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An Interview with Fidel Castro

by Charles O. Porter

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[Charles O. Porter, former U.S. Representative from Oregon's 4th District, went to Cuba in late last September to speak to Prime Minister Fidel Castro on behalf of the *Union de Familiares pro Amnistia de Presos Politicos Cubanos* in order to try to secure a general amnesty for political prisoners that Cuba is holding. (These prisoners are associated neither with the Batista government nor with the Bay of Pigs (Playa Giron) invasion.)

There was hope that this amnesty could be negotiated, because Castro had told James Donovan, who negotiated the bargain for the Bay of Pigs prisoners, that when the Bay of Pigs agreement was closed, he would consider a general amnesty for political prisoners. Porter's negotiations with Castro were not successful because Castro required that before a general amnesty could be declared 1) that the aggressive attacks on Cuba, which Castro is sure are supported by our CIA, must cease, and 2) that the Bay of Pigs agreement must first be completed—Castro claims that Cuba was shortchanged about ten million dollars.

The U.S. Government did not endorse Porter's trip to Cuba as a negotiator for the *Union* although they had full knowledge of that reason for his trip, but Porter did get clearance to go as a journalist representing *Look Magazine* for the purpose of securing an interview with the Prime Minister. That interview took place 3 October 1963, and *Northwest Review* is pleased to print the text of it here. *Look*, which has over 7½ million more readers and, more importantly, an income of millions from advertisers, would not print this interview. We feel very strongly that it should be made available, that it is information that we, as responsible citizens in a free society, ought to have; so does Mr. Porter; so does the three-station Pacifica network, which will play the tapes of the interview for their too-few subscribers.—E. VAN A.]

MR. PORTER: Mr. Prime Minister, as you know, I have presented to you a petition from my clients in Miami, women relatives of Cuban political prisoners, asking for a general amnesty. What is your attitude toward releasing these political prisoners in the near future?

MR. CASTRO: As you know, the State punishes counter-revolutionary activities as a means to defend the revolution.

The revolution has been constantly under unceasing castigation by counter-revolution, inspired by the Government of the United States.

We cannot release the prisoners while there is still the purpose of aggression on the part of the United States, because there is every assurance that these prisoners would be used in case of attack on Cuba.

There is the very recent example of the prisoners of Playa Girón.

The Government set these prisoners free and set them free without any guarantees whatsoever, as concerns the payment of indemnities, and these indemnities were not wholly fulfilled. We were victims of cheating.

And yet, these counter-revolutionary mercenaries were set free and are again getting ready to attack Cuba.

With that, you can easily understand we are not in a very good disposition to offer a general amnesty to these counter-revolutionaries, because, by doing so, we would be proceeding against our own national security.

I want to make it clear as far as Mr. Donovan, the lawyer, is concerned, that I think he has not acted in bad faith. The responsibility lies fully on the part of the Government of the United States that prevented him from carrying out the full fulfillment of the compromise that he had reached with us.

I can tell you that as soon as there is a peaceful situation as far as Cuba is concerned, and the Cuban revolution is no longer menaced by the Government of the United States, the Cuban Government will consider a general amnesty.

What is the basis for your statement that the U.S.A. did not complete its payment, as agreed, for the Bay of Pigs prisoners?

Even though the Revolutionary Government, in order to facilitate the release of the mercenaries, changed the terms of the sentence—changed those terms so instead of receiving the payment in cash, we would accept food and medicine—even though the revolutionary government did that, they [the U.S.] didn't carry it out completely. They didn't—neither in quantity nor in quality. They sent many medicines which we didn't need and didn't ask for, and we kept on saying we were not interested in those medicines.

And we had made a compromise for them to send medicines and equipment in which we were interested, and none of that came. And unilaterally, without even discussing the matter with us, *they* decided when the whole indemnification had been carried out.

Has a formal protest been filed, with a Bill of Particulars?

Yes. Even before the last shipment came, we sent a formal protest with the functionaries of the International Red Cross and the American Red Cross that were here.

And we told Mr. Donovan of the non-conformity. And we have all the documents, to prove [our case] beyond any doubt. I think that [nonfulfillment] was a serious mistake, because that destroys any good faith that one might have that could be used as an instrument to better things.

Has the United States replied to your protests?

Not at all.

On what conditions, if any, would Cuban exiles be permitted by Cuba to return to their homeland?

It is all on condition of the climate—cessation of the aggressions, the policy of the United States. When we don't have anything to fear from the emigrés, because they are a minority. The limitations would be lifted so far as needed workers is concerned. Naturally, work must be given primarily to those who are living and working here.

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Well, I would like to have you differentiate between "Communist," "Cuban Communist," "Socialist," and "Marxist-Leninist." And then tell me which one or more of them do you consider yourself and when did you become so.

This implicates political science and political thought, and every one of those terms refers to various schools of socialism. The terminology is used to describe the Utopian socialists, the communists, the primitive communists and others. So they actually could mean many things.

They are relative. When we say we are Marxist-Leninist, what we mean to say is that we are scientific socialists. This differentiates us from all other types of socialists. We base our conceptions of society on history—and on Marx's and Engel's conceptions, which were later on expanded by Lenin.

And as Marxist-Leninists, we are not dogmatic—we consider that political conceptions should be completely applied to a concrete situation. They are not mechanical. We do not do things exactly as they have been done in some other socialist countries. You understand that every revolutionary movement should apply a creative spirit to its political conceptions and we have applied ours in that spirit. We are building socialism.

To build socialism doesn't mean to build communism. Communism requires a material basis. And those material bases must be carried out during the construction of socialism.

In communism, everyone gives in accordance with his work and receives in accordance with his necessities.

In socialism everyone gives in accordance to his work and receives in accordance to his work.

However, even under socialism, many people receive in accordance with their necessities—sick people, for instance, get medical care. They are subsidized while they are sick. The young people, studying, have

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scholarships—they have nothing to pay. And the aged. And children receive free education—which means that many people in socialism receive in accordance with their necessities, but there are many other people that give and receive in accordance with their work.

There are still some remnants of capitalism—there are many people who receive much more . . . there are even people who do not work and produce any material. We have the case, for instance, of people who own houses, and who are being paid on indemnity of five to six hundred dollars a month, without doing absolutely anything, only because they were proprietors of different houses.

There are some doctors who work in the State Hospitals, and some other doctors who work on their own who make much more.

So you can say there are socialists and there are people that would belong to the communist class, and there also remnants of the old society, the capitalist society. Socialism is only a transitory stage.

Of course, the socialist systems—

Let me understand, though: socialism is where you own the means of production, but communism, in the way you are using it, is even more public ownership than that? Would that be the distinction?

It's more than that. It's superior to socialism.

The state has the property in the name of the people. It is really the property of the nation. There is an identification between the state and the people. There still isn't any communist society in the world.

The Soviet Union, which is a socialist country, is beginning now to solve the practical problems posed by a communist society.

At the moment, we are solving the practical problems posed by a socialist society. And we are highly interested in solving these problems very well. You can have one social system efficient and one social system deficient. So that is also true of capitalism. It depends on the methods—it depends on the formulas you use to solve practical problems.

You substitute one way of living for another. You substitute a society that works on the function of some factors for another society. In our country, which is a small country, it is logically easier. When you have those same problems in the Soviet Union or even in the United States—the most technically developed country that has a highly developed industry—you are more near the structure you would have under socialism.

It is not the same to build socialism in an under-developed country as in an industrialized country. It is not the same to build socialism in a country where you have small factories and four or five big factories as it is to build socialism in a country where all the factories are big.

It is not the same to build socialism in a country where you have multiple small enterprises as in a country where the means of production

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are already in the hands of consolidated big enterprises.

They have practically the same organization they would have under socialism except that there they are in the hands of private people, not public. But who manages these big enterprises? The proprietors? No. The managers of the proprietors. The owners sometimes are thousands and thousands of miles away, and never have anything to do with the administration of those businesses.

Every stockholder of a big enterprise is interested in having a good administrator. In socialism, the people are the stockholders, and all the people should be interested in seeing that the enterprise goes on well so that the earnings will be bigger for all the stockholders and in a socialist country the earnings are for all the people, who are the stockholders.

Of course, an advanced and industrialized country is always more prepared for socialism than an under-developed country. An under-developed country, where there have been very small factories, has no experience in managing big enterprises; they have to create all that organization.

So that poses very big practical problems, which are very interesting. Naturally, it is only a question of time before this government has experience and an organization in order to be able to make use of all the advantages of socialism.

One of the main advantages, I say, in a socialist system is that all the resources are rationally used. They are not employed in an anarchic way. You create an opportunity to orient the resources in one direction, and the strength of all the resources then is more superior than if the resources were scattered.

For instance, you have seen our chicken plantation?

It's wonderful.

There we have birds of the best type. Not any individual producer can do that. Only with resources of the nation.

But aside from the economic aspect, when you said, "I am a Marxist-Leninist," everybody in the United States—the writers—said "Communist, who believes in world revolution by a conspiracy to overthrow the capitalist nations." Now, I want to know, do you consider yourself that kind of Communist? One who is pledged to world revolution by force against the capitalist nations, in accordance with Marxian dogma?

I think it is rather the capitalistic countries who have sworn themselves to destroy socialist countries.

For instance, when Mr. Kennedy and many American Senators say, "We will not allow any communist regimes in Latin America," what are they doing? They are pledging themselves to prevent revolution in Latin

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America—in spite of that not being their problem, because Latin Americans should have the systems of government they want to have.

I think the best thing, in order to avoid confusion, would be to have the Marxist-Leninist ideas spread all over the United States, so that they can see that they form a conception of a society where the means of production are scientific and have nothing to do with an international revolution to destroy different governmental systems.

Well, such things as the withering away of the state, which in Russia we haven't seen happen, perhaps, too soon. I take it that you believe those countries have to be adapted to the peculiar conditions—and that you are not, necessarily, committing Cuba to what Marx and Engel may have written many years ago.

We concern ourselves with the application of the doctrines by Marx and Engels and of Lenin to the concrete conditions of our country. Marxism is a guide for action and not a codified summary of formulas to solve practical problems. Some of the problems that may come this way—maybe one will not be able to solve these problems . . . and must have some other way.

The problems actually facing the Soviet Union are not the same problems they had when the revolution began. They could not be imagined in those times. Life itself poses different situations that one has to solve, based on different purposes and principles.

The main purpose is to abolish the exploitation of man by man.

I think that it's these changed situations that account for your change of policy since you were in the United States, talking free elections—you were talking no intervention of property, and Rodrigues wrote that the "Revolution is not Socialist" in May of 1959. But then it became socialist.

What I want to know is when and how did it become socialist and is becoming communist the next step?

At the beginning the revolution could not be called a socialist revolution, because at that time the program was not properly socialist. It established a series of measures, such that even though it already pointed out social reforms of a very deep character and changing economic structure, it wasn't yet a socialist program.

Life itself teaches us that nothing is static. Man is not born man. He is born like a child. At first, he is not able to walk. Then comes the time when he begins to use his reasoning. Then comes childhood, adolescence, youth, adulthood. In every human, no program is eternal and much less those in the midst of revolutions.

In the fight against Batista, the main objective was to throw him out

and to gain power. The further work of the revolution was concerned with living quarters, land, and some monopolists who had very high prices.

In the first phase, the American enterprises had not been nationalized. But that doesn't mean that it was going to last forever. Nothing is ever lasting.

The transitory phase of the revolutionary program was, no doubt, accelerated because of the measures taken against Cuba. At the beginning of the revolution there was tax reform. Agrarian reform. (The same thing which you are asking from the Latin American governments now.) Social reform. Educational reform. Planned housing. Public health programs. Suppression of speculation. So there were a series of social reforms. And those social reforms gave rise to an aggressive policy on the part of the United States.

Did the United States then try to search for a formula for rediscussion, a formula that would create an honorable solution for both countries? No. Instead of that, the formula of conspiracy—the formula of organization of invasion by mercenaries, the formula of employment of force, the formula of economic blockade, the cutting of the sugar quota. In the face of all these measures, the revolution had to confiscate American enterprises. The Revolution of the Cuban nation, in the face of these aggressions, had to mobilize the people.

So all those aggressions accelerated the revolutionary process.

And if the United States is going to deal with all revolutions in the same way it dealt with the Cuban revolution, some day the United States will find itself isolated from a big part of the world, and from most of Latin America.

The revolutionaries in Latin America see, in the United States, an ally of military, reactionary organizations, and they see all the policies of the United States as a policy against their best interests. The United States, *a priori*, appears as the enemy of the peoples.

In the United States, when you said, "I am a Communist"—in effect, it was interpreted as meaning, "I have joined your enemies, the Russians, who are for the overthrow of the United States Government by force and conspiracy." That's what it meant in the United States and what I want to know is, is that what it means to you when you say, "I am a Communist?"

We declared the socialist purpose of our revolution on the same day when they bombed our military bases—the previous day—the attack on Playa Girón. The attack was on the Playa Girón—the moment when we were getting ready to fight the invasion, of which we didn't know the dimensions. We didn't even know if the United States was going to intervene directly or not.

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And then we said, "We are fighting for these ideas and we are ready to die for them." Because the experience we had had so far had taught us that the people, the exploited, had a fundamental enemy. And that enemy was not the Soviet Union. That enemy was the United States.

That's what we meant. We will fight against that policy and that system—our enemy. That's what we meant. We fight our enemies. That policy said that system is our enemy: that's what we meant by overthrowing.

I think the change of the system in the United States is the task of the intellectual and the working class of the United States. It can only be a product of the historical process of the system itself.

Let me very concrete. Is the Cuban government now conspiring or does it intend to conspire and actively work with the enemies of the United States in the world for the overthrow of the United States government?

We are not conspiring against the United States or anyone else. But, for instance, we feel solidarity with the fight of the Vietnamese. They are dying there under the bombs of America. We have solidarity with so many people fighting for independence. As long as the United States remains as the enemy of the independence of the people—we shall not be against the United States or the American people or even against the system they have there: that's an American program. We *shall* be against their international policy of backing the oligarchies, reactionaries, colonists. We will be against those policies—not against the nation of the American people.

What is your definition of a satellite of the Soviet Union or any other country? Is Cuba a satellite?

No. The satellites I know are those belonging to the cosmic air spaces. . . . But I cling to the conception that Samozia is a satellite, and that Betancourt is a satellite—of the United States. Most of the Latin American governments are satellites of the U.S.

How does the Sino-Soviet split affect Cuba and which side is Cuba on, if any?

We have already stated our position in favor of the unity of the Socialists. The split goes against the revolutionary movement in every country. But we have our own concrete problems to deal with as long as we are facing American aggressions, and for us that is the most important thing: how to resist these aggressions. That's our fundamental task. And we have our own line as far as international programs are concerned.

You've often called United States leaders "imperialists"—what's meant by that word?

The word "imperialist" is well known in political circumstances. It's a political conception.

Political imperialism in the days when Theodore Roosevelt annexed the Panama Canal territory—that is the kind of imperialism that is meant to most American people when someone calls us an imperialist. Remember what we did in the Philippines, Puerto Rico. It doesn't seem to make sense. What you are talking about is economic imperialism and is associated with big corporations supported by the United States.

The economic conception of imperialism means the exportation of capitalism to other countries, where they can find the financial capital, to underdeveloped countries where the work is cheap and where the earnings are bigger. And then in the most industrialized countries, England, for instance, where they have surplus capital and have invested it in other countries, they naturally have some ingredients for progress. The profits of the businesses operating in Latin America were higher than the money they invested.

Really big changes have taken place in recent years. Today those methods and that policy is difficult to defend in the light of reasoning. New formulas are beginning to appear in the United Nations. And, today, it is a universally accepted truth that industrialized countries should help in the development of underdeveloped countries. And you want to better the existing living conditions in the world today.

Do you consider your government a dictatorship? If not, what is it?

Personally, I don't consider it a dictatorship, but if we are going to have a definition of our government from a Marxist-Leninist point of view, we can say that it is either a proletarian dictatorship or a proletarian democracy. There are two types of democracy. In bourgeois democracies, such as you have in the United States, those that own the riches are the most influential—and I understand that what they call a democracy in the United States is a dictatorship of a class—of the proprietors, of the owners. We understand that the Cuban system of government is a democracy of workers and peasants.



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*Is freedom of religion fostered, or at least tolerated in Cuba today?
Is atheism increasing with or without government assistance?*

Anyone can see for himself in the streets. Any visitor, for instance, in Havana, may see all the churches opened. The worship services are held without any restrictions whatsoever. Families send their children to church.

I can't very well answer your question whether atheism is increasing or not. It is not easy for me to answer this sort of question. Religious problems have caused no worry to the Revolution. The only problems that came up were of a political and not of a philosophical nature. Especially when the classes affected by the Revolution tried to use the Church against the Revolution. I can categorically affirm to you that there are no restrictions on the freedom to worship, as you yourself, or any visitor, can see for himself.

Now, I am told that sometimes you stop and talk with the public, in various places. The Brazilian Ambassador was telling me about this and others have told me about it. How often do you do this and why?

I am constantly on the streets. I am an enemy of bureaus and bureaucrats. I understand that the bureaucratic method has some advantages, but I personally choose the most democratic methods, and I think that permits me to be most in contact with the people.

Because in so doing, I have a fresh and direct impression. I can see how things go. I pay visits to the university and the centers—to the factories and talk to the workers. I visit the fishing cooperatives and go very often into the mountains.

And besides all that, once in awhile, I get together with the government to discuss these impressions.

Do you have an office? Files? Secretaries?

I have an office but I use it very little. I have different aides that I use very much.

Do you have a more or less fixed residence?

Sure.

*Will freedom of the press be established in Cuba in the near future?
Will U. S. publications be allowed to be sold and distributed here? How many American news media people are you refusing or neglecting to admit?*

Every social system has its own conception of freedom of the press.

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I think there is freedom of the press that is enjoyed by imperialists and capitalists and there is a proletarian freedom of the press. When we had in Cuba a bourgeois press, the problems of the working class, the necessities of the people, were not pressed whatsoever.

There were nuisances committed against the working class and the peasants, and they were not pressed whatsoever.

The exploited have no press. Because freedom of the press also means having great capital to buy paper, machinery and so on.

Freedom of the press also means to have plenty of advertisements from the big monopolies and large enterprises. That's why the exploited have no press whatsoever.

The press operated on behalf of the exploiters. That's what they used to call freedom of the press.

Now, the press is in the hands of the exploited. And the exploiters have no press. That's what we call freedom of the press. Proletarian freedom of the press.

But there are people, I assume, who honestly dissent about problems—without being traitors—who dissent about policies of the government. Are they going to be allowed a hearing in this proletarian press?

It depends on who the people are. If they are enemies of the revolution they won't have the opportunity. But if they are members of the government, they have lots of opportunity at assemblies, meetings, newspapers Do you think the government here forces anyone to present previously any speech they make? Thousands of them write in newspapers, radio, television—and we, the leaders of the government, many times don't know what they say, and we also could say right or wrong things.

The other night, when you were speaking, there were two different explosions—it may have been just one and its echo. Now, in the account of your speech it said "explosions and his response."

Now, so far as I've been able to find out, there was never any story about what was blown up. Now, people in Havana knew about that and it seems to me that the newspapers had a duty to explain the explosion.

Everybody here understands that with that type of explosion, it is done intentionally for the purpose of sabotaging. When important things do happen, the government keeps the people informed.

When the pilot attacked Oriente Province, it was published. When they burned the department store here, it was published. We publish facts with some importance.

Naturally, things of minor importance, done for propaganda purposes, and carried out by enemies of the revolution—we do not inform the peo-

pe about them. We have no interest. You will understand. This has been our enemy's propaganda. The same way, they never publish in the United States the big accomplishments of the Cuban revolution.

The cables and the American press publish the most fabulous lies.

What about this American press if Time Magazine and The New York Times and the whole gamut of American publications were available here in Cuba? I am not sure they are under our present law. Would they be allowed to be distributed here?

If there would be peace between the United States and us, there would be much more opportunity for all those publications. We would adopt whatever type of measures . . . we would have a reciprocal kind . . .

Now, would that apply also to newsmen? I understand that NBC's John Lobichek, Time's J. Mallon and some others have been refused admittance to Cuba. Is that because Cuban newspapermen have been refused admittance to the United States?

We have given permission to many of them. There have been many newsmen asking for interviews like this one. And it doesn't seem to me personally possible to grant all of these interviews. It is not that they come to ask about Cuba, but to ask an interview of me.

But the policy of the government is to let them in?

Generally, yes. The only limitation is the time we personally have.

Are honest elections impossible today or in the future?

It depends on what type of elections, because we still have to solve our institutions, our constitution . . . and the way we are going to establish the representative system so that all the people can participate. That's a problem of institutional right, but by no means the most urgent problem. The most urgent problem has been to resist aggression, resist the blockade, and be in condition to continue our advancement. In the next years the constitution will have to be approved and established, and then there will be a definition which way people participate. At this moment the people participate in an indirect way. They have trust in the revolutionary government. We're still reformers.

On the 8th of September, Mr. Crimmins, our Coordinator of Cuban Affairs, made a speech to the American Legion and he said in it that the basic human freedoms no longer exist. There was a statement in it that the revolution of bread and liberty that you referred to didn't happen. This is what he's saying, and all but complete elimination of private eco-

conomic activity—well, I wanted you to comment on the basic human freedoms.

You can go to any street in Havana and talk to a native citizen and ask if he does not believe he enjoys basic human freedoms. Ask any Negro nurse in any hospital or ask any Negro boy who can study in any school. Just ask any peasant girl who used to be illiterate and is now studying to be a teacher whether or not she enjoys basic human freedoms. Visit the mountains and ask all of those who have just learned how to read and write. Ask the people who lived in indigence, in slums, under sub-human conditions whether they are enjoying any freedoms or not. Go to the hospitals where the patients used to sleep on the floor before the Revolution. Now the doctors paid by the government save the lives of men, women and children. Ask them whether they enjoy basic human rights. Just ask any worker, any farmer, any fisherman. The only ones who don't enjoy basic freedoms are those who are against the Revolution and are opposed to the spread of basic human rights to the most of the country.

Now we come to the economic question. Communism has lowered (Mr. Crimmins says) rather than raised the standard of living. In 1962, the gross national product was estimated to be 25% below 1958 levels in per-capita terms and the real GNP at least 30% less in your first four years.

That, in the first place, is not true. But when you speak of per capita under capitalism, the per capita of the person who has nothing is zero. But when you speak of per capita under Socialists—it means that everyone has something. That's why many people have more than they ever had. It is possible to have a lower per capita figure and at the same time to have the immense majority getting more than before. Before, the money was taken away from the country—was kept in foreign banks.

In the second place, what right has any American official to speak of our economic situation or of our per capita, for if we have experienced only a 25% decrease in spite of the brutal blockade and the aggressive acts engaged by the United States against Cuba, then this in itself constitutes a victory for the Revolution.

And in the third place, I can tell you that the condition of the masses improves in Cuba in spite of the American blockade. The condition of the masses in Latin America worsens in spite of the Alliance for Progress. It's not only a question of method. Besides, the real question is not the per capita income *per se*. What about in cultural per capita? What about the doubling of the number of children that go to schools. What about our sons getting medical care that they never did before? What about the wiping out of the recurring annual epidemic of poliomyelitis in Cuba,

for instance? The vaccination campaigns? What about all the social benefits? What about the wiping out of discrimination? Or is it that the wiping out of racial discrimination cannot be counted in the cultural and moral per capita of a country?

No doubt, in the United States, the per capita is much higher than in Cuba, but just ask any Southern Negro in the United States—or even a Northern Negro—what his opinion is regarding the moral and social per capita of his country.

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You suggest that a group of U.S. Senators and Representatives ought to visit Cuba now to see for themselves what is Cuba is doing, socially and economically, to improve the lives of its citizens.

Do you have any particular persons in mind? Who? Would they be permitted complete freedom? Of movement and inquiry while here—except with respect to visiting prisons and certain military installations?

In a conversation with you I told you that I was sure there were many persons—citizens in the United States—who absolutely ignore the trends and the firmness of the revolution.

In spite of the difficulties we may have due to the American blockade, I am sure that if a group of American politicians—those who have their own thinking and their own attitudes, their own criteria—would come here, I am sure they would be impressed by what they would see.

And we are ready to invite them.

And they would have their complete freedom, except for the exceptions I mentioned?

They would have maximum freedom, with the exceptions noted. Those things that affect our security. And we will show them our difficulties and we will show them our successes. We will speak as freely as they would wish. I, personally, will show them the work of the revolution.

Would you believe that a group of Cuba's government officials would have anything to gain in terms of understanding the U.S. by making a similar visit there? And also Cuban students? Do you think that this flow ought to be two ways?

We authorize freely the exit from this country, and the United States is not an exception. We wouldn't have to change any policy whatsoever in order to give permission for Cuban officials or any Cuban students to go to the United States.

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In any case, it would be the American government that would have to change its policy. It is they who have really built a wall. You could even say that they have locked within that wall all American citizens.

If your students went there, would they be investigated by the un-Cuban Activities Committee?

No. They wouldn't be investigated, and in any case, one is really amazed, because if everything they said against Cuba were true, the ones interested in not letting people come here would be ourselves.

If the revolution were really so terrible, why should not the United States allow everyone to come here and see for themselves?

Why don't they let the Negro leaders come here and see whether or not we have racial discrimination? Why don't they allow students? The workers' leaders? The intellectuals?

It so happens that we have no restrictions whatsoever.

The American government is afraid to let the truth be known. Can the American government present itself as the defender of truth?

I am told that the reason for the American government's attitude is that they feel they must keep our students from coming here because they are asking various Latin American governments not to allow their student to come here because they are afraid those students will go back and take part in guerrilla activities and knock over rather shaky governments. Would you care to comment on that position?

That's one more proof of the fear of the United States towards the Cuban revolution. By doing so, they show their fear that the Cuban revolution would be attractive to other young people. And if a revolution is so terrible, why should it be attractive? Why not facilitate trips to Cuba?

Is the use of capital punishment increasing?

Capital punishment, according to our laws, is applied only to the cases of high treason. As, for instance, invasion of our territory, or the use of weapons in the service of a foreign government, or for terrorist acts.

Is it possible to say how many executions there have been last month, last year, or since the revolution took place? Are there any such statistics existing?

We can't tell you exactly, but they are minimal.

Is there any kind of torture, physical or non-physical, permitted or practiced in Cuba today?

It is a known fact, known by all the world, and even publicly recognized by our own enemies, that the revolutionary government has never allowed any torture whatever.

The revolutionary government doesn't permit anything against the law. All the penalties for things against the revolution have been established by our law.

I have here a copy of a report dated August 17th by the Havana Bar Association in exile. I gave you this copy in Spanish, and I'd like to have your comments about some of the things they say there about political prisoners.

Of course, they say 75,000 and then they go down into matters of—

One of the characteristics of all these parasitic associations maintained by the Treasury Department of the United States is to lie, shamefully.

Well, they make a case out here—

That's the way they have to earn their living.

They are saying things like many members of your courts are illiterate; that the accused doesn't know the charges . . .

Well, they are not certainly graduates of Harvard University. And all the revolutionary courts are conducted by technicians who have graduated from the International University.

And they say such things as Defense Counsel have themselves been persecuted, imprisoned, and even shot for defending political prisoners. Is there any truth in this?

Throughout the country there are many who have defended the counter-revolutionaries and have become rich.

Because they were defending a social class which was the owner of all the riches. No revolutionary lawyer becomes rich defending revolutionaries. The lawyers of the bourgeoisie and the imperialists made themselves rich.

Does the Cuban judicial system today meet standards necessary for due process of law? What's being done to improve it?

The actual system is accepted because of necessity. It will change as soon as it can.

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Would Cuba consider adjudicating, in her courts, the claims U. S. citizens and corporations have for indemnification of property taken over by the state and to provide for appeals to an international body, either existing or ad hoc?

Yes. We are ready at any moment to discuss whatever formulas might be necessary for the indemnification of their property. At the same time, it's time to start thinking of the indemnification that Cuba should receive because of the harms it has derived from the American blockade and the attacks.

As a lawyer, that would stagger me a little bit, but I understand the position. What's the availability of this remedy, apart from the U. S. concessions with respect to sugar purchases?

There is a law in the Revolutionary government to which both questions are tied. These corporations would be able to receive the payment in pesos, but we suppose they want it in dollars—and how are we going to pay in dollars without having any business with the United States?

Under what conditions, if any, could the Alliance for Progress be useful in the hemisphere? In Cuba?

I think the Alliance for Progress was thought of as an instrument against Cuban revolution and never for the sincere purpose of promoting development in Latin America. In present conditions, development in Latin America is absolutely impossible, because of illiteracy, lack of technicians, shaky governments and a series of other conditions. The masses have already a consciousness of their necessity in bringing improvements and are in the position to fight those conditions. But if present conditions do not change—there cannot be any development, and in the same way the Alliance for Progress fails. Revolutionary governments will spring up. From my point of view there can be no progress in Latin America without changes really radical. And those radical changes can only be carried out by the peoples. What the United States is trying to do to stop this revolution is try to stop *them*—not help them. I don't mean that this is the case in every country, but in most of the countries, especially in the most underdeveloped. That's why I think the best help you can give to the people in Latin America is to respect them, to give them the government they want. The only way you can inspire friendship in Latin America is *no intervention*, or trying to stop the revolutionary movement. The results of the failure are evident. They happen one after the other, at a faster step than ever before. Politically, all these countries have gone back more than ever. It is evident that the intervention is against the entire revolutionary spirit. I think the United

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States should adapt itself to the actual situation in the world—the revolutionary situation is the same as 20 or 30 years ago. The United States should prepare itself to deal with revolutionary governments because it has the alternative of being either friend or enemy, but in no way will it be able to stop a revolution. That's what I think.

In other words, the evolution that is premised by the Alliance for Progress is in your mind wrong. It won't get or make social or economic progress that way. It will have to come after the revolution.

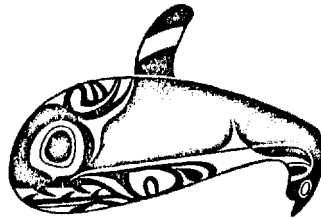
In some other countries with better conditions you may have that evolution. But in most other countries that is not the situation. Unavoidable revolution—that is to think in a realistic way.

If greens, powdered milk and other foods were available to Cuba under the U. S. Foods for Peace program, would Cuba allow them to be shipped here and their distribution to be supervised by U. S. officials? I should explain that the law does allow the President to ship to people of unfriendly governments as in Poland and other places.

Under the present conditions of tension, we wouldn't accept it because it would be interrelated.

Under what conditions, if any, would Cuba rejoin the OAS?

Well, in order to give you an answer, I would have to think it over.



What per cent of completion exists with respect to the Land Reform Program?

I think it will take several years to carry out completely. We are still far from attaining the maximum utilization of our resources. And I think when we reach this goal we will have doubled or even tripled the total production we had under capitalism.

Does Cuba intend to do away with all private property? And what is the schedule and the extent?

There are different types of private property. For instance, the small private property of the peasants will last indefinitely and will only disappear through an evolutionary process. We base our agricultural production on the effort of the small farmers and of state farms. All these farmers who have about sixty *hectares* or less will enjoy full, definite guarantees about their holdings—they are allies of the Revolution. It won't be so with the farms larger than sixty *hectares*.

Is it true that the government has forcibly taken no houses from anyone? I was told that there was no intervening in private housing. I understand that the government has never gone in and said to some rich person, "Get out of your house. I want it."

No, not one single case. The case is simply that the government took over all the homes abandoned voluntarily by those who suddenly left the country.

Besides, two years from now, no one will have to pay any rent for their housing. Soon it will be five years since the Urban Reform Law was put into effect and from sixty to seventy per cent of the people will not be paying any rent. In all the new houses that have been built and given after the Urban Reform Law, people are paying only 10% of their salaries for rent.

You're making a law on land reforms coming out this afternoon. Who made that law? How was it made? Was it made by the Council of Ministers?

It was made by the Council of Ministers. This government didn't come into existence by a *coup d'etat*. It came into power with the support, drive and backing of the masses. This government maintains itself thanks to the firm and committed support, even to the extent of offering their lives for it, of the people, the workers and the peasants. Kennedy may say that millions voted for him in the last elections; we can say that millions of Cubans are willing to die in the defense of our Revolution.

These people on the Council of Ministers were appointed by you and are subject to your removal. Is that correct?

The Members of the Council of Ministers were appointed by the President of the Republic, just like in the United States. In our Constitution, the Prime Minister supposedly leads the political affairs of the government. You are aware that we are in the process of organizing the Party of the Revolution. The Party has the responsibility of directing the political life of the nation, the welfare of the nation itself. As I said, this party is still being formed, perhaps too slowly, but with good results.

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by the best and most militant elements of our people. The formal aspects of this party are still to be established.

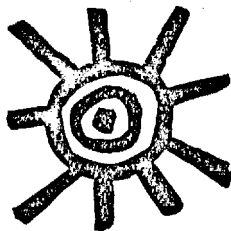
A personal government doesn't exist in Cuba. All fundamental problems are discussed in the government as well as in all the political centers—problems concerning government as well as politics. All fundamental solutions are the result of intelligent discussion among the leaders of the Revolution.

But as a political matter, because of your prestige, don't you have the most say about policies and personnel?

Personal participation is very important. Personal participation is very important in many decisions.

What happens if you become incapacitated or die? Does Raúl take over? What particular plans are made for this possibility? How would there be a transfer of power without much bloodshed?

No plans have been made for this situation. Raúl is Vice Prime Minister. And Vice First Secretary of the Party. Naturally, should such a situation arise—after all this is not a monarchy—the problem would have to be solved by the executive committee of the Party, by the revolutionary leaders and the Party itself.



*I would like to have your opinion of President Kennedy personally and his political situation with respect to Cuban policy.**

Would you think a personal meeting, say at the United Nations, would serve any useful purpose at this time, or later?

We don't trust President Kennedy, because his political attitude is not either firm or sure.

Many times he says one thing and does another. Kennedy is actually

** This interview took place fifty days before President Kennedy was murdered.*

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responsible for the actual political status of the relations between Cuba and the United States.

Kennedy didn't have any need whatsoever to carry out the expedition against Cuba, like that of Playa Girón which was organized by the Republicans.

Even Kennedy, when he took charge, as President, said that he had to start anew again. As far as we have seen, he didn't start anew but continued what they were doing.

He is to blame that today his political enemies can use Cuba in their political campaign. Because, precisely, he followed the line of his political enemies. He played with them.

On many occasions the President of the United States has declared one thing and has done another thing. At this very moment, he is saying one thing and doing another. Because while he declares that the United States will not carry out any military action against Cuba and also that the United States has not any responsibility for these sporadic attacks, we know of the plans that the CIA is carrying out.

These attacks have been organized by the Central Intelligence Agency. The planning centers and the bases to attack Cuba are being personally supervised by the United States. During the last month and since the crisis of October, the CIA has been introducing saboteurs into Cuba. They have been introduced and are disembarking weapons on our coast. The CIA utilizes a group of ships with which they carry out those activities of infiltration and the introduction of weapons, and those weapons come directly from the United States. We have innumerable proofs of that.

Have these proofs ever been presented to the United Nations?

Is there any chance of you and President Kennedy, despite your past disagreements and hard words with each other, reaching an agreement either through a personal meeting or through intermediaries? And I was wondering if the attitude you are expressing would seem to show that that was impossible.

At this very moment, Mr. Kennedy is in a big political contradiction. On one side, he seems to be taking some steps in favor of international peace. This question is, however, aggravated as far as Cuba is concerned. The CIA is increasing its activities in the case of Cuba.

And anyone who would stop to think a little would understand that that's not the proper way to fight for peace. Those two political attitudes are irreconcilable: his peace policy on the one hand, and the policy of aggravation against Cuba. Should this policy be continued, it will—it is going to ruin the peace policy.

But if the policy were ended, then it might be that you could reach

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some agreement directly or with intermediaries?

We have always made public our position in favor of discussing our differences with the United States.

We mean bilateral discussions between our two countries. The means to carry them out is not so important. Any means can be used to have a discussion.

Is Cuba now training, advising and financing guerrilla forces to foment revolution in any other Latin American countries, and if these things have been done—will they continue to be done, and if so, on what scale?

What you read in the cables every day are not statements by the Cuban government making itself responsible for guerrilla actions in Latin American countries. On the contrary, the military of the Santo Domingo government and Venezuela and so on are stating every day what they are doing to prepare to attack Cuba.

It's an evident proof that the American government has been financing, preparing expeditions and promoting and preparing internal subversion in Cuba.

Do they accuse Cuba of the same thing they are doing against Cuba?

Well, I think they accuse Cuba of sending arms to Venezuela and getting young boys here from other countries and training them how to be guerrilla fighters and then sending them out to fight against existing governments.

On this point, the Cuban government will not give any guarantee to these countries which they are not ready to give to Cuba.

It is for that reason that we are not interested whatsoever in clearing up this point.

Would Cuba consider allowing inspection of missile sites and internal search for offensive weapons by a U.N. Commission if conditions were exactly the same for such inspection and search in the United States, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala and other countries involved?

That's a program that the revolutionary government has not discussed. But I personally have always been opposed to everything unilateral. But in a case in which it wouldn't be one-sided, and it would be done under the same conditions to all the countries involved, there wouldn't be reasons for us to have any opposition. And we would be ready to consider any formula that would be reciprocal—an equality condition.