly. In the meantime, more and more people are involving themselves in exercise programs. Many exercise at home after a hard day at work; others attend activities at the many sports facilities already constructed throughout the country. These include special facilities for the handicapped or for people with physical ailments. While use of such sport and recreation facilities is generally free of charge, Diaz explained that a series of modern gymnasiums being built around the country will have to charge a small fee to offset the cost of importing the exercise equipment from Japan. According to Diaz, "Five years ago, it would have been considered improper to see someone jogging in the

street, but now it's not uncommon to see joggers in the streets of Havana." In fact, at an exhibit of sports equipment manufactured throughout the socialist world, a wide variety of ball sports, jogging and water sports items produced in China were on display.

One place where exercise is encouraged is the José Martí Sports Complex in Havana. The complex includes a gym, track, pool and sports fields. There, José de los Santos Hernandez Rios, better known as Cheo, a college graduate with a degree in Physical Education, works as the exercise instructor. New students at the Center must attend three exercise classes in order to have their physical condition evaluated. They spend each of three hours doing general abdominal, back, hip, arm and leg exercises. Once the evaluation is completed, the students work on pullies, weights, and on the floor following programs specifically designed to meet their needs. Some are there to lose weight; others to shape-up. Most attend class three days one week and two days the next. The entire cost is under three dollars a month!

Miguel Diaz predicts that it will take ten years for the fitness campaign to be successful. "It all depends on our being able to communicate with the younger generation. The custom of physical fitness has to begin at home. If a child sees his parent smoking, drinking or being sedentary, it will undermine whatever else is being done about physical fitness."

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