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In all the Americas, no country can match the immense overall power of the United States. It is the wealthiest, strongest and most influential nation in this part of the world, if not the entire world. Yet, ninety miles away from its own shores, there exists a small socialist island called Cuba. On January 1, 1959, a few men, led by Fidel Castro, succeeded in overthrowing the corrupt regime of Fulgencio ~~B~~tista. Since the takeover, Cuba has effectively been transformed into a socialist society, and has become a major threat to the regional hegemony of the U.S. The purpose of this paper is to examine what has occurred in Cuba, what is now happening there, and what the future may bring to the Cuban people.

To begin with, I shall examine the main obstacles to development that Cuba is confronted with. First of all, the number one obstacle to Cuban development seems to be the constant threat posed by the U.S. and the many Cuban exiles who plan to someday overthrow the Castro regime. When Castro took over, Cuban relations with the U.S. began to deteriorate. In fact, by 1961, the U.S. had sponsored an unsuccessful attempt at overthrowing the new regime, the Bay of Pigs invasion. Since then, Cuba has been forced to form a very strong military, the third largest in the Americas, and very strong ties to the U.S.S.R... Why are Cuba and the U.S. now enemies? The answer to this question is, in part, one of simple ideology. On the one hand, to put it bluntly, the U.S. represents imperialism in all its bloody glory, and on the other, Cuba represents the 'red threat' or what ideologues call the 'communist menace.' The total picture, however, is of course more complex. On the U.S. side of the argument, Castro's rise to power and his subsequent nationalization of all Cuban resources, posed a direct infringement on U.S. corporate and stra-

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tegic interests. In fact, prior to the revolution, total U.S. invest-
ment in Cuba was over a billion dollars. ¹ In addition to being a some-
what decadent playground with luxurious beaches, hotels, prostitu-
tion, and gambling providing comfort and pleasure for the well-to-do
and the Mafia, Cuba was a haven for U.S. corporations. All these in-
terests lost out when Castro took over and expropriated everything.
Castro's proclamation that he was a Marxist-Leninist, and his sub-
sequent ties to the U.S.S.R. added fuel to the fire. Since both super-
powers are arch rivals, and Cuba is so close to home, the U.S. is
naturally uneasy. Presently, the Reagan administration has taken a
hard, firm stance against the Castro regime. According to retired
general Vern Walters, Cuba must meet four conditions set forth by the
U.S. State Department if it wishes to improve its relations with the
U.S. First of all, Cuba must stop its program of wars of liberation,
which are seen as efforts on the part of Cuba to install irrever-
sible communist dictatorships. Secondly, the Cubans must get out of
Nicaragua. Thirdly, the wars in Africa, initiated on behalf of the
U.S.S.R. must stop, and finally Castro must take back the criminals
that were sent over during the Mariel boat exodus of 1980. ² These
conditions, it seems, may never satisfactorily be met, because Castro
and the Cuban people are committed to revolution and the overthrow
of U.S. imperialism. Allegations that the U.S. is an imperialist mon-
ster are not unfounded. Lenin defines imperialism as "capitalism in
that state of development in which the dominance of monopolies and
finance capital has established itself; in which the export of cap-
ital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the
world among the international trusts has begun; and in which the
division of all territories of the world has been completed." ³ Exami-
nation of U.S. capital involvement around the world shows that

redundant

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the U.S. is indeed engaged in imperialist-colonialist ventures. In country after country, especially in Latin America, U.S. interests extract the wealth of the people, leaving behind poverty, underdevelopment, underemployment, and brutal military regimes. In Cuba, prior to the revolution, U.S. companies engaged in Cuba read like a Who's Who of American business,⁴ and the U.S. government gave continued praise and support to the corrupt, brutal dictator Batista, up until the last year or so when it cut off aid to the regime.

The exportation of revolution on the part of the Cuban people is the fight to overthrow U.S. imperialism. As Castro himself has stated, "once imperialist domination is destroyed, and above all, imperialist domination of Latin America, imperialism as a system will disappear. In other words, the liberation of Latin America will constitute a decisive step in the liberation of the world from its worst enemy - U.S. imperialism."⁵ Thus, we see that Cuba and the U.S. are real threats to each other. U.S. interests and the U.S. government seem far from willing to admit that there is any truth to these allegations. The capitalist system, which the U.S. espouses and thrives upon at the expense of the vast majority of the world's poor, has been tossed out the window by Castro. We may never see any reconciliation, and the rivalries are likely to result in all out war. It seems also that Castro and the Cuban people will continue to support revolution. In one of his famous speeches Castro has stated:

The duty of every revolutionary is to create the revolution. It is known that the revolution will triumph in America and throughout the world, but it is not for revolutionaries to sit in the doorways of their houses waiting for the corpse of imperialism to pass by... Each year that the liberation of America is speeded up will mean the lives of millions of children saved, millions of intelligences saved for culture, an infinite quantity of pain spared the people. Even if the Yankee imperialists prepare a bloody drama for America, they will not succeed in crushing the peoples'

struggles, they will only arouse universal hatred for themselves. And such a drama will mark the death of the greedy and carnivorous system. 6

The U.S. threat is not the only impediment to development in Cuba, but indirectly, many of its woes can be traced to U.S. influence. On the economic side of the picture, Cuba does not have the resources to survive autonomously. Many basic products must be imported. Before the U.S. imposed its trade embargo against Cuba in November of 1960, Cuba imported as well as exported most of its goods to and from the U.S.. Imposition of the embargo was one factor that caused Cuba to turn to the U.S.S.R. for support. But what are Cuba's resources, and what does it trade? Before the revolution, according to Boorstein, sugar dominated the economy. Together with its by-products, alcohol and molasses, sugar made up about 80% of the exports, and paid for the bulk of the imports. 7 Other export products included tobacco, nickel, and coffee. Yet, clearly, Cuba's main source of wealth was and continues to be sugar. There are several problems tied to a mono-export economy that create serious difficulties for the Cuban economy. First of all, world sugar prices tend to experience boom-bust cycles. A depressed market tends to create major financial crises for the Cuban people. For example, 8.2 million tons of sugar was produced in 1982, the second largest harvest in Cuban history, only to earn one fourth of its 1980 prices. 8 Other adverse factors affecting the Cuban economy are the weather and crop diseases. The tobacco crop has recently been affected by blue mold disease and by hurricanes that destroyed acres and acres just this past year. In part, poor technical management and control cause problems, but the weather is uncontrollable. Another factor adversely affecting the Cuban economy is that the island is sorely lacking

in vital natural resources such as coal and oil. These resources are needed to expand industry, for without them, Cuba would not progress. Today, 98% of Cuba's oil is imported from the U.S.S.R. Yet another factor relating to Cuba's economic underdevelopment is pointed out by Fitzgerald. "Lack of trained personnel was a legacy of Cuba's semi-colonial relationship with the U.S., and was further aggravated by the post-revolution exodus of Cuba's middle class. Cuba in the late sixties was still saddled with an administrative core with an average sixth grade education." ⁹ Thus, Cuba lacked the personnel and the technology that was needed to sustain a vital economy. The problem still persists today. According to Roca, signs of serious imbalances in the availability of critical personnel in the sugar industry, in particular, has caused many university graduates and middle level technicians to be transferred to the sugar mills. ¹⁰ Finally, the last obstacles to Cuban development that it must overcome are its financial debt and its financial dependence on the U.S.S.R. Cuba is now faced with a tremendous foreign debt of 3.3 billion dollars owed to Western creditors. Attempts at rescheduling the debt have recently been made, much to the dismay of the U.S. . In fact, the U.S. wants the creditors to impose International Monetary Fund-type sanctions on Cuba, citing that Cuba's involvement in Angola and Central America should be curtailed, and ^{that} the money wasted on the military should be used to pay its bills. In terms of its dependence on the U.S.S.R., Cuba must begin repayment of its 8.8 billion peso debt to its friend by 1986. That is only three years away. Furthermore dependence on the U.S.S.R. has created difficulties for Cuba on the world trade market. The country must find a way out soon, for time is rapidly running out.

Turning to the Cuban model of development since 1959, the country has embraced what Jagauribe calls developmental socialism. In this model emphasis is placed on revolutionary forms and the overthrow of one order in favor of a new one, dedicated to the transformation to socialism. This is precisely what Castro and the revolutionary vanguard did. Before the revolution, the Batista regime catered to U.S. investment and the middle and upper classes who lived primarily in the urban areas. Statistically, before the revolution, 600,000 people were permanently unemployed, roughly half the population had no electric lighting, 37% of the population was illiterate, 95% of the children in the countryside suffered from parasitic diseases, and 70% of those children had no teachers.¹¹ Yet, conservatively, the g.n.p. per capita in the mid-50's was \$350, above the world average figure. However, rural conditions were far below those in the urban areas. In fact, most of the peasants were landless, with 1½% of all landowners owning or controlling 46% of the total area of the countryside.¹² In addition, much of the land that was usable remained unused and in the hands of the large sugar plantations. Some scholars argue that Cuba experienced slow but steady growth before the revolution. However, Blackburn characterizes the economy as stagnant and attributes this to "the failure of those who received the economic surplus to reinvest it in the right places and in sufficient amounts. New capital formation averaged only just over 10% of the g.n.p., one of the lowest rates in the world."¹³ In terms of U.S. investment, in 1955, U.S. companies owned 40% of raw sugar capacity, 90% of the telephone and electric services, and 50% of the public service railways, with direct remittances of profits and interest to the U.S. totalling 378 million dollars between 1950 and 1958.¹⁴

When Castro stepped in, he sought to change the inequities of the Cuban reality. His first major acts as leader were to embark upon agrarian reform, a massive literacy campaign, and the redistribution of wealth from the wealthy to the poor, and from the city to the country. Politically, the state was re-formed, embracing Marxist-Leninist principles of government. The Cuban Communist Party, formed in 1965 through a merger of the old Communist party and Castro's supporters, consists of regional delegates, a 100-man central committee, and a eight member politburo. There is considerable debate as to whether or not Castro is a dictator. It is certain that without him, Cuban history would not be the same, but contending that all the power is in his hands, and in his hands only, seems a bit far-fetched.

Economically, Cuba gradually nationalized all its resources, collective farms were set up, and land was re-distributed and given to over 100,000 landless peasants. In the first years of the revolution, attempts at re-orienting the economy from one largely dependent on sugar to a more diversified one were attempted with little success. The Cuban economy, in fact, can be seen in terms of a series of experiments, some which have failed, some which have succeeded. One thing is for certain, however, and that is that Cuba has become very dependent on the Soviet Union and other socialist bloc countries for its trade and industrial development. For example, in 1980, 57% of its of its exports were sold to and 62% of its imports came from the Soviet Union.¹⁵

Socially and Politically, the Cuban people have been encouraged to become a new 'socialist people', leaving behind the U.S. inspired legacy of possessive individualism, in order to develop a sense of solidarity and a working class consciousness with all the

the world's workers. According to Fagen, "the transformation of the Cuban man into revolutionary man is at the heart of Cuban radicalism. It is seen by the leadership as a requisite for the success of the new institutional order, and the regime spares no energies in its pursuit." ¹⁶ What some call indoctrination, Castro calls political education. There are always two sides to an argument. Culturally, the Cuban people have lost none of their beauty and grace. Theatre, music, poetry and prose have spread and flourished throughout the society. Group solidarity and commitment to the revolution tend to be dominant themes in the arts. Recently, a friend of mine visited Cuba on a cultural exchange visit to participate in a theatre workshop in Havana. For over a week, she participated with people from all over the world in discussing various forms of expression, in creating poetry by acting out the verses, and in putting together music and dance. She returned with very high spirits and spoke very positively of her visit there. She noted that all the people were politically aware of world affairs, that the people were happy to share the little that they had, and that their commitment to the revolution was as strong as ever. She acknowledged that problems, particularly in housing construction exist, but that they are being worked on with much energy and enthusiasm. *what world you*

On the darker side of the picture, the Cuban model of development has not been totally successful. First of all, the one great weakness in the Cuban model is its refusal to allow for dissent and other freedoms which exist in other countries. Many people contend that Castro is a cruel, brash dictator who viciously eliminates his opposition. Some of this may be true, but because Cuba is the enemy, propoganda warfare against him, particularly in the U.S., tends to overemphasize Castro's role as oppressor. However, that doesn't mean that repression isn't there. Amnesty International's newspaper, *n she are*

Matchbox, in its February 1983 issue, reported that Cuban poet Armando Valladares was sentenced to thirty years imprisonment for speaking out against communism and for refusing to join the militia. Convicted of alleged conspirational and terrorist acts, he was labeled a potential enemy of the state, and locked up in prison for 22 years. In 1975, Amnesty International adopted Valladares as a prisoner of conscience, and after world wide pressure he was released last October. In his poetry, he describes a massacre that occurred in the Bonaito prison, that occurred in 1975: Everything was done with perfect order/ the dead were perfectly murdered/ the wounded were perfectly wounded / the heads were perfectly broken...¹⁷

Other political prisoners continue to be held in Cuban jails. 250 plantados, long term political prisoners, have recently been re-sentenced. In addition, Cuban prison officials are known to respond to protests and hunger strikes by cutting off medical attention and by withdrawing visitation rights.. Although repression has occurred in our own country, I personally can't justify it in the Cuban model. ^{HOWEVER} What one must take into account is that Cuba is under constant pressure from the CIA and Cuban exiles. Security is very tight there, for sure, but one must question the extent of control of a people by a state. Surely, it is a problem, even here. I don't intend to justify Cuban repression, but here in the U.S. military service was for a long time mandatory, we have had our share of political prisoners, and our prison system is in some sectors rather corrupt. Repression is a problem for everyone, indeed. Violent repression of dissent is one way of retaining power, but it isn't the optimal way.

Turning to political participation, much progress has been made since 1970. The Cuban people are encouraged to participate in the various revolutionary cadres, on the job, and at the party level.

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yes but that's incredible

he now denied this

As LeoGrande points out," the evolution of political participation in Cuba has been towards increasing levels of participation, and toward greater participation by the populace in influencing the formulation of public policy. For Cubans, in accord with the socialist character of the revolution, the expansion of political participation has provided extensive and meaningful opportunities to influence the allocation of public goods." One may conclude then that the Cuban model has been somewhat successful in terms of political participation. Marxist scholars, such as Rios and Gallos, in fact contend that socialist democracy is a higher level of democracy than what they call capitalist democracy, because it is not dependent on capitalist exploitation and its domination of the political realm. Furthermore;

Proletarian democracy, through the different organizations that make it up, gives to the masses of the people the most diverse tasks. This enables the masses to make a revolutionary break with the stagnation and unchangeability that are characteristic of democracy in capitalist society, which conceives of the masses as receivers of democratic concessions and not as creators of that form of the state.

Economically, the Cuban model has been rather unsuccessful. As was mentioned earlier, Cuba attempted to diversify its economy, but it attempted to do so too rapidly, and without adequate planning. Sugar remains the primary source of Cuban wealth, but its dependence on the world market leaves it in the red most of the time. Of course, other industries have since been developed, and other crops have been produced, but not satisfactorily. Its debt and dependence on the U.S.S.R. ^{have recently} caused Castro and the Cuban people to tighten their rationing belts even tighter, bringing about cancelled investments, plant closings, reduced outputs, and lower living standards. In addition, cramped living quarters, poor quality consumer goods, and poor development of public services con-

tinue to plague the Cuban people.

However, on the bright side of the picture, Cuba has made tremendous advancement in the elimination of poverty, hunger and illiteracy . In education, for example, in the first ten years of the revolution, the regime has established the existence of free co-education of all types of all schools on all levels, by eliminating registration fees and tuition, and by providing free text books, school supplies, scholarships and financial aid to thousands of young people, peasants and workers, who otherwise would never have had the opportunity to secure an education. ²¹ Today, the literacy rate of Cuba is 96%, one of the highest in the world. In addition, life expectancy has risen from 64 years in 1960, to 72 years in 1970. Other advances include a lower infant mortality rate, more hospital beds, and more teachers and doctors to serve the needs of the people. Clearly, the revolution has succeeded in redistributing wealth so that everyone benefits. Nobody goes hungry anymore, everyone has a job, and everyone has a roof over their head. These are remarkable achievements and in my own view they are deserving of great moral respect.

Finally, what will the future bring to this remarkable little island? It's difficult to predict. However, two crucial factors seem to stand above all others when looking towards Cuba's future. First of all, Fidel Castro isn't going to live forever. If one accepts the notion that he is the backbone of Cuban society, then surely the question of who will succeed him is a vital one. Some people contend, as Tannenbaum has, that Castro is the typical Latin American caudillo who "governs because he can, not because he was elected, and who, by some magic, fraud, or force has at his disposal all the power, which he cannot divide, delegate, or refuse to use." ²² This view of Castro seems to make a mockery of the Cuban people. Sure,

the man is charismatic, and he is the leader, but the Cuban people aren't dumb. They will find ways to make up for his loss. The stability of the society, if the people firmly believe in their revolution, will not fall with the death of one man. The second crucial factor relating to Cuba's future development, concerns U.S. policy and the resurgence of the cold war. Currently, U.S. policy is what Roca calls 'uncompromisingly tough.' Restrictions have been once again imposed on U.S. travel to Cuba, curtailing its tourist industry, propaganda warfare, through the use of Radio Martí has been set up, and the recent passage in the U.S. Congress of the Symm's amendment, authorizing the President of the U.S. to resort to any and all means necessary and available, including the use of military force, to oppose Cuba's threats to the hemisphere, have all reinforced antagonisms between the two neighbors. Furthermore, increased fighting in Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala only adds to the increased possibility of all out war between the two camps. Other future developments in Cuba depend on its ability to overcome its economic woes, its ability to sustain itself as a non-aligned country, and the faith of the masses in their revolution.

In conclusion, writing this paper has in many ways reinforced my own radical beliefs. The Cuban model of development, aside from the repression that occurs, is a just and equitable one. As a Chicano from a poor background, with parents who have been victimized by the capitalist system, I personally believe that the U.S. is indeed an imperialist sow. The people of Latin America are my people, and they have suffered long enough. If the American version of freedom means that the rich are free to exploit and the poor are free to suf-

other system (socialist) don't exploit & minimize

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fer, then true freedom has not been attained. It is too bad that more lives will have to be lost, its too bad that the U.S. has the capacity to destroy the world, and its too bad that violent revolution has to be resorted to, but as my friend Allen Ginsberg has said, 'America will die.' Que viva la revolucion!!!!

An outstanding

paper, completely
well written.

You should be
proud of this
achievement.

See me soon if you
can.

Endnotes

- 1 Hugh Thomas, The Cuban Revolution (New York: Harper&Row, 1977), p.390.
- 2 Don Bohning, The Miami Herald January 7, 1983.
- 3 V.I. Lenin, Imperialism; The Highest Stage of Capitalism (New York: International Publishers, 1972) p. 89.
- 4 Thomas, p.390.
- 5 Fidel Castro, Fidel Castro Speaks, eds. Kenner and Petras, (New York: Grove Press, 1970), pp.141-142
- 6 Castro, p. 104.
- 7 Edward Boorstein, The Economic Transformation of Cuba, (New York: Modern Reader Paperbacks, 1969.) p. 2.
- 8 Sergio Roca, "Cuba Confronts the 80's," Current History, v.82, n. 481, p.74.
- 9 Frank Fitzgerald, "The Direction of Cuban Socialism: A Critique of the Sovietization Thesis," in Contemporary Caribbean, ed. Susan Craig (Maracas, Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies: The College Press, 1982) p.248.
- 10 Roca, p. 74.
- 11 Fidel Castro, "The Problem Of Cuba," in Fidel Castro's Personal Revolution:1959-1973., ed James Nelson Goodsell, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975) p31.
- 12 Castro, p.31.

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