

Selected Newspaper Articles in English:
Syracuse Post Standard (1988+)

Jorge Luis Romeu, Ph.D.

<https://web.cortland.edu/romeu/>

Romeu@cortland.edu

Copyright 2022

Legislative agenda is tangled in disputes over

Herald-American

OPINION

Donald P. Pickard

Chief Editorial Writer, 470-2235

Sunday, April 10, 1988

Page E1

How Castro broke the grip of the Cuban church

Jorge Luis Romeu was 13 years old when Fidel Castro and his band of revolutionaries chased Fulgencio Batista from Cuba in 1959. After two decades of repression under Castro's regime, Romeu fled his homeland in the Mariel Boatlift eight years ago.

He now lives in Syracuse and is an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University of New York at Cortland, south of Syracuse. When he read the Herald's recent series on Cuba and Christianity, written by religion writer Vincent F. A. Golphin, Romeu was moved to write this essay, which he calls "The Solitude of Political Exile."

This is his story, in his own words.

By Jorge Luis Romeu

I was putting away my guitar and my music, just after Sunday Mass, when my eyes caught the article's headline: Cuba and Christianity. I started reading it avidly. It was like reopening an old trunk, up in the attic, and pulling out all the memorabilia.

I was back again in mid-1960, the second year of the Cuban revolution. Batista, our former dictator, had brought down with him the whole political structure of the Republic. The Constitution of 1940 was now suspended, all political parties (except the Socialist) disbanded, the old armed forces and police substituted by the newly created militias.

Newspapers, radio and TV stations were now either controlled by the government or in government hands. "Socialism", a word which had never been mentioned during the struggle against Batista, was now constantly repeated in the state-controlled media. Communist Party members, including those having served in Batista's 1940-1942 cabinet, like current Cuban Vice President Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, were now being quietly appointed to key positions.

One of the few independent organizations still in place in 1960 was the Catholic Church. Since our independence in 1902, state and church were separated. However, according to the 1963 census, over 80 percent of the

Cubans freely declared themselves Roman Catholics. Throughout the country, the Catholic lay organization "Accion Catolica," with its three youth branches, Catholic Youth, Catholic Students and Catholic Workers, still had offices open with thousands of members.

It was obvious that the Catholic movement had to be broken if the communists were to obtain and secure the power in Cuba. And they did! I started high school in the fall of 1960, the last year of the Catholic school system. Like all other private schools, it would be taken over by the government in the spring of 1961. A fierce struggle for the control of student organizations was simultaneously taking place between pro-government and Catholic

factions. As a result, hundreds of students and professors were expelled, leaving the schools in the hands of a pro-government watch-dog group and a population of terrorized students and faculty, trying to ride the wave.

In 1962, I was working with a Catholic Youth group. Our formal organization was already officially disbanded. This occurred after Monsignor Boza Masvidal, auxiliary Bishop of Havana, was forced at the point of a gun into a ship in the harbor. Boza was pastor of the Parish of La Caridad, in one of the poorest neighborhoods of old Havana. He was deported, along with hundreds of other priests and nuns.

■ CUBAN, Page E5

How Castro broke the church's grip

■ CUBAN
Continued from Page E1

He had to be sent away. He was immensely popular among student and the people. After his eviction, old Monsignor Diaz, who celebrated Mass at the "Congreso Catolico Nacional" in Havana, in December 1960, before a crowd of over a million people, steered the church as best he could. After him, caretakers have carried on with the administrative work, honestly convinced that it is wiser to keep an empty church open than to have no church at all.

After that, it was free fall. Complete political compliance was to be obtained at all costs. Fierce mass expulsions of university students, mostly Catholics, were re-enacted in 1963-1965. Finally, we hit the all-time low in 1966 with the creation of the infamous UMAP labor camps, which were going to put an end to the resistance to the government's Marxist policies.

In 1966 I was in the UMAP with more than 30,000 other young Cubans of all races, religions, parts of the country and social strata. This selected group included the students from the Catholic Seminary and dozens of Protestant ministers and Catholic priests, as well as thousands of high school and college students, and young peasants and workers. Never was there a protest in our behalf from our bishops, nor from the Ecumenical Council of Churches. Nor from anybody else within the country. Everyone was terrified in those days.

In UMAP camps we learned to withstand and overcome long days of hard labor in the cane fields, ill fed and constantly reminded that we were the scum of the country and would suffer our punishment until repentance and compliance. We learned to deal with pain, hunger, sickness and fear — and

When I had to declare my religion on the forms, I started writing "none."

It is hard to swallow pride and convictions at age 20. The most infamous thing, after the disintegration of the Cuban family, that Fidel Castro has accomplished in 30 years in power is to force so many of us to lie to survive. We were left without leaders, without an active organization to cling to, denied a Cardinal Vojtula or a Monsignor Oscar Romero. Is it any wonder that there are only 100,000 self-avowed Christians in today's Cuba?

Since then, we learned we will always be losers in their game, because the rules are fixed against us. There is no way to reach any position of relevance because unconditional political allegiance comes first and any other merits later. We cannot even complain. The only way to express our displeasure with the government policies is to leave our country: Cubans vote with their feet!

But of course, not everyone can leave. No, it is not because I cannot go back that I am angry but because, in order to be able to tell the story, I had to leave in the first place. By expressing myself as a political exile I am only fulfilling my responsibility to those left behind. And, I trust, also to the ideals of freedom upon which the United States rests.

'We learned we will always be losers in their game . . .'

Jorge Luis Romeu

humiliation and loneliness. In the fall of 1966, the U.S. Delegation to the United Nations presented photographic material on the UMAP camps. After brief and useless denial, the Cuban government was forced to acknowledge and modify our deplorable conditions in the labor camps. The work week was reduced to six days and the work day to 12 hours. We were allowed the first visits from our families.

And the dismantling of UMAP, which took two long years, started slowly, thanks to the international clamor against it.

When I left the UMAP camps, in the summer of 1968, I was determined to get an education and a position from which to help my people. Careers available at the time for non-government supporters were limited to low profile jobs in pure sciences and agriculture. Medicine, journalism, education, engineering were reserved for pro-government students. I re-entered the university and registered for math.

PUBLIC FURNITURE

CONDUCTED BY HOTEL

BRAND NEW-IN ORIGINAL SEALED FACTORY CONTAINER

HOLIDAY INNS, HOWARD IN OHIO, KENTU

CONVERSATIC

in many different ways.
Sofa - Club chair
- Also available as shown in 10 pc. set
Or make decorator fabric

BRING-IN YOUR INCOME TAX REFUND CHECKS

You Can
5 Pieces
for Or

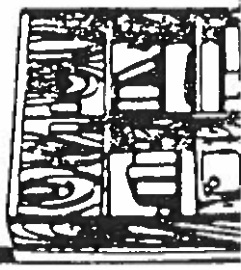
MANY OTHER 3-PC. L SUITES, FAMILY ROOM MODERN AND TRADI



Alloy's COMPUTER DESK, HUTCH, CORNER UNIT & PRINTER STAND

Discount Office Outfitters, Inc.

- Computer Desk with slide-out shelf and drawer with writing surface top.
- Hutch with two doors on top and three adjustable shelves below.
- Printer stand with adjustable shelf, file drawer



• Part # 450 Corner unit

The United States and Cuba reach a showdown over

Castro finally let team spect jails

George Gedda
Associated Press

...less bloody than the Bay of
...less suspenseful than the Cuban
...crisis. But a diplomatic con-
...this year plainly showed the
...ing nature of one of the world's
...during 1962: the United
...Cuba.

...ene was the annual U.N. Human
...Commission in Geneva and the
...of the panel's seven-week win-
...on might appear mundanely
...kable a commission delegation,
...invitation, will visit the island
...this summer to examine the
...human rights.

...at action culminated more than a
...extraordinary efforts by the
...States to call Cuba to account on
...its issue and equally intense
...ring by Cuba to counter the U.S.

...F. WAS enough ambiguity in the
...to permit both sides to claim

...gold," said Dennis Goodman, a
...partment official, summing up
...it.

...most over-whelming political and
...feat the Reagan administration
...ferred" in Geneva, a Cuban Com-
...Party daily said.

...mission was memorable for a num-
...ber of reasons. There were Cuban allega-
...tions that the United States tried to bribe
...Cuban members in a frantic pursuit
...of American assertions that
...that voted against Cuba could
...save of Cuban-sponsored terror-

...HE ALSO was the presence of a
...political prisoner from Cuba as
...U.S. delegate at Geneva — an
...element which stunned President
...Castro. He said America was allow-
...ing to be represented by a con-
...terrorist. "Shameless," he called

...struggle brought into focus the
...fact that Cuba has a deplorable yet
...ignored human rights record and
...its own contention that no Third
...country has done more to protect
...rights drafted in moderate language in
...support by American representatives
...or broad support. At no point did
...the U.S. accuse Cuba of violating
...human rights.

...Cuba lobbied vigorously against
...the resolution, apparently to avoid the
...need for approval for a measure spon-
...sored by its arch-enemy,
...the United States. Cuba and Argen-
...tina, Mexico and Peru came up
...with an alternate proposal, calling for
...Cuba at Cuba's invitation this

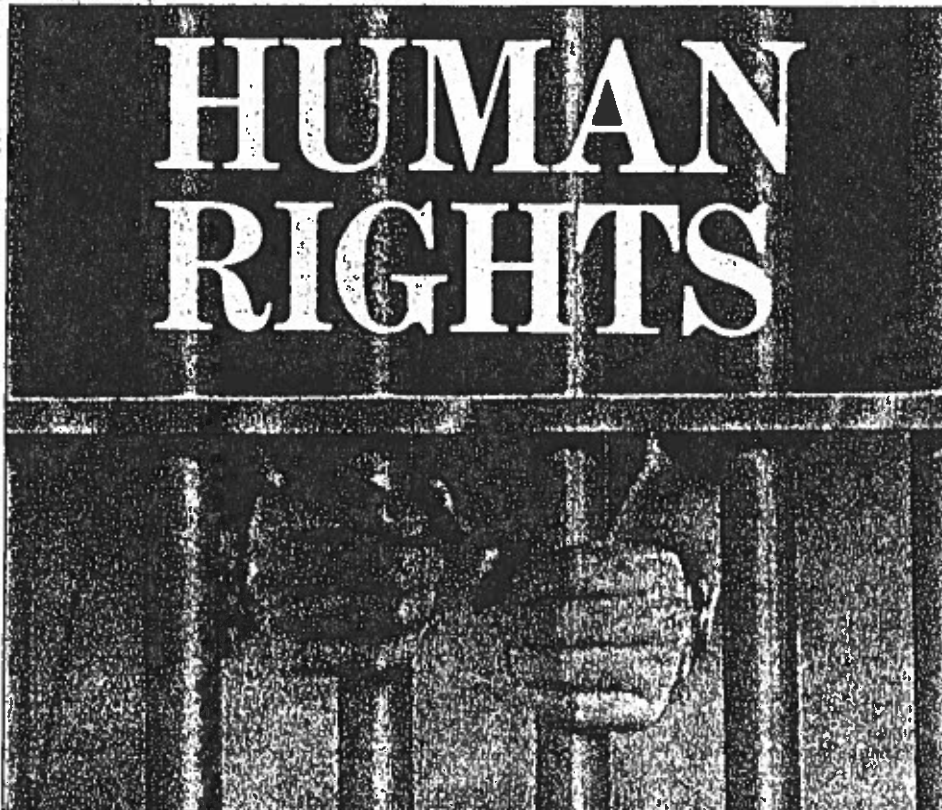
...alternative eventually was
...approved with U.S. support. At first,
...the American delegates reacted
...with surprise and anger to the new
...proposal, but they have preferred an up-or-down
...vote.

...THIRD World countries that
...are in the middle of the U.S.-Cuba
...struggle were elated at having
...achieved a rare victory. In Wash-
...ington and Havana,
...Cubans maintained they had nothing
...to do and that they showed their
...displeasure by inviting a commission dele-
...gate on an inspection tour. They said
...they would never be pressured into
...signing a human rights investigating
...resolution and they interpreted the with-
...drawal of the U.S. proposal as a victory.

...The United States sustained
...an overwhelming defeat that could
...not be inflicted on them," said Raul
...Castro, head of the Cuban delega-

...The United States sustained

HUMAN RIGHTS



Cuba's president, Fidel Castro, shown above speaking in 1986, insists: "There is no single country in which human rights are respected more carefully." But hundreds of prisoners in Cuban jails dispute that assertion. Periodically, Cuba has released some of its prisoners. One such prisoner, Jose Rolando Otero Sabatler, at right, kisses Cuban and American flags after arriving in Miami, Fla. He was released from a Cuban prison following a visit by Jesse Jackson in 1984.



Three former prisoners who recently were released and flew to Miami said the 44 not included on Castro's list apparently were being penalized for staging a prison protest. They said the demonstrators were assaulted by prison guards in late May for refusing meals. Enrique Hernandez Mendez, who had been jailed for trying to leave Cuba without authorization, said the protesters objected to being moved into refurbished cells as part of an effort to create a false impression for the rights commission delegation. THE U.S. delegation went to Geneva determined to avoid a repeat of the 1987 session when a similar attempt to call

Anguish and defiance inside a Cuban prison

Editor's note: Jorge Luis Romeu of Syracuse, an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University of New York at Cortland, fled his native Cuba in 1980 in the Mariel Boatlift. He and his family lived for two decades under the repressive regime of Fidel Castro's brother, Manuel Romeu, who was in opposition to Castro's government in Cuba in 1962 when he was charged with a conspiracy against the state and sentenced to 12 years in prison. At the health failed while in jail, Manuel Romeu was sentenced to an additional 10 years in prison for "refusing to work." He was released in 1975, and emigrated to the United States in 1979. This is the story of Romeu's visit to his brother in prison and his thoughts on Cuba's political prisoners.

By Jorge Luis Romeu

The thick gray concrete wall suddenly interrupted by a door, completely covered by steel planks. The guard opened it on a small cot, was a pale-white, familiar figure.

In spite of the dim light — the barred window had also been covered with a steel plank — and the squeak I recognized my older brother's voice. "What are you doing here today?" "Something happened to the lady."

We hadn't seen him in over a year. I hadn't had any news from him or from us in all that time. He was a "plant," "rooted one" in English. He was "tapiado" too, which loosely means "clustered within."

These Cuban political prisoners, following the Geneva Convention agreement on prisoners of conscience, refused to receive indoctrination, chain-gang work or wear the blue forms of the common convicted. In reprisal, they were first kept in underwear in isolated wards, without family visits or correspondence, since this treatment did not break them. They were transferred to the remote Pinar del Rio Prison and clustered within cells. There, they were cut off from the world and, in addition, were unable to work and exercise, to take the sun, or to communicate with one another.

THESE ARE NOT words taken from Armando Valladares' testimony, "Contra Toda Esperanza," (Plaza y Janas, Barcelona, 1986) or Hilda Perera's fact-based novel, "El Tapedo," (Editorial Planeta, Barcelona, 1981), which describe the situation of Cuban prisoners of conscience. What I actually saw, in the early 1980s when I had the rare opportunity to visit my brother in "Las Tapias" prison.

Most of these men have already served their long original sentences, but are still being held. The ones who have not been released are part of the political prisoners Castro has offered to release, in a recent letter to New Cardinal John O'Connor, and to release to the United States.

Why were these men in prison first place? These were not delinquents but ordinary citizens of all walks of life, like you and me. Most of them were former members of the revolutionary movement that brought Castro to power in 1959, with the pluralism and national renewal that saw their dreams go awry. They revolted against Castro's government when they realized it was becoming another dictatorial regime. They endured long prison terms, in a place where there is no sentence reduction unless you are willing to submit to dehumanization and forced labor and those refusing to do so were convicted, invoking the vagrancy



Herald American file photos
 speaking in
 which human
 hundreds of pris-
 Periodically,
 e such prisoner,
 s Cuban and
 a. He was
 Isit by Jesse

Valladares' appointment, telling an NBC interviewer in February, "You have turned... a terrorist who was arrested with a bag of dynamite supplied to him by the U.S. Embassy, you have made him head of the U.S. delegation. Never in history had such a shameless thing been seen."

Valladares denied he was a member of the police force of the rightist dictatorship which governed Cuba before 1959. He has said that Cuban documents purporting to prove his membership in the police force were fabricated.

Such was Cuba's antipathy to Valladares that Cuban diplomats in several capitals last February distributed a 38-page pamphlet entitled, "The 15 State Department lies about Valladares."

EARLIER THIS month, there were signs that Castro was intent on escaping a harsh judgment by the delegation. He disclosed his intention to release all but 44 of the 429 political prisoners he claims Cuba is holding.

However, the list is believed somewhat out of date because some of the prisoners mentioned are said to be either dead or already released.

Three former prisoners who recently were released and flew to Miami said the 44 not included on Castro's list apparently were being penalized for staging a prison protest. They said the demonstrators were assaulted by prison guards in late May for refusing meals.

Enrique Hernandez Mendez, who had been jailed for trying to leave Cuba without authorization, said the protesters objected to being moved into refurbished cells as part of an effort to create a false impression for the rights commission delegation.

THE U.S. delegation went to Geneva determined to avoid a repeat of the 1987 session when a similar attempt to call attention to Cuba's human rights performance was defeated, 19-18, on a proposal by India to set aside the U.S. resolution.

Many American officials reacted bitterly in the aftermath, particularly to the votes of five Latin American democracies which refused to back the U.S. position.

As U.S. officials described it, the Vene-

■ HUMAN RIGHTS, Page E4

world and, in addition, were unable to get out and exercise, to take the sun, or even to communicate with one another.

THESE ARE NOT words taken from Armando Valladares' testimonial book, "Contra Toda Esperanza," (Editorial Plaza y Janas, Barcelona, 1986); or from Hilda Perera's fact-based novel, "Plantado," (Editorial Planeta, Barcelona, 1981), which describe the situation of Cuban prisoners of conscience. This is what I actually saw, in the early 1970s, when I had the rare opportunity to visit my brother in "Las Tapiasdas" of Boniato prison.

Most of these men have already served their long original sentences, but some are still being held. The ones who haven't been released are part of the 385 political prisoners Castro has offered to free, in a recent letter to New York's Cardinal John O'Connor, and allow to emigrate to the United States.

Why were these men in prison in the first place? These were not delinquents but ordinary citizens of all trades and walks of life, like you and me. Many of them were former members of the revolutionary movement that brought Fidel Castro to power in 1959, with dreams of pluralism and national renewal. They saw their dreams go awry. The rest revolted against Castro's government when they realized it was becoming another dictatorial regime. They have all endured long prison terms, in a country where there is no sentence reduction unless you are willing to submit to indoctrination and forced labor and where those refusing to do forced labor can be convicted, invoking the vagrancy laws, and kept indefinitely in jail.

Why has Castro's government become suddenly compassionate toward these men, when it never felt this urge in 30 years? Some say Cuba needs to improve its public image in a time when even General Augusto Pinochet in Chile is allowing the return of political exiles, the organization of political parties and elections. And when Soviet leader Mikhail S.

■ PRISONERS, Page E4

milestone, debate again rages in N.Y.

last six years he was in office and Cuomo has done the same for the first six years of his tenure.

The Legislature never has been able to muster the two-thirds majority needed to override those vetoes, though it has come close.

"Whenever you get exasperated if you're unable to find a solution to these terrible, terrible problems you go to the death penalty," Cuomo said Tuesday, just hours after Louisiana conducted the 100th execution since the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in 1976 that restored capital punishment.

"It sums up your rage and indignation. I understand that," Cuomo said. "It doesn't work. It never did. Not only

doesn't it make things better, I suspect it makes them worse."

ARGUING AGAINST the supposed deterrent effect of executions, Cuomo noted that nine states have higher murder rates than does New York, and eight of those have restored capital punishment.

The refusal of the two New York governors to sign death penalty legislation is important symbolically, says Henry Schwarzchild of the anti-capital punishment American Civil Liberties Union.

Though polls conducted by legislators routinely show more than 70 percent of New York residents favor restoring the death penalty, New Yorkers overwhelm-

ingly elected Carey in 1978, gave Cuomo a slim victory in 1982 and a record-setting re-election in 1986. The two Democrats each time defeated Republicans who supported the death penalty.

Voters respect governors who take a moral stand on the death penalty, Schwarzchild said.

"In other words, it is not the single fatal noose that political leaders put their heads in, though a great many of them claim that that's the reason they follow the popular call for it," he said.

THE STATE Senate's chief death penalty advocate, Republican Dale Volker, says New York's inability to restore the

■ DEATH PENALTY, Page E4

which cited 83 pregnancies among students in Baldwinsville, when in fact there were 25 that year, according to the Bureau of Vital Statistics.

The tabled APPS grant states the clinics will provide service to adolescents from Baldwinsville, Liverpool and North Syracuse

experiments on animals are terrible.

Personally, I think there must be a better way, even when it comes to medical and other research that is truly for the benefit of mankind, although I can understand that some people might feel that this sort of testing

tures.

I applaud Berke Breathed of "Bloom County" for bringing this subject to the public's attention and for putting it on the comic page, as it is one of the most-read sections.

KARIN WIKOFF
Aurora

A Cuban Referendum

Open Letter by Intellectuals Puts Pressure on Castro

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

SIX months ago, when an article of mine on Cuban political prisoners found its way into the Herald American's Op-Ed page, some of my close friends gave me a kind smile.

I had said that the problem of the Cuban political prisoners could be completely solved by allowing freedom of expression and having internationally supervised, multi-party elections in Cuba.

In October, I wrote about the Chilean referendum in a Post-Standard op-ed piece and established a comparison between the Chilean and Cuban dictatorships. I pointed out how Augusto Pinochet had carried out an internationally supervised referendum in Chile and had accepted his defeat in it, and how Fidel Castro wouldn't even consider such an idea. Some of my pro-Castro acquaintances raised an eyebrow.

A lot has been written lately about a possible Cuban referendum ever since Pinochet allowed one in Chile. In the United States, and in Spain and France, in Costa Rica and Peru, columnists have discussed the issue at length, breaking the ground for a formal proposal.

It finally came the last week of December. An "Open Letter to President Castro" was issued in Paris and signed by over 160 internationally known intellectuals. The letter was sent to Havana and simultaneously published in 18 capitals of Europe and Latin America. European intellectuals of the stature of playwright Eugene Ionesco and director Federico Fellini, of Latin American writers Vargas Llosa and Octavio Paz, and of exiled Cuban poets and writers Arenas and Perera, have openly demanded from authoritarian Castro to be no less than his colleague, authoritarian Pinochet.

These intellectuals are demanding an internationally supervised referendum for Cuba, within a multi-party system and freedom of the press framework, like Pinochet did in Chile. No more, no less!

This time, it was Castro's turn to raise an eyebrow.

What was Castro's answer to this open letter from the intellectuals? At first he ignored it, as he usually does with the things that bother him. Inside Cuba, this always works. But it didn't work this time.

Castro is currently looking for a political opening in Latin America. For the first time in years he has been invited to attend the inauguration of Latin American presidents (Ecuadorian president's inauguration in the fall, Mexican Salinas' in December). Rumors are that he will also attend Perez's in Caracas, Venezuela, next month. Castro's newly found social urge, plus the relevance of the intellec-

tuals who signed the open letter and its widespread diffusion in Europe and America, make it impossible for Castro to duck the issue this time.

Therefore, Havana's answer was that there is no need for a Cuban referendum, that the Cuban people overwhelmingly supported Castro 30 years ago, at the start of the revolution.

But Castro doesn't give the Cuban people the right to re-evaluate his performance and change their minds if unsatisfied, like anybody else in this world does. Havana also says that Castro has been duly re-elected according to the hierarchical electoral process defined in the 1975 Cuban constitution.

In this process, the people directly elect only provincial delegates. These elect the members of the congress who, in turn, elect the president. All of this in a country with a single employer, a single party and government-controlled media.

Gen. Francisco Franco, in Spain, and Antonio Salazar, in Portugal, were also regularly re-elected in their respective countries for 40 years. However, when both of these strongmen died and a really free electoral process took place, the opposition won beyond any doubts.

Is it that Castro, in the bottom of his heart, is fearful of running the same fate as Pinochet has? Is it that his overwhelming ego cannot handle the situation of barely winning the referendum — let alone of losing it — if it takes place within the framework of freedom of the press and a multiparty system?

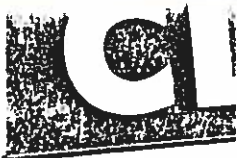
If Castro thinks that this matter ends here, with his rotund "no" to the public demand for internationally supervised elections in Cuba, he is dead wrong. This is barely the beginning. From now on, and until he provides a satisfactory solution to this problem, Castro will have to live with this question wherever he goes. And he wants to go places.

Castro is looking for an opening in Latin America and the Western world that will help him through the squeeze he is receiving from the Soviet Union. Castro has refused to carry out any perestroika in Cuba. He is dying to be invited to Venezuela and other nations and to re-establish political and economic ties with Latin America. Everybody wants to join the club, when it is a good club.

But everything has a price. Pinochet had to yield to the idea of a referendum. Arafat, to renounce terrorism. Gorbachev, to implement perestroika and glasnost.

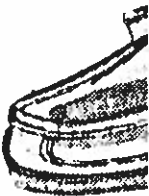
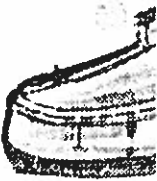
Will Castro get a free ride?

(Romeu, who lives in Syracuse, is an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland. He and his family lived for two decades under the regime of Fidel Castro.)



Dres

FR
SH



Men's

Choose fan
Mocs. Nati

CLE.

30

40

No Excuse for Repression

Chile and Cuba Both Suffer Under Totalitarianism

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

"HOW do you like Chilean referendum results?" asked my colleague, placing his tray on the dining hall table. "It was a rotund 'no' for Pinochet's regime!"

"Just love them; we won!" said I, finishing a mouthful of my sandwich. "I think I'm going to celebrate big tonight!"

"That's curious," he said. "I thought you were for the 'yes.' You are against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and against Castro in Cuba. Aren't you for the continuation of Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile?"

"I am for pluralistic democracy across the board, in Chile as well as in Cuba and Nicaragua. Not just at selected places," said I. "Now that democracy is on its way in Chile, I am looking forward to seeing all those who worked to bring pluralism back there to also contribute their fair share to bring it back to other more senior dictatorships. Castro included!"

"But it's not the same," said my colleague. "Castro is working for the Cuban people, and you wouldn't like to go back to Batista's dictatorship, would you?"

"Those are the same reasons that were argued by Pinochet's supporters in Chile," I answered him. "Do you want to go back to the four-digit inflation of 1973, was the favorite slogan that Pinochet supporters were running throughout the entire Referendum campaign. Inflation was 1,200 percent when President Allende was overthrown, and there were shortages of food, fuel and very long lines to obtain these goods in those times."

"No!" I continued saying to my colleague. "We want for Cuba the same options that we want for Chile: political pluralism. And we are a million exiles, which constitutes 10 percent of the Cuban people!" I had finished my lunch, so I picked up my tray and got ready to leave. But, then, I turned and asked him:

"Do you also want for Cuba the same option you seek for Chile? Or do you want for Chile the same option we have in Cuba?" And I left.

The fact of the matter is that the recent Chilean referendum is an excellent occasion to analyze objectively, the consistency and reciprocity of our political beliefs.

Chile and Cuba represent two radically different political models which, like often occur with all extremes, are very close to each other. They are both totalitarian regimes that present themselves as the only national alternatives for "saving" the country from two different but extremely convenient evils.

Castro came into power in Cuba 80 years ago, after seven years of Batista's authoritarian dictatorship. At the head of a popular revolution, Castro promised the Cuban people a return to pluralism and good government.

He then took over the media, dissolved the political parties, the army nationalized the big and small industry, commerce and agriculture and then announced that he was a Marxist. Opponents to his

political and economical policies were jailed, fired or forced to emigrate.

One million Cubans roam the earth, and many uncounted others suffer in silence inside Cuba, ever since. Castro declared himself the "guardian" of the Cuban nationality against the American imperialism, accused of pro-American sympathies anybody who disagreed with his policies and aligned himself with the Soviet Union.

Pinochet came to power in Chile 15 years ago, in 1973. He deposed Chilean President Salvador Allende, who three years earlier gained power in a deadlocked election, where his Socialist coalition obtained 36 percent of the popular vote (to 28 percent for the Christian Democrats and 34 percent for the Conservatives).

After the military coup, Pinochet dissolved the Congress and the political parties, banned the unions and sold back to private hands the companies that Allende's government had nationalized or intervened. Pinochet also portrays his government as the one that reduced inflation from 1,200 percent to 20 percent annually, and that has reinstalled order and stability to a country that was "at the verge of a civil war in 1973."

As a result of these two dictatorial regimes, both countries suffered greatly, generating thousands of political prisoners and political exiles. Tens of thousands in the case of Chile, had to leave their homeland for 15 years; they are now back, organizing their followers for the no in this referendum.

Hundreds of thousands in the case of Cuba also had to leave the island. Castro has never talked about a possible return, nor of allowing the reorganization of political parties, nor of allowing the organization of an internationally supervised referendum in Cuba. There are no independent — let alone opposition — media in Cuba. Only the government press can drill the Cuban people with their official interpretation of the world. That is why so many Cubans turn every day to Radio Marti, the BBC and other short wave radio stations for information.

Excuses to justify a totalitarian regime we can always find. Our question, however, remains the same.

Deep in our hearts, are we simply and honestly in favor or the pluralistic political system? Or are we kidding ourselves — and maybe others — and really supporting pluralism only at selected places, where our friends are out of government? Are we really searching for all sorts of excuses to cover up defects and uncomfortable realities for those governments we like and support while condemning, for the same behavior, those we dislike?

Answers for these very personal questions are ones that only each of us can find in the privacy of our hearts. Whether we are willing and able to provide answers for them, with candor, will define the type of human beings that we are.

(Romeu, who lives in Syracuse, is an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland. Romeu fled his native Cuba in 1980 in the Mariel Boatlift. He and his family lived for two decades under the regime of Fidel Castro.)

Dissimilar Elections

In Paraguay, It Buys Time; in Panama It's a Weapon

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

TWO apparently similar electoral processes have just taken place in Latin America last week: one in Paraguay and the other in Panama. However similar they may seem at first glimpse, they are radically different in more than one way.

It is true that both Panama and Paraguay have suffered stern authoritarian dictatorships under democratic cover. It is also true that, in both cases, the presidential candidate supported by the government predictably has been expected to win. It is still true that both governments were compelled to organize elections because of internal and international political pressure and economic problems — not their love for democracy. And finally, the prime objective for conducting these elections has been to buy time.

But here is where the similarities end.

If we perceive elections as some sort of innocuous popularity contest where the winner takes all, then both processes are identical. However, if we believe that elections are complex, multi-stage processes with profound consequences, then we can point out the following radical differences between the two:

In Paraguay, Alfredo Stroessner's regime represented a stable (34 years) political system with a powerful and well-organized political base: the Colorado Party. In Panama, by contrast, Gen. Manuel Noriega has governed for less than a decade with a heterogeneous group more interested in short-term material gain than in a long-range political stay.

In Paraguay, Stroessner was deposed by his own followers when he became a burden for the continuity of the system. The Colorado Party is now rapidly trying to evolve in order to survive. It apparently has accepted the principle of power-sharing in a pluralistic democracy and is now willing to give up its monopoly of power not to lose it all later on.

The opposition, apparently, has understood this change in attitude and is willing to play the game to take the country back into the democratic path. Between these two political forces they may achieve it, sparing the nation the blood bath and destruction of an open power struggle.

Hence, the time that the Paraguayan election is currently buying is, hopefully, the necessary one to make the transition to a mutually agreed pluralistic democracy.

In Panama, on the other hand, Noriega doesn't seem to care much about the opposition, its role or a return to formal democracy. A shrewd operator, Noriega has successfully wrapped himself in the national flag, as so many other dictators conveniently do, to obtain some sort of legitimacy and support for his government. The opposition, apparently

overconfident of American support, hasn't been wise enough to find a way out of government for him and his entourage.

Hence, each side seems to be using the electoral process to destroy the other. And the futile time they are currently buying may prove just enough until their next inevitable clash.

How can such a difference exist between such two apparently similar processes?

Maybe because Paraguayans have finally understood there are three stages in an election, and Panamanians haven't.

First, in an election the government recognizes the existence of alternative power groups (the opposition) with valid interests and solutions to the national problems (their platform). Second, these alternative groups are allowed to share their ideas with the nation as a whole (the political campaign). Finally, the election itself permits one of these groups to take charge under two conditions: to hear and take into account what other groups have to say and to relinquish power after a finite period of time.

This political reality, which in our days has been acknowledged by several European and American governments, apparently has been accepted in Paraguay.

In the 1970s, for example, in post-Franco Spain as well as in post-Salazar's Portugal, all political groups accepted pluralism to avoid civil war. The same occurred in Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay in the early 1980s. And the same is taking place in Chile.

At the other end of the political spectrum, in the Eastern European countries, we are starting to observe the same political behavior. In Poland, Solidarity has been legalized and allowed to present candidates in an open election. And in Hungary, restricted political associations have been allowed. Apparently, what wasn't possible for Dubcek during the Spring of Prague in 1968 or for Imre Nagy in Budapest in 1956 is becoming feasible today.

Dictators from the right and from the left, Gen. Andres Rodriguez of Paraguay and Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski from Poland, may finally have realized that to function efficiently as a nation the consent and contribution of all its citizens is required. Noriega, apparently, has failed to grasp this.

Inadvertently amidst these noisy ones, a third Latin American presidential election has taken place this week, too. In Bolivia, for the second time since its return to pluralism in 1985, the citizens went to the polls to select a president in a three-way race: left, center and right.

There is hope. Time is working for democracy, these days. Let's pray for the best.

Romeu, who lives in Syracuse, is an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland. He and his family lived for two decades in Cuba.

SYRACUSE Post-Standard - May 12, 1989.

Lighthearted 'El Super': Cuban Film Outside Cuba

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

Although "El Super" was shot entirely in New York City, it is a Cuban film through and through.

It was filmed by a Cuban-American crew, under a small "cinema verite"-style budget. In addition to its Cuban director and actors, its theme is Cuban: the story of a family of exiles struggling in poor neighborhoods of New York City.

The main character is Roberto Amador Gonzalo, "el super" (the building supervisor), a 42-year-old former Cuban bus conductor who left his native land in 1968 with his young wife and little daughter. He settles in an old Hispanic section of New York, and takes a job as the supervisor of a dilapidated apartment house.

He struggles with the job, having to raise a family in a society very different from the one he left. He still yearns for the land he left behind, because of his political dissent, and to which he can never return.

Ten years later, finding that he no longer can stand life in New York City, Gonzalo plans to leave for Miami, Fla., the city that's closest to his homeland. The film uncovers all sorts of comical situations in the daily life of the super, who finally achieves his objective of moving toward the sun.

Gonzalo is neither an educated bourgeois nor a wealthy landowner. By his neatly kept apartment and the many religious images displayed throughout his home, you can feel he is an ordinary, independent-minded working man with a traditional background. Although forced to leave Cuba because of the drastic changes of an atheistic and highly authoritarian regime, he has become attached to the American system. Yet el super misses his homeland.

His wife is primarily a mother and homemaker, the traditional backbone of a Cuban family. She keeps house, and suffers from the lack of communication between herself and her Americanized teen-age daughter.

"Don't you think I didn't spend,

FILM REVIEW

during my engagement to your father, many nights without sleep for wanting to be with him?" she asks her pregnant daughter. "Couldn't you have waited, too? Or at least have told me?" She scolds her severely, but she doesn't turn her away; it's her family.

The girl, too, faces her share of the tragedy in the Cuban experience: that of a child who is growing between two cultures, wanting to assimilate into the one without turning away from the other.

Two family friends represent the contrasts between the Cubans and the rest of the American Hispanic culture. The Cuban friend is a burned-out, ex-Bay of Pigs expeditionary who sees life only through an anti-communist prism. A Puerto Rican, a close friend of el super, goes with him to play dominos and talk politics.

When the Puerto Rican confides to el super that "I have never told you about our problems... about the Ponce killings..." Gonzalo retorts: "Yes, but if you want to go back tomorrow, you just go to the Eastern (airlines) counter and buy a ticket."

El super dreams of moving to the Hialeah section of Miami, which closely resembles a suburban city next to Havana. The dream comes true when el super receives a letter from a friend with a job offer in Miami. At a farewell party, we again find the theme of the separation of friends and family, an experience all the guests had bitterly lived through.

"El Super" can be seen as an entertaining light comedy (in Spanish, with English subtitles) or as an excellent opportunity to understand the Cuban-American experience. To its director, Leon Ichaso, we say, "Thanks, buddy. You did a good job."

Jorge Luis Romeu, a native of Cuba, is assistant professor of mathematics at SUNY Cortland, where "El Super" will be screened at 7 p.m. Thursday. It is the last in a series of three Hispanic films shown in the fall semester.

LIQUIDATION SALE HANDMADE PERSIAN & ORIENTAL RUGS Save 60-80% off Retail Prices

- Shipments of Merchandise specially ordered to open Retail outlets.
- Due to unforeseen circumstances, Financial investors millions of Dollars of fine Handmade Oriental rugs will be letters of Credit from Major Banks on behalf of Importers.
- Selection of over 500 rugs including Persian, Turkish, Indian, Pakistan, Chinese & Russian rugs from 2x3 to 12x12

Examples:	Size:	NOW	Examples:	Size:
Heavy Chinese Killim	4 5x6 6	\$ 99	Heavy Sculptured Chinese	9x12
Sculptured Aubusson	9x12	899	Persian Isphahan	10x14

ONE DAY ONLY:

FRIDAY, NOV. 18th
10 A.M.-8 P.M.
SYRACUSE AIRPORT INN
HANCOCK INT'L AIRPORT
NO. SYRACUSE

Certificate of Authenticity with every rug. One-of-A-kind items. Subject to Terms: Cash, Check & all Major Credit Cards.
Embassy Auctioneers, Inc. Info: 800-423-5666

CALL COLLEC

ANNOUNCING PHONE-A-LOAN
the fast, convenient way to apply for
Marine Midland personal installment
loan. Now you can get a great low rate
and an answer in just 24 hours or less.

Whatever you need—a new car, a boat, an addition on your house—it's yours at your fingertips with Phone-a-Loan.

CALL 1-800-843-5515
Monday—Friday 8 a.m.—8 p.m.



MARINE MIDLAND
Let's work it out together

Loans subject to credit approval. Member FDIC

Community Living

Film Review —

'El Super' Depicts Struggle of Cuban Exiles

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU
SUNY Cortland
Math Department

"El Super," the last in a series of three Hispanic films for the fall semester, will be shown tonight at 7 in Room 120 of SUNY Cortland's Sperry Center.

Can "El Super" be considered a Cuban film? Shot entirely in New York City, by a Cuban-American crew and not in Havana, with the blessings of the official Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC) the theme of "El Super" is legitimately Cuban: the story of a family of exiles struggling in the poor neighborhoods of New York City.

The film tells the story of Roberto Amador Gonzalo, a 42-year-old former Cuban bus conductor, who arrives in the States during the Freedom Flights (1965-1970) with his young wife and little daughter. He takes a job as the supervisor, "El Super," of an apartment house and for 10 years struggles with three things: his job, his task of raising a family in a totally different society, and with his curse of still yearning for a land he left behind and to which he can never return.

Finding that he can no longer stand the life in New York City, Gonzalo plans his return to the closest thing to home — Miami, Fla.

The action occurs in an old, working class and largely Cuban section of the city. There, one can live and die without ever having to

speak English, eat a hamburger or listen to a single rock-n-roll song.

The main character is not a highly educated bourgeois nor a wealthy landowner. His neatly kept apartment, and the many religious images displayed throughout it, gives the viewer the feeling he is an ordinary but independent-minded working man with a traditional background. He was forced to leave Cuba by the drastic changes of an atheistic and highly politicized regime.

Instead, he became attracted to the American system where "you can even call the president an SOB and nobody will care." But El Super deeply misses his homeland — "Where is the sunshine?", his family — "My old lady passed away, and I wasn't there to see it!" and his friends — "Who would say that I, Roberto Amador Gonzalo, at 42 would start my third life?..."

Two family friends are presented in the film: one Cuban, one Puerto Rican. The Cuban is a burned-out, ex-Bay-of-Pigs expeditionary who sees life through an anti-communist prism. The Puerto Rican provides the contrast between Cubans and the rest of the Hispanic groups. He is a sure and close friend of El Super, yet the Puerto Rican confides to him: "I have never told you about our problems: about Albizu Campos, nor the Ponce killings..."

To this, El Super replies: "Yes! But if you want to go back tomorrow, you just go to the

Eastern counter and buy a ticket!"

This is the difference; some people have chosen not to go back. The possibility is always there for them, but not for us, is the message of El Super to his Boricua friend. It differentiates an immigrant from a political exile.

Gonzalo dreams of moving to Miami, to Hialeah! Any one who has walked through Miami's Hialeah section and La Lisa, an Havana suburb, can surely take one for the other. Miami! This is the closest that Cuban-Americans can get to home...

Gonzalo's dream comes true when he receives a job offer. "The Visa!" he shouts, in direct reference to the American visas, so long awaited in Cuba. La Visa represented El Super's possibility of a transition to the Promised Land: now in Hialeah!

In the Farewell Party scene, we find again the theme of the separation of friends and family.

The film ends with El Super looking at the boiler: "¡a Boila." It represents everything he hates: the cold, the snow, separation, loneliness.... El Super may not be going back home, but he is getting the best surrogate he can humanly find.

Yes, "El Super" is a Cuban film because everything: director, crew, actors and theme are all genuinely Cuban. Just that, precisely due to its theme, "El Super" couldn't happen inside Castro's Cuba.

'Steel Mc On CRT S

Cortland Repertory received rights to produce Broadway comedy "Magnolias" during its season and has high production which received office success Stage.

For 17 years, Cortla

Santa's C

Santa Claus is coming to Pyramid Mall in Ithaca on Monday at 11 a.m.

Santa, who will be horse-drawn wagon in a giant balloon launch about coming to the children are about see

Santa is excited year, he will have a the midst of the reception at Cafe Square. Santa's made of giant present silver mylar paper. I



Alternate High Helps Teens

The Cortland Alternative High School (CAHS) was developed for students identified as being in high



THE PRESS

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, COLLEGE AT CORTLAND

Volume XIX Number 7

October 28, 1988

Gay and Lesbian Alliance formed at Cortland College

KATHRYN ZONA
Co-News Editor

In order to educate the Cortland College Community about gay and lesbian issues an ad hoc committee was formed last year (1987-88) titled the Lesbian and Gay Concerns Committee.

This committee worked to address major issues on campus. It added the definition of sexual orientation to the college handbook, to guarantee that homophobic threats and slurs would not be tolerated. The committee also introduced speakers, and films to campus that

dealt with issues of sexual harassment.

This year the committee provided a report on their success and requested standing committee status.

The Lesbian and Gay concerns committee, which stems from the minority and womens study council, has yet to be approved by the acting provost, Morris Bogard. Following Bogard's anticipated approval the committee will have full committee status at do other committees under the minority and womens council.

A group of students recently organized a group called the Gay and Lesbian

Alliance as a branch of the Lesbian and Gay concerns committees.

GALA will be a totally independent student organization with no official connection to the Lesbian and Gay Concerns Committee, although Margaret Nash Coordinator of Lesbian and Gay concerns and Patricia Francis, Chairwoman of minority and womens studies said they will support GALA. "The purpose of the GALA," said Louie Larson, Career Planning and Placement, "is to become an organized group to promote educational programs for the college population.

Chilean Referendum-chance to review political beliefs

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU
Special to the Press

"How do you like the Chilean Referendum results?" asked my colleague, placing his tray on the dining hall table. "It was a rotund NO for Pinochet's regime!"

"Just love them; we won!" said I, finishing a mouthful of my sandwich. "I think I'm going to celebrate big tonight!"

"That's curious," he said. "I thought you were for the YLS. You are against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and against Castro in Cuba. Aren't you for the continuation of Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile?"

"I am for pluralistic democracy across the board: in Chile as well as in Cuba and Nicaragua. Not just at selected places," said I. "Now that democracy is on its way in Chile, I am looking forward to seeing all those who worked to bring pluralism back there to also contribute their fair share to bring it back to other more senior dictatorships. Castro included!"

"But it's not the same", said my colleague. "Castro is working for the Cuban people, and you wouldn't like to go back to Batista's dictatorship, would you?"

"Those are the same reasons that were argued by Pinochet's supporters in Chile", I answered him. "Do you want to go back to the four digit inflation of 1973," was the favorite slogan that Pinochet supporters were running throughout the entire Referendum campaign". Inflation was 1200 percent when President Allende was overthrown, and there were shortages of food, fuel and very long lines to obtain these goods in those times.

"No!" I continued saying to my colleague. "We want for Cuba the same options that we want for Chile: political pluralism. And we are a million exiles, which constitute 10 percent of the Cuban people!" I had finished my lunch, so I picked up my tray and got ready to leave. But then, I turned and asked him:

"Do you also want for Cuba the same option you seek for Chile? Or do you want for Chile the same option we have in Cuba?" And I left.

The fact is, the recent Chilean Referendum was an excellent occasion to analyze objectively, the Consistency and Reciprocity of our political beliefs.

Chile and Cuba represent two radically different political models which, as

often occurs with extremes, are very close to each other. They are both totalitarian regimes which present themselves as the only National alternatives for "saving" the country from two different but extremely convenient evils.

Castro came into power in Cuba thirty years ago, after seven years of Batista's authoritarian dictatorship.

At the head of a popular revolution, Castro promised the Cuban people a return to pluralism and good government. He then took over the media, dissolved the political parties, the army, nationalized the big and small industry, commerce and agriculture and then announced that he was a Marxist. Opponents to his political and economic policies were jailed, fired or forced to emigrate. One million Cubans roam the earth, and many uncounted others suffer in silence inside Cuba, ever since. Castro declared himself the "guardian" of the Cuban nationality against the American imperialism, accused of pro-American sympathies anybody who disagreed with his policies and aligned himself with the Soviet Union.

Pinochet came to power in Chile fifteen years ago, in 1973. He deposed Chilean President Salvador Allende who three years earlier gained power in a deadlocked election, where his Socialist coalition obtained 36 percent of the popular vote (to 28 percent for the Christian Democrats and 34 percent for the Conservatives). After the military coup, Pinochet dissolved the Congress and the Political Parties, banned the unions and sold back to private hands the companies that Allende's government had nationalized or intervened. Pinochet also portrays his government as the one which reduced inflation from 1200 percent to 20 percent annually and that has reinstated order and stability

Tuition increase?

By PAMELA R. KUJAWA
Co-News Editor

A financial crisis in the New York State budget may spell a tuition increase for SUNY students.

Governor Mario Cuomo gave the Chancellor of the SUNY system, D. Bruce Johnstone, a proposal to cut back spending by 90 million dollars. In order to meet this proposal campuses would have to be closed or tuition increased.

Jim Cullen, former CCSA President and SASU's Vice President for Campus Affairs, feels that this would reduce the "accessibility and quality of (the) SUNY (system)." SASU has been organizing students to lobby the legislature. Signatures have been gathered from students around the state. According to Cullen, the "fight isn't over." SASU went to Governor Cuomo and asked for a tuition freeze. The lobbying will not conclude until negotiable terms are met.

Aside from the regular tuition increase that has been proposed is the \$750 out-of-

state tuition increase that the chancellor has also proposed. This increase is in addition to the \$750 out-of-state increase over this past summer. This amounts to a \$1500 tuition increase if passed. "This increase is especially alarming because the majority of out-of-state students are people of color

from various cultural backgrounds. At a time when SUNY is emphasizing cultural diversity, this proposal seems counterproductive. Facts show that tuition increase discourages enrollment" stated Cullen.

SASU will look into two areas to help alleviate the increase. The first is to try to decrease Bundy Aid (public money from tax payers that goes to private universities.) The second area is to look into the lottery, which should be giving profits to higher education.

Recently SASU has successfully discouraged the chancellor from supporting the tuition increase by working through the governor. "It has been a victory for the students and SASU," according to Cullen.

Senator Seward speaks at Cortland College

By KELLY A. HOGAN
Assistant News Editor

On Monday Oct. 23, the College Republicans presented Senator James Seward Seward, New York State Senator of the 30th district, spoke to students and faculty in the Corey Union Exhibition Lounge.

Seward spoke of the two main themes of his campaign and how they were achieved the first being tax cuts. In April of 1987, a three year phase tax cut was initiated. "In two years," said Seward, "tax rates will be back to what they were in 1958." Seward's second theme was the creation of more jobs, and the resurgence of economic development in the past years. More job opportunities are available now than ever before. Seward

feels he has been successful in "bringing back the bacon" to the 30th senatorial district.

to a country which was "at the verge of a civil war in 1973".

As a result of these two dictatorial regimes, both countries suffered greatly, generating thousands of political prisoners and thousands in the case of Chile, had to leave their homeland for 15 years; they are now back, organizing their followers for the NO in this referendum. Hundreds of thousands in the case of Cuba also had to leave the

Seward went on to express his support for Republican presidential candidate George Bush. "George Bush will be elected", stated Seward.

Issues raised by Cortland's students and faculty, included getting students to vote, the SUNY budget, highway funding, the state of the SUNY system, taxes, energy conservation, Bundy Aid, and the banning of irradiated foods.

Seward is a strong supporter of the SUNY system. He presently serves on a higher education committee, working to restore the SUNY budget. He promised to be looking elsewhere concerning cuts. Seward agrees the SUNY system has been squeezed long enough.

Seward concluded with a question of how many students were registered to vote. Students attending informed the Senator of the 1150 newly registered students.

island. Castro has never talked about a possible return, nor of allowing the reorganization of political parties, nor of allowing the organization of an internationally supervised Referendum in Cuba. There is no independent-let alone opposition media in Cuba. Only the government press can drill the Cuban people with their official interpretation of the world. That is why so many Cubans turn every day to Radio Marti, the BBC and other short wave radio stations for information.

Inside This Week

News	1-3
Editorial	9
Entertainment	7-12
Cartoons	11
Photos	4
Opinions	8-9
Insights	12
Sports	13-16

Quote of the week:

"May the inward and outward man be one."—Socrates

Three Power Struggles

Should Totalitarians Lose Sleep over World Events?

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

THREE political events, largely interrelated, have occurred around the world: the elections in Poland, the student revolt in China and the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran. If, separately, they are eloquent enough about the special characteristics of their respective countries, together they tell us a powerful story.

In Poland, for the first time in 40 years, a free election has taken place. A legal opposition organization, Solidarity Union, was allowed to contest the ruling Communist Party. And without the benefit of equal media time or space, without the contacts or the skills that many years of legal operation provide to any political organization, Solidarity obtained over 80 percent of the popular vote. By all counts, this is a resounding victory.

A few months ago in Chile, Gen. Augusto Pinochet lost his plebiscite when he received only 43 percent of the vote. Pinochet is now getting ready to leave. Besides being a strong indicator of the Polish people's desire for a drastic change, the bare 20 percent of the pro-communist popular vote could also be taken by the current Polish authorities as an invitation to leave.

In China, hundreds, maybe thousands of college students have been massacred in the public square by government troops for demanding more political freedoms. Born and raised in a totalitarian society, these Chinese students put their lives on the line to claim their right to make their own decisions. They did not want the party making decisions for them any more in exchange for a guaranteed minimum standard of living.

In Iran, Khomeini, a religious leader-turned politician, was considered nothing short of holy in his native Iran. Followed more by religious faith and emotional consideration than for the force of his arguments, Khomeini's death creates a large power vacuum that has to be filled rapidly. The question remains, which of the competing power groups will get it and how.

If we overlay these three stories, we obtain an even clearer picture of what these events are all about.

The search for individual freedom is intrinsic in the human being and only second to the search for daily nourishment. This has been demonstrated by the events in Poland and China.

In both these countries, the people have been subjected, for years, to "electoral" processes where 99 percent of the potential voters cast 99 percent of their votes in support of the ruling party. And now, when given a real free choice, the majority rejects its rule.

Second, it is evident that economic reforms are not enough if they are not accompanied by political reforms. We have just seen that in China. When people are ready for reforms, either they obtain them via negotiations, like in Poland or attempt to get them via open struggle, like in China.

If Chinese authorities think they can drown in blood the people's quest for freedom and reforms, let them just look to Hungary and Poland. There, in 1956, the Soviet tanks and local communist troops silenced with bullets the people's protest. Today, barely 30 years later, the same communist governments have been forced by history to undertake the most sweeping political reforms in all the Eastern Bloc. Freedom can be delayed, but never forsaken.

The Chinese events also show that caution should be used when dealing with totalitarian societies. Conservative hard-liners are reluctant to bring about change. And unlike in open Western societies, they are just waiting for the right occasion to regain power through internal reshuffling. Even when the leaders are honestly in favor of evolution, an abrupt internal struggle — like the present one in China — can turn around the trend any time.

The death of the ayatollah reminds us of the frailty of human nature and of the greatest problem in a totalitarian society: that of swift and peaceful succession. Khomeini is barely gone; the power struggle in Iran has just started, and heaven knows where it is going to lead them.

These three political events are very thought-provoking. But should they make us or the totalitarian rulers of the world lose sleep?

For example, it would be no surprise if Cuba's Fidel Castro, who doesn't want to have a plebiscite for fear of obtaining the same results as the Polish just did, cannot sleep very well this week.

Castro, now 62, may fear that within his own government there may be some who think he will soon rejoin Khomeini.

In that case, a power struggle is likely to occur among the three factions that support the government: the old communists, the Sierra Maestra guerrillas and the socialist generation formed in the last 30 years. A similar situation to the one in Grenada in 1983, when Maurice Bishop was murdered in a power struggle, may arise.

Already some in Cuba may be seriously considering the possibility of retiring Castro, as recently occurred to Paraguay's Alfredo Stroessner, and then slowly opening up the system, like in Poland, toward power-sharing with the opposition. This course of action could avoid a bloody revolt, like the one in China, that would open the door for an international intervention, like in Grenada.

Isn't that a really unsettling thought for an old autocrat?

Romeu, who lives in Syracuse, is an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland. He and his family lived for two decades in Cuba.

Tip of the Iceberg in Cuba

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

THE arrest, trial, sentencing and execution on drug dealing charges of Cuban Gen. Arnaldo Ochoa has made the front pages in Miami. But there are strong reasons for it to be considered hard news anywhere.

Gen. Ochoa, 58, was decorated by Fidel Castro in 1984 as a "Hero of the Cuban Revolution." Ochoa commanded the Cuban expeditionary forces in Ethiopia and was considered the architect of the Cuban military victories there. Later on, he commanded Cuban forces in Angola and in Nicaragua. And until last month, he was third in the chain of command in the Cuban army.

But now, with six other high-ranking army and intelligence officers, Gen. Ochoa had been indicted and sentenced for setting up and operating a smuggling ring that introduced Colombian cocaine in the United States. These operations had been repeatedly denounced in the past by U.S. authorities and repeatedly denied by the Cuban government. It is now apparent that they were true after all.

Two weeks ago, the Cuban government apparently found out and arrested the officers. A military "High Court of Honor" was organized to look at the problem. As a result, Ochoa and all his accomplices were stripped of their military ranks, medals and government and party positions and sentenced to death or long imprisonment.

But the substance of the problem doesn't lie in these sensational and highly publicized events but in another important one: Was it really possible, as Castro's government now claims, that such a large, complex and long-lived operation could have taken place in a tightly controlled country like Cuba without the knowledge and acquiescence of the highest power circles?

There are, at least, three theories to explain it. We will call them the "naïve," the "hard-line" and the "pragmatic" explanations, respectively.

The "naïve" approach suggests that the current drug-busting events in Havana are nothing but another proof of the "good will" of the Cuban government. Castro was completely ignorant of the drug traffic and he ordered the crackdown as soon as he found out. Consequently, Castro's behavior should be encouraged with better economic and political relations between Cuba and the United States.

This simple explanation leaves an important unanswered question. How, for over two years, Colombian drug dealers entered and left the Cuban ports, airstrips and used sophisticated Cuban intelligence reports without the knowledge and complicity of the highest Cuban authorities?

The second, "hard-line" explanation, states that the real ring leader and the only one to blame is Castro. After years of accusations, Castro was no longer able to maintain his cover-up and was forced to acknowledge that he was trafficking with drugs. Then, Castro found some "convenient" scapegoats to blame, as he has traditionally done with all his other previous political and economic mistakes during the last 30 years.

To the supporters of this approach, we remind that Castro, an astute operator, has effectively remained in power for over 30 years. He is not so clumsy. And the sacrifice of a close associate as Arnaldo Ochoa is not done without undue cause. Other, more expendable scapegoats could have easily been found.

There is yet a third, pragmatic, more sophisticated approach. It supports the idea that Castro was pressured by his Soviet patrons to drop the inefficient Latin American guerrilla operation. It was costing too much and yielding too little. But Castro didn't want to stop it.

Then, Gen. Ochoa, a loyal and old comrade, suggested the drug trafficking scheme as an efficient solution with several consequences. It would provide funds to support the guerrillas and other operations in Latin America as well as some badly needed hard cash in Cuba to develop tourism in the island. All this hard cash would come from the drug dealers, who would gladly pay for the services rendered in Cuba as they smuggled their drugs from Colombia to the United States. Finally, the spreading of drugs in the United States would contribute to the "moral decay" of capitalism. Convinced by all this, Castro conveniently looked the other way and let his people run the operation for him for all this time.

But maybe there arose a small and unexpected problem. Maybe Gen. Ochoa, a Soviet-trained field commander, well-liked by his seasoned troops after many years under fire in Ethiopia, Angola and Nicaragua, was getting too powerful. Maybe Ochoa's ideas about the Cuban future were more in tune with Soviet perestroika than with Castro's return to the past via the process of "rectification of errors." Maybe Castro, who is getting old, thought that Ochoa was becoming a potential threat.

Hence, by laying out in the open the drug traffic and blaming Ochoa for it, Castro would gain in several ways. First, he would rid himself of this real or imagined foe and send a message to others like him in Cuba. Then, he could use this timely disclosure of the drug deal very adroitly as another public relations chip in the U.S.-Cuba rapprochement game.

If this last approach is close to the truth, then getting rid of Ochoa is only the first of very interesting events to come.

In Portugal in 1974, the gerontocracy in power was ousted by young army colonels. They had forged close ties under the bullets during the colonial wars in Africa. And Castro, knowledgeable of this, may want to avoid the same problem. But by trying to avoid this pitfall, Castro may well fall in another worse one. For a witch-hunt among young Cuban army officers may only force them to oust Castro first.

Maybe what we have just seen in Havana, with Ochoa's trial and execution is just the tip of the iceberg. If so, it may well also be the beginning of the end.

Romeu, who lives in Syracuse, is an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland. He and his family lived for two decades in Cuba under Castro.

Making Math Applicable

Applied Courses Can Help Students See Its Usefulness

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

MID August. Schools are empty. Books are stuffed in their shelves. Pools are thriving. And in Washington's National Gallery of Art there is an exquisite exhibit of early 20th century Japanese-American photographs.

Why, then, bother to talk math?

Because at the 150th annual meeting of the American Statistical Association in Washington several important sessions were devoted to this problem. And because the importance of math and of how the United States is falling behind with respect to other industrialized countries is of great concern.

But why should we particularly stress math?

Because in addition to its traditional arithmetic applications, mathematics is a formative subject that develops very important intellectual abilities.

Critical thinking, which includes looking at a complex problem in its totality and weighing its pros and cons, can be enhanced through the study of mathematics. For example, when we discuss the classical quadratic equation and analyze how its results change according to whether the coefficients are positive, negative or zero, we are exercising our critical thinking capabilities.

Math also develops abstract thinking. We first start with the study of the plane. Then, we grow into tridimensional spaces where we have three coordinates: length, width and height.

Math also develops good study habits of continuity and consistency. To succeed in Math II, for example, we have to do well in Math I, and so on. And this may be one of the reasons why some students dislike it.

Finally, in computer math, students learn about flow charting, which teaches them to organize their work from beginning to end before its implementation. And then, to write a program from this flow chart, stressing the importance of the order in which things have to be done. There are strong similarities between writing a program and writing a report. We can map the construction of a flow chart with that of an outline and then proceeding from both to produce the finished product in each setting.

However, students as a whole don't do well in math. They don't like to take math. They would rather take another subject, say English. Why?

English, like many other subjects, is straightforward. Everyone knows that if we do well in English, we will be able to write a letter to our sweetheart, or a resume and cover letter to get a job. We may write a proposal and get a grant. We can become professional writers, novelists or journalists. Or we may simply enjoy reading the Sunday paper. Nobody thinks of teaching English as if it were the exclusive domain of the linguists, who forever dwell over the correct use of an adverb, nor the realm of the

teacher, who will devoutly educate the next generations.

It is not always the same with math. In high school we seldom learn, for example, that by using a spread sheet cleverly we can solve the problem of finding the "best" allocation of study hours, by subject, given a fixed total. Or that we need some weights, representing the difficulty of each of the subjects of study. And that we can estimate them by analyzing the amount of time spent, and the corresponding grade obtained by fellow students of equal ability to ours.

But why aren't these things taught more often in school, if for no other reason than to bring out this latent desire we all have, to attack and solve challenging and interesting problems? Maybe because teachers have not been exposed to sufficient applied mathematics in college.

A math education curriculum may well include four semesters of calculus, three of algebra and one each of geometry, computers, analysis and probability. In addition, students may take a few electives, say another computer course or history of math. But colleges restrict the total number of mathematics courses that can be taken, and students often graduate without having had a single applied math course.

Operations research and statistics, subjects that deal with modeling and problem solving, are seldom found in a math-ed curriculum. Hence, we cannot blame teachers if, implicitly or unconsciously, they pass on to their students that math is a theoretical subject, useful in graduate school or good for becoming a math teacher.

All these concerns about the problems of teaching math were amply discussed in the recent ASA meeting. The need to introduce applied mathematics as an integral part of the high school curriculum and to train the high school teachers who will explain this material was stressed.

There are currently several national efforts providing this training, among them the ASA Quantitative Literacy Project, summer institutes and state district in-service training courses. However, there lies yet another important, unresolved question that has to be addressed: the update of the mathematics education curricula.

Mathematics education curricula should be revised to include more applied courses, including statistics and operations research, even at the expense of other more theoretical topics. Otherwise, teachers will continue to lack the necessary background to teach them. And the need for training courses will remain, unnecessarily and indefinitely.

The introduction of applied mathematics topics as integral parts of school math curricula should be a positive step. It may show students that math, like English, is a useful topic they can relate to and use to their advantage today, not three years into their college life. Then perhaps many more will take it successfully and even choose a quantitative-oriented career, so much in demand and need in the years to come.

Romeu is an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland.

The Diversity of Hispanics

Three Main Subgroups Have Own Characteristics

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

TO appreciate the differences between U.S. and Latin American university systems," I began my talk at the college, "it is necessary to understand the differences between Hispanics and Anglo-Saxons." I searched my audience for feedback and, suddenly, met the black, intense, Mediterranean eyes of my colleague Joe.

"What on earth are you talking about?" they seemed to tell me. "I'm no Anglo-Saxon; I'm Italian!"



Romeu

I had fallen into my own trap: stereotyping. I had overlooked the differences of this, apparently homogeneous, English-speaking European-American audience. They were composed of Anglo-Saxons, but also of Italian-, Jewish-, German- and Polish-Americans.

Hispanics often complain about a similar situation when others address us by our collective name, for the term is just an umbrella name that often hides our great and rich diversity.

The term "Hispanic" characterizes a complex culture rather than a single racial, national or social group. We Hispanics are the descendants of the Spanish colonizers — of the Indians they subjected, of the African slaves they imported and of all possible combinations of this union of peoples. This is so because we Hispanics for centuries became a part of the Spanish world and were profoundly touched by it, and by the other cultures that were intertwined in it.

Hispanics may frequently speak Spanish at home, may often have a darker complexion, may use a Spanish surname and may follow similar strict and close family structures. There is much that brings us close together, and indeed we seek each other out and gather by individual affinity whenever we can. But it would be a mistake to consider us a monolithic group.

In very broad terms, there are three main Hispanic subgroups in the United States. Each has a different geographical origin, each has inserted itself at different historical moments and for different reasons and each has settled in a different part of the country. And, yet, in spite of this diversity, we still resemble each other in many cultural traits.

The first, the oldest and the largest of the three subgroups is the Mexican. There are those who became Americans after the Mexican war of 1846-48, and also those who have come in more recent times. We find them predominantly in rural areas of the Southwest, often as agricultural workers. And they face specific problems derived from their regional and occupational traits.

Secondly, we find the Puerto Ricans, who became Americans after the Spanish war of 1898. Many of them have come to live in the continent and settled

in densely populated cities of the Northeast. There it has been more difficult to keep up with the fast pace of a largely industrial society.

The third, most recent, of the groups are the Cubans. Some always have lived on the East Coast. But the big Cuban influx occurred after the communist takeover of the island in the early 1960s. Cubans are, predominantly, politicized urban workers, frequently bilingual and often trained in trades, business or technical and liberal professions. They settled mainly in Miami and Union City and have had their share of problems, like the rest. For example, they are learning to keep the delicate balance with other Miami ethnic groups and to live in the front line of the American drug war.

Finally, we may consider a fourth group, composed of all other immigrants from the many countries south of the Rio Grande and from Spain. Even more heterogeneous than the previous three, these have incorporated into Hispanic groups or to the mainstream America. They also have peculiar problems of their own, identity and isolation not the last items on their list.

On occasion, the term Hispanic is used to address its segment of economically disadvantaged. This usage does not contribute to the development of our group. Many Hispanics who are not economically deprived may not wish to be labeled as such. And many others who have effectively risen from poverty may shy away from it. The result may well be the loss of valuable role models.

Other times we are requested to declare our "race" as black, white or Hispanic. This is often a difficult choice and many of us end up filling in more than one item. For there are white, black, Meso-American Indian and, of course, mixed-race Hispanics, all as good as the next.

There are Hispanics of all shades, forms and social occupations. Linda Chavez and Lauro Cavazos are Hispanics — but not all of us are White House staff or secretaries of education. Willy Chirino is a known Hispanic musician. We have them in the federal prison in Atlanta awaiting deportation to Cuba and in Miami's affluent suburbs. But not all of us are in jail or wealthy. Most, I would say upfront, quietly and unobtrusively, get up early every morning to go to work and bring the bacon home — just like you. No more, no less.

In this blessed multiethnic, multicultural nation there is much to gain from diversity. It not only enriches its intellectual wealth, but also constitutes a positive international trade tool.

There are 21 Spanish-speaking Latin American, European and African countries who buy and sell goods. It may be easier for a Hispanic to successfully conduct business there. And for every additional \$40,000 in exports, a new job is created at home.

Yes, Hispanics, as individuals, are both similar and different. But in a nation of immigrants that stamps the motto "*E Pluribus Unum*" — "Out of Many, One" — on its coins, can this really surprise anyone?

Romeu, who lives in Syracuse, is an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland. He and his family lived for two decades in Cuba.

Syracuse, NY - Post-Standard - Nov 8/89

March toward Pluralism

Latin America Follows Path from Totalitarianism

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

IN our recent local elections, less than 60 percent of the registered voters went to the polls. Some critics blame this apathy on general system complacency and point out that in other countries citizens vote in large numbers. And where pluralism is lacking, people demonstrate in hordes claiming their right to participate in government.



Romeu

Just look at the events in Eastern Europe. There, a rapid evolution toward pluralism is taking place with an unusual display of tolerance and moderation by all sides. In Poland and Hungary, opposition groups were first allowed, then legalized by the governing communists. In exchange, the opposition accepted to soften their rhetoric and to talk out their differences.

As a contrast, in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, where hard-line top leadership refused to evolve, violent demonstrations have forced them out. New, more reform-minded replacements have agreed to implement the popular demands for a system change — the alternative being a Beijing-type blood bath and continuation of the present stagnation. Freedom of emigration, of the press and of religion, previously non-existent in Eastern Europe, are now beginning to sprout behind the crumbling Iron Curtain.

This model of peaceful internal evolution from totalitarianism to pluralism is feasible, but only when implemented with firmness and honesty by both sides.

It worked in Portugal in 1974 during the dismantling of the Salazar-Caetano regime and shortly after with Franco's Spain. In both cases these totalitarian systems were swiftly and non-violently substituted by model pluralistic regimes, by the cooperation between government and opposition.

Throughout the 1980s, most of Latin America has, quietly but steadily, followed the same path from dictatorial to pluralistic government.

In Mexico, for the first time in 50 years under PRI party rule, an opposition candidate was elected state governor. PRI is now ready to share power with the newly organized leftist Cardenas' followers and the conservative PAN party.

In Argentina, Carlos Menem, a moderate Peronist, succeeded moderate conservative president Raul Alfonsin, who was elected when the military returned the government to civilians after the 1982 Malvinas War. During the 1970s, the Peronistas supported the urban guerrillas, while the military suppressed them. Today, they have apparently agreed to bury their hatchets and

work together to get the economy moving again. And in Brazil, after 20 years of military rule, a moderate transition government just held elections last month. The two front-runners, from the moderate right and left, will face each other in a runoff election this month.

In Chile, after 16 years of military dictatorship, the same is occurring. In spite of enjoying one of the most stable economies in contemporary Latin America, the people voted in referendum, to return to pluralism. In today's voting, Hernan Buchi, the government's candidate, will face Patricio Aylwin, a Christian Democrat sponsored by a 16-party coalition ranging from the moderate right to socialists.

In Nicaragua, the Central American peace process has arranged an election for next February. There, another broad coalition of 12 parties, ranging from conservatives to communists, is contesting the 10-year Sandinista rule.

In Peru, novelist and former PEN president Mario Vargas Llosa is heading a right of center coalition in next year's presidential election. Vargas Llosa, who as a visiting scholar delivered a series of lectures at Syracuse University last spring, is ahead in the opinion polls and is also claiming to be the peaceful alternative to the violent Shining Path, the drug lords and the current economic crisis the country is living.

In Uruguay, last month's elections returned a moderate conservative as president and the candidate from a coalition of socialists, communists and former Tupamaros (urban guerrillas), as the mayor of the national capital.

Presidential elections also have taken place or will shortly take place in Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Dominican Republic and Venezuela, to name a few. Unfortunately, there are still exceptions to this trend toward pluralism in Latin America.

In Panama, Gen. Manuel Noriega canceled the vote count when he realized his candidate was losing. In Haiti, in spite of Duvalier's departure, the military still runs the country. In El Salvador, pro-Marxist guerrillas have interrupted the peace talks to successfully pursue their war effort to overthrow the government. And in Cuba, Fidel Castro refuses to implement the mildest of reforms for fear that he will follow the same fate of recently deposed Honecker, Yivkov and Jakes, who six months ago also looked strong and popular to their muffled people.

All these events show that totalitarianism from right and left has not been able to solve the social and economic problems or bring just happiness to the people. Pluralistic democracy by itself cannot guarantee economic boom or social peace. But at least it may help create the general mood that can allow the nation to successfully work toward these worthy goals.

There is hope.

Romeu, an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland, lived in Cuba.

Writing in Exile

Authors Further Cause Of Pluralism at Home

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

WRITING and publishing is fun. And if we browse through writers' guides or how-to books we find three very good reasons for it: money, fame and the sharing of ideas.

But for some of us who come from far away and oppressed nations where there is no free press, there is an additional, very significant reason. Writing provides us with a tool to fulfill our commitment to those left behind, thus giving meaning to our political exile.



Romeu

Every time one of us has the opportunity to publish a piece, sharing with you some of our experiences about life under totalitarianism, and you take the trouble of reading it, we are scoring a point in our long struggle toward the restoration of pluralism in our country of origin.

And this is so, not because we, the ostracized, may have a monopoly over truth — we certainly don't — or because we may be members of an extraordinary breed — we certainly aren't. Simply, because every time one of us manages to get our message of pluralism through, those totalitarian governments we combat realize they have made a political mistake by throwing us out or letting us go.

To fully understand the nature of this situation I offer you a concrete example: my native Cuba. It is necessary, however, to understand how Castro deals with the internal opposition to his regime.

For the duration of his 30 years in power, Castro has encouraged or forced those opposing him to leave Cuba, based on the old Spanish saying: "Build a silver bridge for the enemy who flees!"

At regular intervals, from 1960 to 1962, from 1965 to 1970 and from 1979 to 1980, Castro allowed a selection of discontented citizens — 1 million all together, 10 percent of the country's population — to leave Cuba. And through this scheme, Castro has gained a temporary respite in the internal political situation that has allowed him to regain control and remain in power.

In addition, Castro has partially financed many Cuban social programs — housing, schooling, full

employment — with the houses, money and positions left behind by the exiles and taken over by the Cuban government.

Castro has paid a minimal price for this policy of giving away much of the best and brightest of Cuba's management, professional and technical classes. It may be true that Cuba is bankrupt and its citizens stand in long lines for the most essential things of life. As far as Castro is concerned, he is still in power.

Totalitarian regimes use control of media and people to their positive points and conceal their flaws. This is propaganda. One of Castro's most important functions as a client state of the Soviet Union is to function as a public relations operation of communism in Latin America.

By exposing his regime with our articles and talks, we can hit him where it hurts most: by damaging the interests of his Soviet underwriters.

With the recent events in Eastern Europe, the fallacy about the large popular support Castro's government enjoys because there is no internal opposition crumbles. Look to Cuba's sister communist countries, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania.

As in Cuba today, these countries were until recently apparently supporting their totalitarian regimes. Given an opportunity, they have revolted and executed or jailed their most staunch and cruel leaders, like Ceaucescu and Honecker, or retired those more amenable to allow an evolution, like Jakes or Zhivkov.

Hence, when we publish or talk about oppression in our country of origin and make waves abroad, the cost-benefit of expatriating the opposition has to be recalculated. We consciously want to make expensive for Castro his policy of exporting dissidents.

For inside the country, even when muffled and persecuted, opposition groups can organize, as Solidarity and Civic Forum have done. And then, better things will come.

It was the result of many years of hard work from opposition organizations, and not the goodness of the hearts of hard-core Stalinists like Honecker, Zhivkov or Ceaucescu, that triggered the Eastern European evolution towards pluralism.

This, in a nutshell, is why we write. And if, in however a modest but consistent manner, our writings contribute toward regaining pluralism, then every effort and resource we put into it is well spent.

Romeu, an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland, lived in Cuba.

The morning after will tell the tale

There is much stereotyping regarding Latin America, both from the right and from the left. This does not help the understanding nor the solving of Latin American problems. As a result, the extreme right often supports any "strong man" who is able to maintain "order" and free enterprise. And the radical left does the same for any regime that enforces, in Latin America, the type of extreme social and economic measures they would never sponsor here in the States.

I propose three direct questions, to be answered in the intimacy of our own conscience, regarding the forthcoming Nicaraguan elections:

1) Do you think the Sandinista government would have held free elections if the Contras hadn't existed? If you answer affirmatively, look to Cuba, the closest Sandinista supporter, ally and role model in this hemisphere, where free elections have not been held in 30 years, perhaps because the opposition has no real power to bargain with the government.

2) Last year, the united opposition in Chile won the elections against the 18-year-old rule of Augusto Pinochet. During this process, they received support from many international organizations and governments, including the Spanish government. And in Poland, Solidarity also receives the support of many international organizations, in their struggle for pluralism. The Nicaraguan opposition has been criticized for receiving economic aid from the U.S. However we may feel about the legality and wisdom of such widespread practices, what makes the Nicaraguan opposition so different that it should be singled out over all the other cases?

3) The test for real democracy is not so much what happens on election day, as what happens the morning after. The possibility of carrying on with one's daily life, even after our party has lost the elections, and of being able to openly pursue an opposition role until the next elections are held, is what defines real pluralism. Think of your favorite U.S. president, say Carter or Reagan. And think how this blessed country would be different if it had been possible, for him to rule, uncontested, for 30 consecutive years!

Do we always consistently apply the Golden Rule?

JORGE LUIS ROMEU
Syracuse

*Syracuse Herald American
Sunday, Feb 25, 1990.*

What Now for Nicaragua?

New Alliances May Arise To Further Pluralism

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

ELECTIONS are over in Managua and, to the surprise of most everyone, the Nicaraguan opposition coalition won by a margin of 55 percent to 42 percent.

How did this unexpected result occur? And, most important yet, what happens next? One explanation may be obtained with the following interpretation of the Central American events.



Romeu

The Contadora Peace Process of the early 1980s failed because the Latin American governments involved felt no particular need to press negotiations, nor had anything to negotiate with. Then the contra factor came into play, providing two important side effects: A strong stimulus for negotiating and a good bargaining tool.

The Central American governments now realized that the contra factor was rapidly converting their region into the battleground of a small-scale U.S.-Soviet geopolitical confrontation. And they realized they better end this war quickly or the rest of the countries would be dragged into the devastating conflict. In addition, they now had something tangible to barter with — the dismantling of the contra forces.

At this point, two unscheduled though favorable international events occurred. In the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev came to power with new proposals for arms reductions and detente, which were matched by the Reagan government. And in the United States, the Congress froze the contra aid funds. The resulting de facto de-escalation process produced two tired Nicaraguan camps fighting an attrition war that neither could win and hence were prone to negotiations.

Under these new conditions, President Arias of Costa Rica, using a combination of economic incentives, international pressure and quiet diplomacy, carried out the Esquipulas negotiations. For them, he received the gratitude of the international community and the Nobel Peace Prize.

Today, as a result of the free elections agreed during the peace talks, the Nicaraguan opposition is in power and the region may well be on its way back to normality. We can, again, argue forever that "these Sandinista rascals" will never really yield power or that "these contra rascals" won't either.

With this, we will achieve little else than killing the peace process before it even starts.

On the other hand, in spite of the many prob-

lems that exist, a real peace process could bring many benefits to all, including the United States.

The main concern is the military problem. Both sides bear large resentment as a product of the war. The Sandinista army, the largest in Central America, has to be substantially reduced. And the contras have to be disbanded. Nicaraguans could look to neighboring Costa Rica, where the army was dissolved in 1950 after their short civil war. Costa Rica has had only stable, peaceful and democratic governments after that.

On the civic front, the Nicaraguan opposition won enough votes to control the Congress, but not enough to impose a congressional dictatorship. Precisely the excessively large congressional control that the Sandinistas exerted during their government, which practically annulled any legal opposition, was in the root of much of the country's political unrest. This time, the Sandinistas, who are now in the opposition, need not feel threatened or at the mercy of the newly elected government, as occurred in the past. And this can only bring stability to the process.

Eventually, if the democratic spirit catches on, the three constituent currents within Sandinismo may naturally separate.

We may see new alliances emerge, creating the three traditional blocks — left, center and right — in Nicaragua, with Ortega and his followers forming a left-wing party and the Chamorros a centrist one. This would show that the American support of UNO was, in fact, in favor of a pluralistic process and not for a specific group.

Consolidation of a democratic process in Nicaragua could help end the Salvadoran conflict, too. Simultaneous and balanced international pressure on both Salvadoran factions could bring a de-escalation of the war followed by negotiations. For peace and war will be univocally linked in these two countries.

There remains one large enemy of the current peace process: Fidel Castro. Castro needs to foster revolution abroad in order to divert American attention off Cuba, and to divert the Cuban people's attention from their difficult domestic problems. But after the recent Eastern European events, Castro has become terrified with the prospect of evolution and national reconciliation.

Undoubtedly, the Nicaraguan democratization process is a long, difficult and risky one. But the payoff could be high and the alternatives somber. For the Nicaraguans, it would mean the prolongation of the war, followed by a military dictatorship of whoever wins it; for the Central Americans, the worsening of their regional political stability.

And for the United States, the prolongation of a foreign policy problem with large domestic political repercussions.

Romeu, a native of Cuba, is an assistant professor of mathematics at State University College at Cortland.

Making History in Peru

Ex-Visiting SU Professor Tries for Presidency

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

THE June 10 Peruvian presidential run-off election particularly attracts the interest of many Syracusans because one of the candidates is no stranger to Central New York.

Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa, who spent three weeks among us in the spring of 1988, lecturing on literature, history and sociology as Syracuse University's Jeanette Watson Distinguished Visiting Professor of Humanities, is running against Alberto Fujimori.

Precisely because we know him, some may be tempted to ask how this elegant, well-educated, white intellectual can be a leading candidate in a Third World country where one-third of the population speaks Quechua as their first language. The answer is provided by the history of this country and the characteristics of this man.

Vargas Llosa was born in southern Peru in 1936, and spent most of his first 10 years in neighboring Bolivia. In Latin America, especially at the time and in the provincial cities where he lived there were no "burbs" nor "inner cities" and, hence, much interaction among different social classes was possible. It may well have been during this period that Vargas Llosa acquired his interest for, and first knowledge of, Peruvian life that has always been at the soul of his best novels ("La Casa Verde," "Conversacion en La Catedral," "El Hablador").

Later, as a teen-ager in Lima, Vargas Llosa attended a military school that provided the material for his first novel ("La Ciudad y los Perros") and the university, where he joined an underground Marxist group.

Finally, in the late 1950s, Vargas Llosa moved to Spain to complete his doctorate, then to Paris, where he lived for many years among other Latin American literary "boom" writers and worked for Radio France.

Like many others of his colleagues, Vargas Llosa was a follower of J.P. Sartre and a sympathizer of the Cuban revolution. He served in the mid-1960s as jury in several of Cuba's Casa de las Americas literary contests. However, by the end of the decade, he broke with the Cuban government, disenchanting by the creation of the UMAP forced labor camps for young students and dissidents, the repression of freedom of creation and the purge and trial of writer Heberto Padilla, whom Vargas Llosa supported in an open letter.

During the 1970s and through the 1980s, Vargas Llosa became president of PEN International, the

writer's organization, continued producing novels and taught and talked at universities in Europe and the United States while living between London and Lima.

That such a man has captivated the imagination of a large chunk of Peruvians is not strange. Latin America has had many military, revolutionary and writer-republican presidents in its history.

As far as Peru is concerned, most Americans know it is the world's leading coca producer. But many ignore that until the late 1960s, it was also the world's largest fishing country and among the largest oil, copper and zinc producers, that it had a per capita of over \$14,000 a year and that in 1989, the annual inflation rate was 2,700 percent.

It is no wonder then that Maoist Shining Path and Tupac Amaru guerrilla movements have fought the government in a civil war that has left, in the last 10 years, 15,000 dead and \$17 million in damages.

Peruvians have tried several fixes to their problems in the last 30 years. Liberal president Belaunde in the mid-1960s implemented mild reforms and was followed by 10 years of populist military dictatorship of Gen. Velasco Alvarado. Velasco nationalized the petroleum and other basic industries and implemented an extensive land reform, but could not redress the country's decaying economy. The government then returned to civilians in 1980.

Belaunde was again elected but could achieve little else. APRA, an independent leftist party came to power in 1985, and the young and charismatic president Alan Garcia undertook a vast plan of nationalization. In 1988, when he proposed taking over the banking sector, writer Vargas Llosa launched his "Libertad" movement to oppose the measure, attaining national attention.

FREDEMO, his center-right coalition of liberals, conservatives and Christian Democrats, proposes a new liberal platform of denationalization of state enterprises and revitalization of the private sector in a market economy. FREDEMO claims that the large state bureaucracy is the culprit of the current economic problems and that the "informal sector" composed of small to middle-size "illegal" companies that operate in Peru without government license but with government knowledge, has to be encouraged, and that reducing the size of government will accomplish all these goals at the same time.

The new president will receive a country plagued with inflation, guerrilla insurgency and drug production problems. And since both candidates are political outsiders, they may have problems carrying out their innovative programs against the old politicians.

- But the big election loser has been the Shining Path guerrillas. In spite of their threats of violence, the large voter participation has sent a clear message: the Peruvian people may well want change, but it is no doubt that it is a peaceful change.

Let's wish them luck. They will certainly need it.

Romeu, a native of Cuba, is an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland.



Vargas Llosa

Remembering the Mariel Boats

By JORGE ROMEU

TEN years ago, on Mother's Day and at the height of the Mariel boat lift, we left our Cuban homeland for the United States. Two weeks later we arrived in Syracuse, where we settled and have lived ever since.

We have come a long way from our Hawley Avenue apartment and our first job in one of the local foundries. For that we happily thank God and our many Hispanic and American friends. In return, we have worked hard to keep the delicate balance between the respect and gratitude due to this blessed land and its generous people, and our commitment to those of us left behind.



Romeu

But what was this Mariel boat lift? More than 120,000 Cubans came across the Florida Straits in all sorts of boats, on a stampede that preceded the fall of communism in Eastern Europe by 10 years! Our own story may aid in understanding this phenomenon better.

In early 1980, many Cubans were pretty upset. For over a year, our relatives exiled in the United States had been allowed to return for a one-week visit at a \$1,000 price tag. They came to Havana by the tens of thousands, like Santa Clauses, to visit parents and relatives they hadn't seen in over a decade.

The Cuban government had cleverly allowed these visits to obtain some badly needed hard currency. But the Cuban people now saw how all these "traitors" who were supposedly "scrubbing floors, washing dishes and operating elevators" in Miami could not only travel freely, but also have milk for breakfast and put sugar in their coffee — or simply have coffee!

Shortly after these visits started, people began breaking into Latin American legations in Havana, seeking political asylum. In one of these break-ins, at the Peruvian Embassy, one of the guards killed another guard in a cross-fire. The Cuban government blamed those trying to get into the Embassy for the killings. The Peruvian ambassador refused to hand them back to Cuba, and Castro withdrew the Cuban guard from the Embassy.

The word spread, and from many provinces near and far, people came and entered the Embassy. In two days there were 10,000, and people kept coming. The Cuban government then sent mobs armed

with clubs, chains and pipes, and the special forces. The Embassy was closed off.

The problem now was: What to do with those already in? Fidel Castro, playing on the strength of Cuban family ties, announced that anyone who would come to Mariel on a boat could take their relatives back with them.

At this our sister, a local Syracuse college professor, flew to Key West, got on a shrimp trawler along with seven other families, and sailed to Mariel.

For a year, we had been stranded in Cuba. In spite of having valid passports and visas from Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and the United States, we were not allowed to leave. Our long-standing writing habits had caused us some problems with the Cuban security forces, who had sequestered our documents.

Our sister arrived in Mariel, and stayed there with hundreds and maybe thousands of other small, medium and large boats for days and days, hoping to get us out at last.

One morning, one of the members of her expedition called. "She doesn't have the courage to call you," he said. "The government says that for every one we want to take with us, they will put six on the boat." There was a silence. "The thing is," he concluded, "that there is not enough room to take all your family, and I need you to give me a list with your selection ..."

Maybe the government thought it wouldn't look good if some people with valid passports and visas had to leave on a boat. In any event, they gave us back our passports and put us on the next plane to Mexico. Our brothers-in-law took our places on the boat.

With the Mariel boat lift, Castro thought he would somehow cast a shadow on the Cuban political exile. For some of the people he put in were mental patients, or inmates right from prison. Others were poor and ill-educated.

Black or white, rich or poor, highly or poorly trained, good or bad, we were all Cubans. By expecting to embarrass us, Castro only showed that under all his Marxist rhetoric he remains a racist and a classist.

Mariel in 1980; like Dunkirk in 1940, was a massive exodus of apparent losers. But if history repeats itself, we may well see a political Normandy not too far away in the Cuban future. And pluralism will flourish again.

Romeu teaches mathematics at SUNY Cortland.

The Latino Task Force

Group Endeavors to Build Bridge between Cultures

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

FOR the past few months, every second Friday a group of Syracuse Hispanics has been meeting at a most unusual place: Mayor Tom Young's office.



Romeu

The Latino Task Force, as it has been officially named, was organized in April to analyze the needs and problems of our Latino community and advise the mayor about them.

Its composition is as varied as Latinos themselves, and includes all sexes, occupations and shades. But its desire to contribute to the betterment of the community is monolithic.

The task force has identified five broad areas of interest to the Latino community: law enforcement, education/language, health/social welfare, employment/job training and communications/social impact.

The task force already has met with several high-ranking city officials, including Police Chief Leigh Hunt and School Superintendent Henry Williams. And it intends to meet, before it adjourns and writes its report, with other leaders in the health services, the Chamber of Commerce and the local media.

The law enforcement concern triggered the creation of the task force. And there is a language problem that affects the scholastic performance of Latino children and the employment and job training of Latino adults.

Hence, it also affects the health and welfare of many families of our Latino community. And it is a sad fact that the above problems sometimes do not project the best image of the Latino community to the mainstream and to ourselves.

However, we also could invert the order of priorities of those areas of interest and place communications and social impact first. We could work on people, both Latino and mainstream, in order to improve the situation. This certainly does not preclude or reflect a value judgment on the first approach.

A negative impact makes things much worse. For example, teachers won't try hard for our kids if they believe Hispanics are slower learners. Employers won't hire us if they believe we don't work. On the other hand, an improvement in communications would bring along an improvement in the understanding within and between both cultural and ethnic communities.

Within our own cultural and ethnic community, the access to media — a publication or radio program — would give us a chance to promote, among our own, much-needed self-help and tap internal energies.

Many Latinos have moved upward through hard work and education and are willing and able to provide valuable voluntary services to our community. They project an important image and provide role models for our children. As humans, we all strive for those goals we perceive as realistic and attainable.

We don't stop being Hispanic when we earn a college degree or a better-paying job. We don't stop eating beans or enjoying salsa. We just move to a large house and buy a better car, as any other normal human being would. But we keep the kinship feeling and still want to serve. And by doing this, we also are serving the broader community. Many good efforts are wasted for lack of tapping on these resources.

A radio program or a community paper might get the ball rolling.

A Spanish publication or radio program also would help bridge the cultural gap between Hispanics and the rest of the community. It is a fact that the mainstream most hears of us Latinos when we break in or brake out, but not when our kids make the varsity team or the National Honor Society or when we get a job promotion.

We have our rotten apples, like any other group. And they are not an element of joy for us, either. This negative image hurts us twice: Once, with the mainstream and again with a segment of Hispanics who part with the group.

But in our own media we could display with pride traditions and our music and broadcast news about the often forgotten 21 Latin American republics. We could provide a Spanish practice session for many young and adult mainstream Americans who are learning Spanish.

America has been blessed with its multicultural and multiracial composition. This has important economic consequences.

Our main industrial competitors, Japan and Germany, have only Japanese and German salespeople. America is the only industrialized country that can tap millions of citizens of all colors and ethnic backgrounds who could do a better sales job in Third World markets.

In the past, some of us have tried to start a permanent Spanish radio program and publication to create a transcultural media that reach both Latino and mainstream and help build the bridge. Maybe the momentum generated by the Latino Task Force will produce better results.

Romeu, a native of Cuba, is an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland, and a member of the Latino Task Force.

An Opportunity in Cuba

As Soviets Review Links, World Could Lobby Castro To Hold Open Elections

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

THE similarities between Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Fidel Castro's Cuba go beyond both being staunch dictatorial regimes.

Like Saddam, Castro maintains control by a combination of providing social programs and uprooting any sign



Romeu

of opposition or dissent. Like Saddam, Castro was closely allied to the Soviet Union and received ample Soviet military and economic aid. Like Saddam, Castro had an exceedingly large army engaged in foreign wars: in Angola, Ethiopia and Nicaragua. And like Saddam, Castro now faces with concern how his huge army sits idle at home, posing a threat to his autocratic rule.

Saddam found a shrewd solution to this problem: invading Kuwait — which keeps his army busy outside Iraq. Castro has found only poor excuses to execute several of his best field commanders and to throw in jail his minister of interior.

However, after the consolidation of perestroika, Castro's usefulness for the Soviets has decreased, but not the high cost of the Cuban operation. And the global move toward pluralism has negatively affected Castro's international image.

This summer, for example, many Cubans sought refuge in the embassies of Spain, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Canada and the American Interest Office in Havana. After the penetration by Cuban police of the Spanish legation in pursuit of these political refugees, relations between Madrid and Havana were strained to the limit. Castro's visit to Brazil for the inauguration of President Collor, proved even worse. Several heads of state publicly suggested he should hold free elections.

The internal Cuban situation isn't any better. In addition to the problems in the armed forces, there is growing discontent and civil dissent.

Several groups, among them the well-known Cuban Human Rights Committee, are alive and well in spite of several of their members serving time. Their well-known leader, Professor Arcos Bergnes, has launched an open proposal for all Cuban political groups, government and opposition, in Cuba and in exile, to hold a meeting to start moving the country back into pluralism. For this proposal and his previous work in human rights, he has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Cuban exiles also have been particularly active in a new and interesting way. In addition to the Cuban American National Foundation, one of the oldest,

strongest and most active Cuban exile groups in the United States, several other organizations have been created. CANF's largest success has been the creation of Radio Marti, possibly the most effective operation in favor of the re-establishment of pluralism in Cuba. Radio Marti has provided alternative sources of news, entertainment and cultural programming to Cubans on the island.

In addition to the conservative CANF, several new groups have appeared, showing that opposition to Castro comes from a wide spectrum.

The Center for the Cuban Democracy, founded by a Miami sociology professor, and the Cuban Liberal Union, founded in Spain by a well-known Cuban writer and journalist, are two of many new centrist and liberal political organizations. They are also advocating that Castro hold internationally supervised multiparty elections, following the Chilean and Nicaraguan models. It is unlikely Castro will agree.

However, there is a window of opportunity provided by the restructuring in the Soviet Union. This development forces the issues beyond Castro's control and provides, at least, four courses of action to take.

One is to do nothing and let this opportunity pass. Either the Soviets are tempted to use Cuba as a beachhead again, or Castro finds another underwriter, for he cannot make it on his own.

The second is the "hard line," implementing a stronger embargo or even a military operation. The embargo will not send Castro to his knees, and his followers won't topple him if they perceive a hostile United States under which their own fates will be uncertain.

The third option is to lift the embargo if Castro performs a few of his well-known public relations stunts and "opens up" the system. However, we can establish an analogy between the situations in Cuba and South Africa. There, the white government has gone further than Castro would ever be willing to go because of the economic sanctions. An untimely opening would provide more harm than incentive for continuing evolution.

There is a fourth alternative — less flamboyant but perhaps more effective — to propose that a large group of nations call for Castro to hold internationally supervised elections in a multiparty setting.

If Castro refuses, it would signal to his followers, especially the middle-rank military and party members, that Castro is the problem, and that if they unequivocally accept political and economic pluralism, they may survive Castro's fall. After Castro, these functionaries have no place to go and may be better off with such a solution than with a Ceausescu-like blood bath.

The current window of opportunity will vanish if the Soviets fall to the temptation of using Cuba again for hostile activities against the United States or as soon as Castro can find another underwriter to pay his way.

Will there be adroit players on both sides of the Florida Strait to find the solution to this problem?

Romeu, a native of Cuba, is an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland.

Linking with Latin America

U.S. Economic Assistance Would Benefit Both Sides

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

THIS week, President Bush will complete a six-nation tour of South America. Bush's four, the Enterprise for Americas Initiative, is part of an effort to establish closer economic and political ties with the Latin American countries.



Romeu

This is not a futile or isolated event. In the past few months we have seen rapid changes all over the world. A "new world order" is emerging; one which nobody knows exactly how it will be. Wise, large and rich nations like the United States are preparing to play their new role in it under the most favorable conditions.

This new order was triggered, in a large part, by the process of perestroika in the Soviet Union and by the dismantling of the totalitarian states in Eastern Europe. It also was spurred by the political and economic union in Western Europe, which begins in 1992, and the economic development by the Asian nations of the Pacific Rim.

Since the geographical areas of economic and political interests are being redrawn, it is smart for the United States to review and revitalize its interests in the American continent, its natural habitat. It is a continent where the role of the United States has not always been perceived as a positive one and where anti-American sentiment has often been exploited by the international enemies of the U.S. and the local demagogues to the best of their selfish interests.

The revitalization process started last year with the economic treaty between the United States and Canada and was followed by the recent encounter between Presidents Bush and Salinas. Such commercial ventures may constitute the prelude of more with other countries south of the Rio Grande.

Latin America has quietly moved ahead in the past 15 years. Since the mid-1970s, slowly but surely, all Latin American countries except Cuba have established political pluralism and democracy.

Brazil and Argentina, Peru and Uruguay, Ecuador, Bolivia, Paraguay and recently Chile, have now freely elected governments. Others, like Bolivia, have estab-

lished a record number of successive free elections without a military coup.

In Nicaragua, civil war gave way to a democratically elected government, and in El Salvador, the United Nations may soon mediate a cease-fire, while government and opposition continue their conversations in Mexico City.

But freedom alone does not feed people; jobs and money do. Economic development fosters political stability like no theory can.

In addition to pluralism, a higher standard of living in Latin America can create the political markets our foreign trade is searching for these days. Thus, their economic expansion and political stability will eventually benefit our economy, too. Maybe this is God's way of rewarding a good deed.

Stronger economies also would open to the Latin American peasants alternative markets that would allow the substitution of coca cultures by more orthodox crops. This by-product alone may prove sufficient to justify providing aid to the economies of these countries.

In addition, the past few years have seen an increase in the illegal immigration of Latin Americans. Some causes include the political instability, civil war and poor economic conditions that prevail there. An improvement of political and economic conditions may not only halt such immigration waves but even reverse the migratory movement, as has recently occurred with Chile and Nicaragua.

Finally, there is still another political advantage in fostering better economic conditions in Latin America. In totalitarian Cuba there is a devastating economic situation due, in part, to the poor management of Fidel Castro's administration and to the faltering economic aid that previously came from the Soviet Union.

If Cubans perceive real improvements in the international trade and economies of their neighboring Latin American countries, they may surely want to participate, to join the club. But Cuba should pay the same registration fee all other Latin American countries did: a return to pluralism and democracy. No more, no less.

Essentially, because they are true, such economic and political arguments are certainly much stronger than any chauvinistic slogan or rationalization Castro may offer the muffled Cuban people.

Romeu, a native of Cuba, is an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland.

Another Negative Portrayal

'Havana' Gives Cubans a Poor Representation

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

Early this month I couldn't resist the temptation of viewing "Havana," the new Robert Redford film about the fall of Batista's government.



Romeu

the fall of Cuba's previous dictator was told.

It was very refreshing to find that the film's ambiance was unusually accurate, thanks to the collaboration between producers and the Cuban authorities.

Daily life 30 years ago is captured from the first scene of Havana's "Malecon," its long sea-shore drive, the ferries crisscrossing the bay and the Prado Boulevard. And even in the rest of the film, most of which was shot in the Dominican Republic, the quality of the ambiance comes through.

In many small details: bottles of "Hatuey" beer or packages of "Pinos Nuevos" bread. Only the trained eye can notice that "Autobuses Modernos" buses shown were old GM American coaches instead of the original British Leyland used in the 1950s.

Also, several native actors played leading roles and their bilingual and seasoned performances added much realism and quality. But this collaboration also allowed the introduction of several subtle but clear political messages.

The first message comes through the overall corrupt environment portrayed of Havana, a capital of over a million inhabitants. The city had, in addition to bars, brothels and a handful of American casinos shown over and again throughout the film, several museums, symphonic orchestra theaters, three universities and many offices, modern factories and quality stores.

The unorthodox amenities were for those tourists who did not enjoy our beautiful beaches and natural scenery.

There were certainly many unfortunate ills that thousands of Cuban men and women, who put very long hours in their shops, offices or sugar cane fields, were working hard to redress. And many thousands of beautiful women employed as teachers, secretaries, clerks or simple housemaids, helped with their low wages to support a modest but honest and loving household.

The second message, short but intentional, was given by the Cuban journalist. In one scene, he laments being a member of the corrupted and weak middle class, condemned to escape to Miami.

A review of Cuban history shows how the revolution of 1959 was, essentially, the endeavor of the middle class. And many of today's Politburo members are still of professional extraction. Of course, Castro needs to justify and belittle the exodus of over a million Cubans triggered by his delivery of our democratic revolution to Marxist totalitarianism.

The third message is yet another consequence of Castro's guilt. In several scenes, including one with the hanging of peasants, some hammer and sickle symbols are shown.

The historical fact is that none of the organizations in the struggle against Batista was communist. But Castro, in his quest for a perma-

nent place in history, needs to conceal how he misled thousands of idealistic young men to their death under a false flag. But this, history will not forgive.

The message is delivered in the scene with Meyer Lansky, the infamous Miami Mafioso. Lansky belittles Batista, his government and the whole Cuban nation as a banana republic, created and controlled by the Americans.

Batista, a crooked politician who would not hesitate to order someone killed, was tougher than Lansky and had a larger and richer organization.

But Batista never sent Cuban troops to Korea, Guatemala or Lebanon, following Eisenhower's orders, while Castro's troops did fight in Angola, Ethiopia and Syria to advance and support Brezhnev's foreign policy.

"Havana" is a love story reminiscent of "Casablanca." Without being consciously ill-intentioned, this Hollywood film portrays very negatively yet another Latin country. And this doesn't help improve the existing stereotypes about Hispanics.

Americans of Hispanic descent cannot feel proud of their heritage when their peers and the countries of their forefathers are portrayed as corrupt banana republics populated with second-rate people.

And in a democratic nation, such negative stereotyping can affect the vote of segments of the electorate and, hence, its foreign policy. Careless portrayal of nations also can hurt the feelings of their people and affect foreign relations.

Yes, "Havana" is entertaining. But unlike the film, the real Cuba, like the real Latin America, is full of good, hard-working people. People who try hard to do their best with their lot, the same as we do here. Even when it is not always recorded in the Hollywood films.

Romeu, an assistant professor of mathematics at State University of Cortland, is a native of Cuba.

Is It Latino or Hispanic?

Debate on Term Is an Important Identity Search

By **JORGE LUIS ROMEU**
Across the United States, Hispanics are holding an important debate: Should Americans of Spanish descent be called Hispanics or Latinos?



Romeu

Syracuse has not been spared from this debate. And recently, a panel on the choice between Latino and Hispanic was sponsored by the Hispanic American Society, a Syracuse University student organization.

Four Hispanic panelists participated: two American-born and two foreign-born American citizens. It was interesting to see what their preferences were, how they defended their positions and, especially, how they managed this difference and their consequences. The discussion started with the origins of the two words. The term Hispanic was apparently coined by the federal government in the early 1960s. It is, according to the dictionary, someone from "Hispania," the old word for designating the Iberian peninsula. Hence, Hispanic World, Hispano-American, design those peoples and cultures derived, at least in part, by the conquest and colonization of America by Spain and Portugal.

The term Latino has risen later

as a creation of Americans of Hispanic descent and derives from Latin American. The origin of the latter dates from the French occupation of Mexico in the mid-1800s.

At the time, the French were trying to extend their influence to the former Spanish colonies. And since France is not a part of the Iberian peninsula, they sponsored a new name, Latin America, that would allow them to extend their heritage to this region, too.

For France was, as were Spain and Portugal, part of the Latin world, conquered and colonized by the Romans. Hence, the wording Latin American would put them in the same footing with the former "mother" countries.

But more important yet than the origin of these names is their use and the underlying connotations they convey to the different groups that use them. For example, the context of the name Latino.

Those of us who prefer Latino argue that it is more inclusive than Hispanic. We argue that the American (i.e., U.S.-born) Latino is not purely a descendant of the Spaniards, but one whose background is mixed with blacks and Indians and whose culture is also a mixture of all these constituent ethnic groups. Hence, the name conveys better their essence.

On the other hand, those of us who prefer the name Hispanic also argue that it is inclusive. Hispanic is not the same as Spanish.

It denotes those people who are the product of the Spanish colonization — those groups who were formed in America as an admixture of racial and cultural influences of, at least, Iberians, blacks and Indians.

It was curious to notice how the panel split regarding the choice of name into American and foreign-born Hispanics. This writer, who has traveled throughout the United States, has often observed the same

pattern of behavior elsewhere. As a consequence of these observations, we propose this conjecture about the situation:

American-born Hispanics may perhaps prefer the name Latino because "Hispanic" has been imposed on them by the government. And, in a way, it reminds them sometimes of negative experiences also imposed on them by their surrounding world.

American-born Hispanics have grown up in "mainstream" America where they constitute a linguistic and ethnic minority and where they are and feel different. And at the same time, having born in it, they are and feel an integral part of this society.

On the other hand, perhaps foreign-born Latinos prefer the name Hispanic because they came to this country later in life, by choice.

But they grew up in a place where speaking Spanish, exhibiting some specific cultural characteristics and having, perhaps, a darker complexion, was not a problem or, at least, not as important. And perhaps the name Hispanic reminds them of their origins, their old country, faraway friends and relatives and childhood, instead of unpleasant or negative early life experiences.

Perhaps the most important lesson from this panel was the way the discussion was conducted: without animosity or bitterness. The usefulness of a name is to add self-esteem to the group that uses it and to convey the respect of the group that addresses you with it.

For finding the proper name is an important part of the identity search and of the growth of any group. And it can only bring the self-assertion that allows the individual to completely and proudly incorporate.

Romeu, a native of Cuba, is an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland.

Mistakes at the Bay of Pigs

Popular Support, U.S. Air Power Never Happened

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

Thirty years ago this month, 1,400 anti-Castro exiles trained and armed by the CIA landed on a swampy beach in southern Cuba.



Romeu

For three days and nights they fought Castro's regular army and popular militia. Finally, on April 19, the remaining 1,100 surrendered in what was to be known in the United States as the Bay of Pigs fiasco and, in Cuba, as the invasion of Playa Giron.

For many, the Bay of Pigs brings back memories from newsreel scenes showing lines of anti-Castro exiles with their hands in the air and their weapons piled on the ground.

For those of us in Cuba, these memories include their public interrogation on national television by the Cuban authorities, with lively interchanges between some of them and Castro himself.

But when we seek an explanation for the Bay of Pigs events, we have to go back before the landing or even the moment early in 1961 when the first exiles arrived in the CIA training camps in Guatemala. To understand what happened we have to go back to Havana in January 1959.

Twenty-six months before the Bay of Pigs fiasco, Castro entered Havana at the head of a Liberal revolution, promising the Cuban

people free elections in 18 months and a return to democracy and pluralism.

Instead, Castro started an accelerated program to build a totalitarian socialist state. He eliminated the free press and the political parties and took over the banks, the foreign trade, the bigger factories and the large and middle landholdings.

In addition, Castro banned all opposition to his government and started committing dissenters to jail or forcing them to go abroad or underground. The only voices allowed were of those who supported and praised his regime.

As a result, Cuba split into two strongly opposed political camps and without the option of a civil opposition, anti-Castro Cubans started organizing for civil war. At this stage, President Eisenhower authorized the CIA to provide support to several exiled groups in Miami and the Cuban Council, headed by a former Cuban prime minister, was created.

However, two costly tactical errors were made. The first was to assume that a huge popular uprising against Castro would take place if a force landed in Cuba. The second was to reassure the Cuban exiles that American air support would be provided to them and with this help, they would be in Havana in a matter of days.

Meanwhile, in Cuba the political situation worsened by day. By April 1961, even the private Catholic schools had been taken over by the government and guerrillas were overtly operating in all the six provinces.

The CIA then gave the order to launch the Bay of Pigs operation. On April 15, old World War II B-26 bombers manned by Cuban crews flew from Nicaragua to attack military airfields in Havana and two other cities to destroy Castro's air force on the ground.

I can clearly remember the

bombs exploding and the anti-aircraft guns firing at Havana's Columbia military airport less than a mile away from our home. And I can remember the surprise and frustration among Cuban underground operatives ignorant of such an operation taking place.

Some say the underground movement was too split and penetrated by Castro's security forces to be useful or reliable. Others say that Miami exiles did not want to share power with the internal forces.

In any case, Castro launched a massive roundup of political dissidents, and in less than 48 hours over 100,000 men and women were put in concentration camps. Then Castro declared publicly for the first time since his arrival to power two years earlier that socialism was his true political goal.

It was now too late to react. The internal opposition had been broken. And in the Bay of Pigs, Castro's remaining air force brought down all the exiles' B-26s in the first 24 hours of combat.

The recent Iraqi defeat has shown the extraordinary advantage of owning the skies, and Castro's forces made excellent use of it. The invaders' fleet, with all the water, food and ammunition, was sent to the bottom of the Caribbean. And the exiles, thirsty, hungry, encircled and outnumbered 30 to 1, without the promised American air cover, surrendered in three days.

Thirty years have passed, but the Bay of Pigs remains a controversial element of both Cuban and American politics. Some think it was a lost opportunity, others that it was a senseless mistake. And for Castro, the Bay of Pigs remains a useful weapon for his internal and foreign propaganda and policy.

Romeu, a native of Cuba, is an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland.

Free Trade with Mexico?

Pact Might Save Jobs, Open New Markets to U.S.

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

Is a free trade agreement with Mexico a blessing or a curse? Will it take away more jobs? Will it hurt the environment, organized labor and small- and middle-size organizations? Or will it boost our economy and make us



Romeu

more competitive in the 21st century?

Everything signals that the 1990s will become the decade of the economic blocs. Europe will form one, politically and economically, in 1992. Eastern Europe, with its highly trained and low-wage work force, will likely try to join.

The Japanese and the rest of the Asian countries of the Pacific Rim are economically stronger every day, and may start working toward a closer cooperation. And even in Latin America, the recently created MERCOSUR, a market that includes Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, is now a reality.

In the 19th century, the United States had the foresight to become a large and well-organized nation at a time when the rest of the world was quarreling with factionalism. America became a vast free market where products were produced and distributed without barriers, creating the current industrial power and affluence.

But now the rest of the industrialized world is quickly catching up: Everybody is forming new economic blocs, the size of the United States and more. This alone is a good reason for taking a second closer look at the consequences of the proposed free trade agreement with Mexico.

There has been stern opposition. Some argue there is something basically wrong with this mix, for the two countries not only have different languages and cultures but also standards of living and development

levels. But a similar situation occurs in Europe, where Greeks and Portuguese are joining their dissimilar German and Dutch cousins.

Others argue that such a free trade agreement would increase the number of jobs we lose or that it would decrease the pay of our work force and weaken our unions further because the higher-paid American work force could never compete with the low-wage Mexican worker. Finally, others argue that unscrupulous capitalists operating in a country with few environmental laws would pollute to the limit to make a fast buck.

We have, indeed, been losing jobs way before any talk of a trade agreement with Mexico, and for all the aforementioned reasons. Recently, we have lost many local jobs to Korea and Latin America. We also have lost many more jobs to the migration of New York industry to Southern states. And things won't get any better, with or without a deal with Mexico.

However, if an assembly shop goes to Asia or South America or possibly to Eastern Europe in the not too distant future, chances are that the American worker will never see any fallout from it again.

If, on the other hand, it goes to nearby Mexico, the product may come back for a local high-tech finish or final processing. We may indeed lose many low-tech blue-collar jobs, which we would lose anyway in the long run. But we may keep many other more technical ones we would also lose, were these companies to move to another continent.

With respect to pay scales, pollution and unions, there is nothing more contagious than betterment options. People learn fast and Mexicans are not dumb. However, we are not talking of competing job categories but of migration of job categories that our high-tech and more sophisticated society has priced out of our labor market. And careful legislation and treaty writing could take care of the environment.

The most important argument against a free trade agreement with Mexico comes from those who fear American technology may end up in the hands of our competitors or that competitors would use Mexico as a springboard to flood the Amer-

ican market and avoid import tariffs and treaties. This argument deserves full attention and a careful study, for it may become the Achilles heel of the whole deal.

On the other hand, a free trade agreement shows several positive elements.

Mexico is our neighbor and the door to the vast Latin American markets. It compares favorably in education and development with our other neighbors to the south. And its geographical proximity mitigates some Mexican deficiencies in infrastructure that have to be corrected in short time.

Through Mexico, the United States can sell many products in Latin America, manufactured at a lower cost and more appropriately for consumption in less affluent and sophisticated societies.

For example, if American industry produces cheaper, stronger and less-sophisticated cars, trucks and tractors that Guatemalans and Bolivians can run on their rugged roads and operate in their harsh conditions, the distant Japanese and Europeans won't have a chance.

Finally, there is yet another strategic reason for establishing a healthier economic relation with Mexico and, by transitivity, with the rest of the countries south of the Rio Grande.

After the demise of the Soviet empire and the democratization of Eastern Europe, the world is quickly changing. But its final form is undefined.

It would be good policy to foster economic and political stability amid our closest neighbors, and there is no doubt that a good trade agreement would bolster Mexican economy, decrease its inflation rate, promote higher standards of living and solidify its political stability.

A hasty decision for or against a free trade agreement with Mexico may either compromise the American economy or kill a beautiful opportunity for a better political and economic international position 20 years from now. But with a careful analysis of the pros and cons, good will and foresight, a mutually beneficial deal may well come out.

Romeu, a native of Cuba, is an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland.

COMMENT

Statistics: Not Just Numbers

Students Need To Know Daily Applications

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

Recently many of our youngsters proudly received their high school diplomas. And we look forward to



Romeu

seeing some of them follow math and science careers. It is unfortunate, however, how every year fewer and fewer opt for the science track.

seeing some of them follow math and science careers. It is unfortunate, however, how every year fewer and fewer opt for the science track.

The big question is, how can we foster sci-

ence and math studies among our teenagers?

Currently, there is much debate on whether more money should be poured into education.

Some maintain that if our high school students don't put in two daily solid hours of homework, just as the Japanese, Korean, German and all other kids who outscore ours do, all this money will be thrown into a bottomless bucket.

Part of the solution may well be the introduction of topics that capture the natural curiosity of our youngsters: for example, statistics.

Statistics is such a widely used subject that I tell my students they should not receive college credit for it. Everything they learn in our course they already do, one way or another, even when they do not realize it consciously.

I first discovered this truth more than 20 years ago. I had just graduated from the University of Havana with a math-statistics degree. I was doing my weekly round to the

countryside to exchange our cigar quota for some food when I met an elderly peasant.

He could barely write and read, but earned his living buying crops in the backwoods and selling them in the farmers' market. I asked him how he went about estimating the crop size. His answer was a detailed description of what we, in statistical jargon, know as stratified sampling.

My whole world crumbled! To think I had spent so many years in college learning about sigma algebras and the random-nikoddin derivatives. And now I had found an almost illiterate peasant who knew as much about sampling as I did!

The fact is that we all use statistics daily in an intuitive way. For example, when we look for a good bargain for second-hand car, we sort through the classified ad pages. We find two or three similar cars and average the prices. Then we buy one for this or a lower figure.

And when we stereotype — when we discriminate — we mentally take a sample from a group of people we know and find the "average" of their good and bad traits. With these, we build a "typical" representation or stereotype, of the entire group.

Unfortunately, many times our sample is too small and specific to be of any real value. And our resulting stereotype doesn't really represent the group, but our biases. Other times, the group is so varied that our stereotype is very different from most group individuals we find.

Equal opportunity employment philosophy is also derived from statistical concepts. The argument runs: if a society is bias-free, then all groups will be represented in all activities in similar proportion with which they occur in the general population.

By standing this argument on its head we say: if we guarantee a percentage equal to that of the general population, in all activities, then we will have achieved a fair and bias-free society.

Statistics is a straightforward subject. But one can misuse it to deceive people in the same way as one can with almost anything else.

Take, for example, a bar chart showing the popularity of two candidates running really close. Cut off the bottom half of the chart, magnify the remainder and a meaningless difference between them looks tremendously large.

Or take a sample of five toothpaste users and ask for the brand name. If the majority isn't using your favorite brand, throw out the results. Continue this procedure until you get a sample that actually uses your brand. Then just report the final results without mentioning the previous ones.

These examples of bad uses of statistics do not detract from its great potential in education. Statistics provides the student with a tool for quantitative reasoning and training in observation and critical thinking. For this alone, statistics is a subject worth including in most, if not every curriculum from seventh grade on.

We must continue to train more and better engineers and researchers to maintain the American technological edge if we want to keep our current high economic standards.

And for this we have to stimulate our kids' brains with lively and challenging topics that will make them, again, want to hit the books at least two hours every day!

And statistics may well be a very good one to start with.

Romeu is an assistant professor of mathematics at State University College at Cortland.

COMMENT

No Siesta in Mexico City

Commerce Fills Capital's Streets With Activity

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

It was 2:30 p.m. and our plane was landing at Juarez Airport in Mexico City.



Romeu

time.

However, the Mexico City I found was far from asleep. Except for the banks, government offices and churches, which close for lunchtime, everything was bursting with activity with tens of thousands of people rushing around in this city of over 23 million people.

The first thing we encountered was pollution — the scent of car exhaust that would accompany us throughout our visit. As we took a taxi downtown, we also discovered the first thing about Mexico: It is a country of tens of thousands of small independent entrepreneurs.

Taxis — as well as mini-buses called "peceros" (fish bowls, for their many windows that display the passengers inside) — are all independently owned and operated and constitute a good third of all vehicles on the streets. They all travel at incredible speeds in bumper to bumper traffic, zigzagging from lane to lane while causing very few accidents.

Our hotel was in the downtown section with its beautiful colonial buildings and cobblestones, far from the expensive and modern Zona Rosa tourist zone. But it was close to the Bellas Artes center, where the famous Mexican Folkloric Bal-

let and other first-rate shows take place, and to the Zocalo, Mexico's main square displaying a four-century-old cathedral, the National Palace and the Templo Mayor, an Aztec temple dug up by pure chance about 20 years ago during the construction of the subway.

In downtown Mexico City one sees hundreds of small and independent shops and stores that specialize in one merchandise and are located by trade.

The city wakes up late — don't even try to find the morning newspaper before 8 a.m. Stores start opening at 9 a.m. and start closing at 8 p.m., some running as late as 10 p.m.

You shop by street as you would shop by department in a store. There is a street of jewelers and one clothing and leather stores, one of bookstores and another of hardware stores. And on the sidewalks street vendors display merchandise from umbrellas to tortillas and enchiladas. Everywhere in Mexico people are selling food on the street at almost any time.

We saw vendors in the hallways of the very orderly and efficient subway, which has the unique characteristic of displaying in several stations archaeological constructions that were unearthed when it was built.

And we saw many children, women and elderly people selling pencils, singing or performing other tasks and soliciting some money — which shows a positive work ethic, since they were always providing something in return.

On one occasion, for example, our bus stopped at a red light at a busy intersection. Two men ran to the middle of this busy avenue, one climbed on top of the other and started juggling five balls for about one minute. Then they came down and passed the hat to the amused drivers and rushed back to the sidewalk to wait for the next red light.

For arts and crafts, Mexico is the place to go. There are several markets, the most typical being La Ciudadela, reminiscent of the pre-Colombian open-air Aztec markets.

There you can find anything you fancy in clay, straw or fabric handicrafts at incredible prices: \$2 (6,000 pesos) for a clay mask or a puppet, \$10 for a hand-embroidered blouse. If you want silver, better bring dollars with you, for it is beautiful but expensive!

One striking thing to the visitor is security. Men and women guards with submachine guns and bullet-proof vests stand in front of banks, government buildings and public places such as bus stations. Evidently, Mexicans are concerned with violence prevention, given the many problems they have had in the recent past.

Mexico has suffered a severe economic crisis, its peso falling in a short time from less than 100 to 3,000 to the dollar. In addition, the country's political system is also undergoing a change: "la apertura" (openness).

Currently the PRI, the party in power for the last 60 years, is preparing to share power with the opposition. Hence, in preparation for the Aug. 18 election there was barely a wall or a street pole without a poster for this or that candidate of one of the four large and half a dozen small parties that range from the conservatives to the communists.

Parties have taken very strong positions in favor or against the free trade agreement with the U.S. and Canada. Left-of-center PRI, the government party, favors it; conservatives are skeptical and leftists denounce it as a sellout of the country.

But many in the streets see free trade as a positive thing that will create new jobs and economic stability. As a nation with many small and middle-size entrepreneurs, Mexicans look forward to a freer and larger market. And with their new political system of true pluralism and their economic dynamism, Mexicans may well be able to achieve a more efficient system that increases their lot.

Romeu is a native of Cuba and an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland.

COMMENT

Voyage of Pain, Possibilities

■ Columbus' Atlantic trip resulted in much pain for the peoples of America and Africa but it also led to advances in Europe and possibly the American Revolution.

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

There is much said and done these days about the quincentennial of Christopher Columbus' trip to America.



Romeu

Three reproductions of his "caravelles" or ships, have been built in Spain and are already sailing the seas. A huge international fair will take place next year in Seville, long the main port between Spain and its American empire. The Public Broadcasting System has spent millions to produce a seven-hour series on the topic, comparable to its recent series on the American Civil War. And many Indian groups all over the American continent are protesting the celebration of an event that represented much disruption and suffering in their lives.

The relevance of Columbus' voyage is unquestionable: it changed, for good or evil, the course of the world on at least two continents.

Under scrutiny these days is whether Columbus' trip was really a "discovery" and whether its effect can be assessed as positive, negative or mixed, given that the extermination of large portions of the indigenous population and the slavery system were two of its most visible consequences.

It is unquestionable that America was inhabited by humans when Columbus arrived. And many of the cultures, e.g., Mayan, Inca, Aztec, were quite advanced. Hence, Columbus could not have discovered something that was already known to millions. Also, there is some evidence that other Europeans, e.g., the Vikings, had already reached North America, hopping from Iceland to Greenland, to other smaller North Atlantic islands. So what was it that the Italian sailor discovered? Columbus was, essentially, a

seaman in a time when few dared to venture far away from the coast. No one before Columbus had crossed an open ocean like the Atlantic using the simple technology available at the time. In a way, Columbus' trip in 1492 represents the same as the flight to the moon in 1969: both opened new horizons to the human adventure.

His discovery was not one of a foreign land, but one of a totally new way of traveling. He opened the oceans as a communications route. Shortly after Columbus, Ferdinand Magellan crossed the Pacific and Vasco da Gama the Indian Ocean, and only then the world became round in a practical sense.

The American conquest came later, when Columbus had already finished his job and was preparing to die, poor and forgotten, somewhere in Spain. With the conquest the Spaniards proved, as many other Europeans did later, that ruthlessness was a trait of the times, not of a race.

For if human sacrifices were held in the Aztec and Inca religions, the torments inflicted to Chiefs Hatuey in Cuba, Tupac Amaru in Peru and Caupolican in Chile to establish Spanish domination were no less barbaric. American Indians finally were conquered by the Europeans who then brought the African slaves, then Asian and East Indians, imported as cheap labor. These human elements, jointly with all possible admixtures, populate America today.

But what did this process of conquest, settlement, displacement, suffering and force bring about? How different would the world be today had Columbus not sailed to America in 1492?

Since the beginning, America has had as much influence in Europe as Europe has had in America. It is questionable whether Europe, without having exploited the American riches, would have achieved the economic and intellectual level that allowed the great discoveries of mathematics and physics as well as the writings of the encyclopedia in the 18th century. All these events had a great effect in triggering the American Revolution of 1776.

It is also possible that Lafayette and other Frenchmen who came to fight for the American Revolution would have perhaps hesitated in

supporting their 1789 revolution, had they not seen firsthand the American one.

Had the French Revolution and Napoleon not occurred, the Spanish nations would probably have not obtained their independence in the early 1800s. And the Europeans would have perhaps found it more attractive to strip the decaying Spanish Empire of its productive colonies than to go and develop their own in Africa and Asia as they did.

What Europe would have been without America can be assessed, to a given extent, by looking at the Eastern European countries. They had few contacts with the American colonization experience and developed tardily.

What Latin America would have been without the European colonization is more difficult to imagine. It is very possible that another sailor from another country and at a later date would have finally conquered the queen. At least with Spain, Latin America achieved a level of intermixture that largely diminishes the hatred between former masters and servants and peoples of different races.

When you visit the Aztec archaeological site of "Templo Mayor" in Mexico City, you find an enormous inscription on the wall. It explains how modern Mexicans are not pure Indians, not pure Spaniards, but a racial and cultural admixture of peoples that has created something different: the Mexicans. Such a positive feeling that makes room for all, whatever their ethnic extraction, is not uncommon in modern Latin America.

The history of humanity is one of successive conquests. Columbus' voyage opened a historical epoch that inflicted much pain on peoples in America and Africa. But it also opened new possibilities we can all share today as partners. We can either try to turn back the clock of history or try to make the best of it by looking to the future and working together in good faith.

We can then in a positive way look to the past to avoid the same mistakes and to heal any open wounds.

Romeu, a native of Cuba, is an assistant professor of mathematics at State University College at Cortland.

Post-Castroism Is Here

Evolution Toward Pluralism Is Best Method for Cuba

By **JORGE LUIS ROMEU**
Post-Castroism as a historical period has already started.

Many facts blatantly announce it: the recent demise of Cuba's remaining friends in the Soviet government after the failed right-wing coup; the rise to power of Boris Yeltsin, one of Castro's worst Soviet critics; the recent disclosure by Cuban security forces of a "plot" to organize a coalition between domestic dissident groups and exile organizations, which constitutes an official recognition of the internal opposition; the meetings between a delegation of the Cuban American National Foundation and Boris Yeltsin, to discuss Soviet aid to Cuba; and Wednesday's announcement of the pullout of 11,000 Soviet troops.

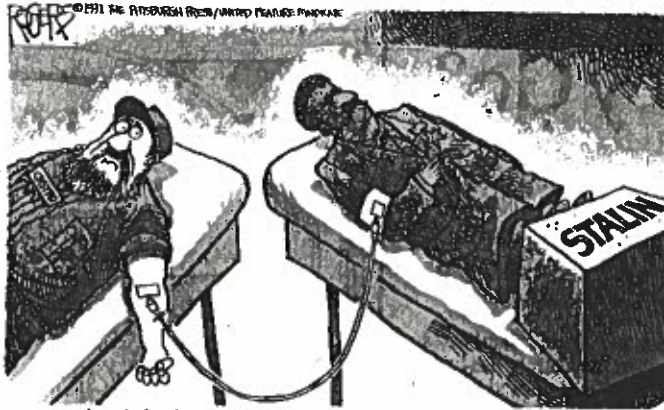


Romeu

Castro's chances for international support are slim. Soviet aid, already dwindling, will be further reduced or cut off. He has no credit and no hard currency. And things at home are so bad that the government has been building tens of thousands of bicycles, for lack of transportation, and a pigeon mail carrier service has been recently started. Cuban artists, technicians, and even government officials have been increasingly defecting during their trips abroad. And hundreds have already defied in the first six months of 1991 the rough waters of the Florida Straits to leave the island in search of greener pastures.

After his 32 years in power Castro appears totally worn out and isolated, as he recently verified during his stay at the conference of Latin American Heads of State in Guadalajara, Mexico. Therefore, unless Castro can quickly find another "sponsor" hostile to the United States and willing to underwrite him in exchange for a base close to American shores, he is doomed. And reciprocally, there is a legitimate American interest to see him go.

There are now at least three options for the U.S. government to encourage in Cuba, a move such as those occurred in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, to reinstate pluralism in the island. They are: to lift the embargo, to



strengthen it further or to stay the course and react in accordance to future developments.

The first option, lifting the embargo, would only extend the suffering of the Cuban people and give Castro a chance to continue his senseless hold on power. But intensifying the embargo would generate more negative effects than the advantages they may offer.

One important negative effect is to send the wrong message to the Cuban establishment. Like the Soviet one, it is composed of many elements who want to survive Castro's downfall or who may even disapprove of his policies but cannot or dare not overtly oppose them.

Another negative effect is the neutralization of the internal opposition, which could easily be accused by Castro of "collaborating" with the "foreign" aggressor. The Cuban exiles would also split. Certain exile organizations have close ties with the current American administration and their larger influence would exacerbate the rivalries among them. Finally, the Latin American countries would not favor a solution that depended on direct American intervention, which could revive some ill feelings of the long-forgotten Big-Stick era.

A third strategy is to stay the course and send the Cuban government a clear message that an evolution to pluralism and market economy would be considered very favorably. Government officials in Havana would then realize that "there is life after Castro" for those who participate in the solution.

The opposition inside Cuba could then openly work toward a pluralistic evolution with the aid of the Cuban exile groups. And the Latin American countries could now support such a move toward pluralism in Cuba, as they have supported similar moves in Chile, Argentina and Brazil. Cuban officials would then have to seriously consider

shooting their own under Castro's and the old guard's orders, or joining the effort to restore a regime where there would be political space for all.

Under the political evolution scenario, a brief transition followed by an internationally supervised election would lead to a pluralistic system. The embargo could then be used as a positive incentive to move toward pluralism, and as in South Africa, encourage change.

The worst drawback of an evolutionary approach is the lack of trust among the opposing Cuban factions. The proponents of the evolutionary process may be initially perceived as "agents" of the other side and be mistrusted. And the possibility of "treason" will haunt everyone during the initial phases of the negotiations. But Chileans, Poles, Portuguese and Soviets who dared to pursue this approach are now living under democratic regimes.

Those who argue that an evolution toward pluralism is utopia may be disregarding Cuban history. By their inability to negotiate their differences, Cubans suffered two American interventions, a terrible revolution in 1933 and 30 years of communist dictatorship after 1960. Many Cubans on the island and abroad have learned the virtues of tolerance and the ills of authoritarianism. They have also learned that the only alternative to an evolutionary solution is for the ailing Castro to continue in power until a bloody revolt occurs, and then no one may be able to control the events. One dictatorship may well follow another, and not even the United States will come out ahead, having to live with an unstable, unreliable neighbor 90 miles away.

Post-Castroism is alive and well, and waiting to be approached. Have the interested players finally attained the political maturity to resolve it?

Romeu, a native of Cuba, is an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland.

Will Cuba Have Democracy?

■ Elections are quite different in Cuba than in the United States, but change is coming, one way or another.

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

This November, for the sixth time I went through the experience of participating in an American election. And it still impresses me. For compared with the system in my native Cuba, it is night and day.

In Cuba, there is a single party controlled from above by Castro and the Central Committee he has appointed. The party, as it is simply known, approves all local level candidates.

These elect, following a pyramidal scheme, the upper-level regional and national representatives. Finally, the national representatives re-elect President Castro.

Cuban citizens live under strong government pressure. Collective fear stems both from the government's ceaseless propaganda and complete control of the economy. If you are singled out as "not revolutionary," the possibilities of social, educational or economic opportunities are gone. Therefore, Castro always obtains over 99 percent of the vote.

With such experiences, it is not difficult to imagine my delight when in 1986 I was finally able to select, and from no less than six national and regional parties! Nor to understand why, with every new American election, I think again about the possibilities of a return to pluralism in Cuba and of ways in which a peaceful transition to democracy could be fostered.

Last year's events in Eastern Europe have only galvanized these thoughts.

But in Cuba, one year after the collapse of socialism, we see no sign of change.

One golden opportunity arose this last October, during the fourth congress of the Cuban Communist Party. Many in Cuba and in exile



Romeu

If you are singled out as "not revolutionary," the possibilities of social, educational or economic opportunities are gone.

hoped Castro would use the congress to promote change or at least to send a signal that change was welcome.

Instead, Castro scorned pluralism and hailed orthodox Marxism. But the country's economic situation is so bad some change had to be made.

Direct election for national representatives was approved — even when the party still designates the candidates. And pro-Castro Catholics and other believers are now allowed to belong to the Communist Party — measures of little practical value other than as public recognition of the religious discrimination and political control Castro has held over his 32-year reign in Cuba.

However, the Cuban economy is in such bad shape after the Soviet Union stopped its subsidies, that another radical resolution was passed. Cuba will start promoting joint economic ventures with foreign capitalists.

Castro is hoping to solve his economic mess by building, with the money of European and Latin American entrepreneurs, a huge tourist industry.

New touristic enclaves will rise to exploit the famous warm and beautiful Cuban beaches. But the Cuban people know they will not be able to stay in these hotels, nor buy in their well-stocked tourist stores. And this is starting to blow the minds of people that have to stand daily in line for many hours to buy the most elementary things.

The level of popular discontent may be assessed by the number of political and human-rights groups that have recently appeared and the fact they are not radically suppressed as they were 10 years ago but instead tolerated as sort of escape valves to popular malaise.

However, these mushrooming dissident groups also can be perceived as heralds of a new era in

the Cuban political scene. For the well over a dozen that already exist have organized into two broad alliances. And they have established working relations with the two main broad political coalitions that constitute the Cuban exile community.

One of the two internal alliances, *Concertacion Democratica*, linked with a group of Liberal, Christian and Social Democrats and nationalist exiles, the Democratic Platform.

The second, *Coalicion Democratica*, is associated with the conservative Cuban American National Foundation. Both organizations are requesting aid from Latin American and European governments to support a transition to democracy in Cuba. And their success can be measured by a recent meeting in New York of Argentina's president with leaders of the Cuban exiles.

In addition to their political lobbying, both coalitions broadcast daily to Cuba. Their two stations, *La Voz del CID* and *La Voz de la Fundacion* read the daily editorials of Miami's two large Spanish papers, *The Herald* and *Diario Las Americas*. Many of these editorials are written in Cuba by dissident group leaders and sent abroad. And most discuss pluralism and the ways of achieving it via a peaceful transition, a very dangerous proposition.

In spite of Castro, a de facto national dialogue has started between the two Cubas. Two of the three components of a pluralistic system, the right and the center, are in the process of organization. And the third component, the democratic left, may well arise anytime from amid Castro's younger and more enlightened ranks. The increasing number of defectors is a good sign of that.

The embryo of Cuban pluralism has been created. Continued internal dissidence and international pressure can only help it develop. And in due time either Castro moves aside as Pinochet did in Chile, or he will be ushered aside by the wheel of history, as with Stroessner in Paraguay. No more no less.

Romeu, a native of Cuba, is an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland.

COMMENT

Should Spanish Be Banned?

■ Hispanics use their native language as a bond among family and friends, not because they disapprove of English.

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

When I was going through high school in Cuba at the start of the Castro dictatorship, English



Romeu

stopped being our enforced "second language." It was another legacy of Yankee imperialism to be done away with, they said. But many of my fellow students who chose Chinese, Hun-

garian or Russian found, to their chagrin, they had to learn English anyway. All our college engineering and science books were in English. If English was that important in communist Cuba, how much more is it in the United States, where over 250 million use it daily! Refusing to accept this fact will seriously curtail anyone's chances of advancement.

Hispanics know this well, and we try hard to learn English. It is well-known that functioning in two languages provides more economic advantages than knowing only one — especially in our international world.

And even when it is more difficult to learn another language as one becomes older, we try hard and often succeed well. Our accent may be heavy or recognizable, but our communicating ability has little to do with this when some good will is present.

However, there are problems with some "mainstream" Americans accepting Spanish spoken in public. And groups like the "English only" movement have appeared to prevent it.

A lack of mutual understanding is probably a main reason for these disagreements.

Latinos speak Spanish because we learned it at home — not as a

scholastic subject but as the vehicle of daily family communication. It provides yet another bond among kin and even another manifestation of love and friendship.

It is widely spoken in certain regions of the country like Puerto Rico, Texas and New Mexico. When these Americans move, they just carry it with them, too. And no other intent is meant.

Non-Latinos seem to take our speaking Spanish in a different way, perhaps because our language experiences have also been different. We have often heard descendants of second- and third-generation immigrants say how they were never taught the language of the "old country" at home, and how their parents, when they wanted to discuss things they didn't want the children to know, spoke in their original languages. And here may lie two substantial differences between these immigrants and Hispanics.

First, Puerto Rico, New Mexico and Texas are not foreign countries nor are their residents immigrants. In fact, these regions were Spanish-speaking before they became integral parts of the United States and have remained bilingual ever since.

Second, we Hispanics don't speak in Spanish because we want to keep others from knowing what we are saying. And we don't perceive how others can interpret it this way, because our parents never spoke another language in front of us with such intention. Perhaps on occasions we forget the courtesy of speaking English when others are present, granted. Bad intentions? Not so. Just a mutual misunderstanding.

Today's problem may be how to make Spanish-speaking Americans fluent in English so they can function within the society and not on the fringes. There are two theories to go about achieving this: bilingual education and English as the only instructional language.

Bilingual education has the advantage of using the "home" language: Spanish. It uses it to teach all school subjects and introduces English as one of these subjects

until the transition to total English can be made. It is faster in the early grades, since the students can learn subjects at their own pace. It has the disadvantage that it can become a crutch, and some students may take much longer to learn English this way.

All-English schooling pursues teaching every subject in English, which at an early age is a foreign language for many Hispanic children. Children spend much effort learning English at the expense of other subjects. It is a more "sink or swim" approach.

In our family, we used a combination of both methods. Our children, who knew no English, went first to the Seymour School bilingual program. There, they were exposed to some English without setbacks in other subjects like math. Then we sent them to a regular school, where they had some special instruction and a lot of backup at home. As a result, they are now completely bilingual, with some slight accent perhaps, and going to college.

Because we are a two-parent household with a close-knit extended family, we could provide much support at home. We practiced with them daily and, for a while, we even adopted English as the language of our daily lives.

The kids learned English so fast that we had to go back to our using Spanish at home, for they are now losing their Spanish! This combination worked well for us. However, this approach would not necessarily be effective or appropriate in every context.

Sometimes the "English only" approach reminds me of a traditional in-law quarrel: The apparent object of dispute is not always the issue but just an excuse. The real issue cannot be raised.

If we all, Hispanics and non-Spanish-speaking Americans, agree that English is the language of the country and it is necessary for all to learn it to fully participate, what is the real issue?

Romeu is an assistant professor of mathematics at State University College at Cortland and a native of Cuba.

OPINION'S PAGE

COMMENT

In Cuba, Races Bridge Gaps

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

"Hey, guy, come down!"

The fellow at the bottom of the ladder was my childhood friend Orlando Fernandez, who was black. He lived across the street, in our Eastwood-like neighborhood of Havana, ever since I could remember. More so, I can distinctly recall the day his family



Romeu

moved in, Orlando insisted on climbing "my" tree, so we had a big fight. His father, a man of a liberal persuasion and a mason, like my father was, intervened and forced us to make peace. We were good buddies from then on.

In Cuba, the year is divided into two seasons: drought and rain. For us kids, it had many more: the top season and the kite season, the yo-yo, marbles, skating, biking and baseball seasons and many more.

Orlando and I always enjoyed them together, playing at each other's home or in the street with the rest of the kids on the block. We competed, we disagreed, we fought and called each other names — even four-letter ones — without giving it a second thought as to whether it was "politically correct."

But all was done in good faith and it helped that Orlando had never had to ride in the back of a bus, drink from a special water fountain or go to a segregated school.

At the start of the Cuban revolution, Orlando's father, who spoke several languages, got a high position in the Foreign Trade Ministry. Shortly after, he sent Orlando to study in the Soviet Union. Orlando spent several years there, went to college and was now a big manager in the Ministry of Agriculture, with a government car and all.

"Hey, guy! What are you up to now?" he said again as I came down the ladder with my brush and paint can. "I have been watching you working around the house for six weeks now. And nobody in this country gets that much vacation!"

The story of our friendship was not very different from that of other kids of working or middle-class extraction in Cuba in the 1950s.

"They let me go," I said. He looked me over and scratched his beard.

He said: "Do you want to work with me, in Agriculture?"

"I am not revolutionary," I answered.

"I know that, but that is not what I asked you."

To make a long story short, I started working as statistician for the Ministry of Agriculture a week later and worked there until I left Cuba in 1980.

The story of our friendship was not very different from that of other kids of working or middle-class extraction in Cuba in the 1950s. I won't say there were no racial differences in Cuba or that the people were "colorblind." But in the 70 years elapsed since the abolition of slavery in 1880, Cuba made large progress toward an integrated society.

Black slaves were brought to Cuba since the early 1500s to work for their masters. In the early 1800s, blacks constituted a third of the population. But of these, almost half were already freed and owned small farms and shops.

Spain used the race issue and the close example of Haiti's slave revolt as a political weapon to curb Cuba's independence movement in the first half of the 19th century. But in 1868, at the start of the War of Independence, Cuban revolutionaries freed their slaves and let them join the army. With this action, Cubans cut the last hold Spain had on them.

Many black men, free and slave, distinguished themselves among the officer corps. Gen. Antonio Maceo was second in the chain of command, and Juan G. Gomez, a black lawyer, was the personal delegate of Marti, the independence movement leader.

After the war, Gomez, along with many other black Cubans, held high positions in the government, including his lifelong Senate chair. In 1933, the head of the army was already black. In 1940 the president was black.

Although classified as black, many of these men were of mixed race, which is often the case in Latin America.

In the professional and economic spheres, 20 percent of doctors, lawyers and teachers were black, as reported in the 1943 census. The population was then about 30 percent non-white. The primary and secondary schools and access to the university were open to all races. However, on the average, blacks were poorer than whites.

And since education was better in private schools, blacks as a group were still less-educated and occupied a lesser socioeconomic level.

In the uppermost social and economic levels, blacks were still discriminated against. Separate social clubs existed for affluent whites, blacks and mulattoes. However, all professional societies, churches and lodges were completely integrated.

How was such racial harmony attained in so short a time in Cuba? It was a long and engaging process for whites and blacks. It takes two to tango, and one of much good and mutual accommodation — one that works only if both sides are really willing to bridge the gap.

In England a thousand years ago Normans conquered the Saxons. I wonder how many Britons today care what their ethnic origin is. In Yugoslavia, on the other hand, Serbs and Croats have been fighting with each other for 1,000 years. England is a world economic and political power; Yugoslavia is a mess.

Maybe we could borrow Ben Franklin's revolutionary slogan, apply it to the multicultural and multiracial context, and say: Either we hang together or we hang separately.

Romeu, a native of Cuba, is an assistant professor of mathematics at State University College at Cortland.

Hispanic Press Alive and Well

By **JORGE LUIS ROMEU**
Manuel DeDios, the editor who was shot and killed earlier this year, was a leader among Hispanic journalists in the thriving specialty that is Spanish-language newspapers.



Romeu

DeDios was a crusading writer who had exposed drug deals taking place in the *barrio*. He wrote and managed New York's *El Diario/La Prensa*, founded in 1913 with a daily circulation of 70,000. (By comparison, The Post-Standard's is about 90,000). A second New York City Spanish daily, *Noticias del Mundo*, has a circulation of 45,000 daily copies.

There are over 2 million Hispanics in New York City, the second-largest Puerto Rican city outside that island. In Los Angeles, Miami and Chicago, large-circulation Hispanic newspapers also appear every day. In addition, there are two national TV networks, Univision and Telemundo; national syndicated news services such as Hispanic Link; and family magazines such as *Mas* and *Replica* — or the upscale, English-language *Hispanic*.

However, it is the community newspaper, often bilingual like *El Vecino de Rochester*, that is growing the fastest — for two reasons. One is that Hispanic papers discuss and inform Latinos in their first language. Secondly, advertisers have discovered a growing Hispanic market that can be tapped by using this medium.

In contrast to American newspapers, journalism in Latin America tends to radiate from the big cities. *La Nacion*, *El Mercurio* and *El Pais*, for example, help define the common debate in Argentina, Chile and Spain, respectively. In the United

States, a national newspaper like *USA Today* is still less read than the local paper.

Latin American newspapers tend to be associated with an ideology or a political party that furnishes them with economic support, readers and writers. *La Nacion* and *El Mercurio* are conservative, while *El Pais* is liberal. Readers balance out the news by buying more than one paper every day.

In the Spanish world, writing for a newspaper is considered an honor and a civic duty. Leaders of all types of causes use the press to promote and defend their ideas. Intellectuals are encouraged to contribute frequently. This allows newspapers to operate with a reduced full-time professional staff, cutting costs.

Many of these traits have passed on to the Spanish-language American newspapers. Small community papers flourish wherever a Hispanic group exists. Large newspapers have developed only in the four cities with a large Hispanic immigrant population. In other heavily Hispanic cities like *Sante Fe* or *San Antonio*, where the Hispanics are mostly second or third generation, only the Spanish community newspaper remains. As they become more intimately acquainted with the English language and culture, Hispanics feel more comfortable with the Anglo press.

Only in two large American cities do Spanish newspapers compete with their English counterparts. The first, Los Angeles, is the second Mexican city outside Mexico. Its largest Spanish newspapers are *La Opinion*, founded in 1926, circulation 105,000; and *Noticias del Mundo*, founded in 1980, circulation 45,000. They both cater to the over 2 million Mexican-Americans living there, most of them first generation.

Miami is the only truly bilingual and bicultural American city. In New York and Los Angeles, His-

panics constitute only a minority. Their newspapers cannot compare with giants like *The New York Times* or *Los Angeles Times*, with a million copies a day.

In metropolitan Miami, 40 percent of the population is Hispanic, including leading politicians, business managers and bank and university presidents. No wonder *El Nuevo Herald*, the largest Spanish-language newspaper in the continental United States with over 120,000 copies, is published there. A second Spanish paper, *Diario Las Americas*, with a circulation of 67,000, is another alternative to the English-language *Miami Herald*, circulation 450,000.

El Nuevo Herald began as an insert in the *Miami Herald* in 1976. Since 1987 it has maintained a totally independent staff. In 1988 it won an award for the best front page among all American newspapers. Its designer, Mario Garcia, is a former Newhouse professor in Syracuse. Editor Carlos Verdecia is a former Cuban vice minister of foreign trade from the early Castro days.

Diario Las Americas was founded in 1953 by Nicaraguan Horacio Aguirre, who still runs it. It employed many of the best Cuban journalists who left the island in the early 1960s.

El Herald editorial writers are not afraid to clash with conservative Cuban exile groups. Its young editorial staff publishes articles from many perspectives. A healthy liberal-conservative debate, reminiscent of Madrid or Mexico City, exists between *El Herald* (available at the Onondaga County Public Library) and *Diario Las Americas* (available at Le Moyne library).

Journalism is an important indicator of the health of a community. By this standard, U.S. Hispanics are alive and well.

Romeu, who lives in Syracuse, teaches statistics at SUNY Cortland.

Do Constitutional Changes Signal Slippage for Castro?

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

Last summer the "Asamblea Popular," the Cuban legislature, met in Havana to approve several fundamental constitutional changes proposed by Castro.



Romeu

These changes were triggered by the extraordinary events leading to the disintegration of the communist bloc.

The first change deletes all constitutional references to the "eternal friendship with the Soviet Union," an ally that is no more. The former Soviet republics refuse to continue underwriting Castro's regime now that the Cold War is over.

For example, five years ago, a ton of Cuban sugar would buy about nine tons of Soviet oil. Today, it barely buys one.

Another change, this with the Communist Party constitution, deals with religion. By the constitution, Cuba is an atheistic state. Therefore, citizens with religious beliefs, during the past 30 years, have rarely been selected for management positions or allowed to pursue, say, careers in science, engineering or journalism. Advances come later for them, after significantly larger effort. Now the Cuban government is desperately trying to win them over by allowing them to be party members, apparently with very little success.

A third change deals with direct elections to the National Assembly. Up to now, the electoral system was indirect. Government-sponsored candidates ran for local offices — like our county legislature — in a one-party election. And these local legislatures selected, from their own, the representatives for the National Assembly.

From now on, the National Assembly will be directly elected from a list of candidates drafted in public meetings by government-run "popular" organizations — unions, youth, women and neighborhood watch groups.

Nominations are made in public, not in secret ballot. Opposition candidates who dare risk the government's wrath and put their jobs in jeopardy can always be accused of "enemy propaganda" by the local

Cubans are hungry and tired after 30 years of unfulfilled promises.

government watchdogs. There is no free press; political parties other than the official communist party are not allowed.

Oswald Paya, leader of a Catholic movement inside Cuba, declared his candidacy to the National Assembly. The Cuban people found out about Paya's effort through Radio Marti, the American shortwave station that broadcasts to Cuba. Paya has no access to radio, TV, press or any other Cuban media. He has not been able to explain his message on pluralism and national reconciliation. And Castro's government has accused him and his followers of being agents of American imperialism.

Another constitutional change deals with the economy. Presently, practically all economic activity is, by law, in government hands. From now on, joint ventures with foreign capitalists will be legal. However, Cuban nationals are strictly forbidden to participate.

The last important constitutional change may be related to the one above. Cuban exiles, who up to now were officially dual citizens of Cuba wherever they live, will be stripped of their Cuban citizenship.

When visiting their relatives in Cuba, exiles are required to use a Cuban passport, even if they have acquired another citizenship. Many hundreds of thousands have submitted to this practice since 1978.

Cuban "visitors" pay over \$200 for a Cuban passport and \$1,000-plus for the one-week "tour." As Cuban citizens, these visitors can be arrested at any time, just like any other Cuban citizens, if they do not follow their instructions to the letter. Exiles put up with all that to spend some time with their relatives and buy them scarce, badly needed rationed goods in the expensive government "tourist" stores.

By stripping the exiles of their dual citizenship, Castro may pursue several objectives. Cuban exiles will not be eligible to take part in the political life. Say, if a Cuban exile declares in Miami or Madrid his or her candidacy for office, it would no

longer be legal. Such a possibility is not elusive. In the recent election in Cuba, in spite of much government pressure and secrecy, foreign correspondents reported that high numbers of blank and invalid ballots were cast — perhaps as much as 20 percent.

However, Castro may be preparing a better scheme. Since Cuban exiles would no longer be considered nationals, they would be eligible to participate in the mixed economic ventures like any other "foreign capitalist." Castro could set up a deal where those investing a large sum would become preferred stockholders and attend periodic stockholder meetings — visiting their relatives more frequently.

Many desperate exiles could consider taking a second mortgage. In the past, Castro has played without scruples on the strong Cuban family kinship. He will take our money and use the scheme to divide us. But this little scheme has a double edge.

Cubans are hungry and tired after 30 years of unfulfilled promises. Just recently, a Cuban passenger plane with over 40 people landed in Miami. All but five requested political asylum. By the scores, artists and technicians who travel abroad stay in Mexico, Spain and Canada. Even those studying in the former Soviet Union refuse to go back to Havana. More than 2,500 made it through the Florida Straits in rafts last year.

Younger leaders in the military and the party who will naturally outlive Castro may not appreciate his creating a Cuban apartheid for foreign tourists and capitalists in the midst of a suffering nation. These young leaders, whose families also suffer shortages and difficulties in Cuba, may realize that times change and that Castro and his close entourage of gerontocrats are preventing an evolution in the country.

It is not impossible that they join the internal dissidents and the liberal wing of the Cuban exiles in a coalition to restore political and economic pluralism in the island.

Such was the story in Portugal in 1974 and in Paraguay in 1989. Will it also be Cuba's in 1993?

Romeu is a native of Cuba and an associate professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland.

Syracuse Post-Standard. - Saturday, Jan. 16, 1993.

Castro Gets Cool Reception, Advice to Change in Spain

By **JORGE LUIS ROMEU**
GALICIA, Spain — Cuban President Fidel Castro has for many years stirred different reactions



Romeu

from many of us. For some, Castro has been the revolutionary hero who created a socialist state 90 miles away from U.S. shores. For others, Castro represents the treason to the liberal cause, when he installed a personal and communist dictatorship in Cuba.

Hence, as soon as we found out that Castro would attend the second summit of Hispanic nations in July in Seville, Spain, some of us found a way to make it here, too.

We did so to have a chance to confront Castro's dictatorship in a country where a peaceful transition to pluralism took place in 1975 after Franco's death and where an appreciation for pluralism is strong.

However, to understand the complex Spanish sentiment toward Cuba and the United States, it is necessary to know some recent Spanish history.

Spain, in 1898, lost all of its remaining colonial empire — Puerto Rico, Guam, the Philippines — to the United States. This occurred after the Cuban-American-Spanish War, where Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders distinguished themselves at the Battle of San Juan Hill and where the Spanish navy suffered two humbling defeats in the Battles of Manila and Santiago de Cuba Bays.

The Spaniards have not forgotten "El Gran Desastre" of 1898, which is very much at the heart of the support that many Spaniards have for Fidel Castro and his anti-American revolution.

We, thus, came to Spain to try to explain to the Spaniard people the plight of "The other Cuba" — the Cuba of the internal dissidents, the

political prisoners, the exiles and the "balseros" who brave the waters of the Florida straits to escape Castro's locked island.

We were well aware of the difficult task ahead of us, facing a people whose pro-Castro sentiments were well known. But we had faith in the rightness of our cause.

Our first stop was Santander, a city of half-a-million on Spain's northern seacoast. And it was a big surprise for us to find how the publisher of *El Diario Montanes*, its main daily paper, gave us more than an hour of his time to listen to the plight of the Cubans. And how he published a lengthy piece on Cuba that we had written. It was apparent, at last, that the Spanish public, tired of Castro's 33-year-old rule, was ready to hear our plight.

We, then, proceeded to Santiago de Compostela, the capital of the Galician region. There, Manuel Fraga, the president of the Galician Xunta — something like the governor of a U.S. state — had invited Castro to visit.

Castro is the son of a Galician immigrant who made a fortune in Cuba in the agriculture business. Galicia is a very nationalistic region in the northeast of Spain. And Fraga is a former Franco minister who was one of the main architects of the Spanish transition toward democracy and pluralism after Franco's death in 1975. He is one of the most important conservative leaders in Spain.

Fraga, who is also the son of a Galician immigrant to Cuba and lived there as a child, was invited by Castro to go to Cuba last year. He obtained the release of some political prisoners and invited Castro to visit the homeland of his father. Some have criticized this attitude as a self-serving gesture of a fading politician. But it has turned out to be one of the more interesting twists in modern Cuban politics.

We arrived in Santiago on the same day as Castro and searched for the city's newspaper. As it happened, the editor of *El Correo Gal-*

lego, the main daily, not only heard us but invited us to write an article about the Cuban dissidents inside the island. And our piece joined the several other ones critical of Castro's long reign.

In general, the Spanish press was highly disappointed with Castro. He arrived with two plane loads of body guards and committee members and toured the Galician countryside for two days. Castro was supposed to give his only news conference in Spain in Santiago — but it was unapologetically canceled at the last minute.

He cut short his stay and went back to Cuba — some said because there were very serious internal problems going on there during his absence. Others said he could not afford to confront the questions of a free press in a free country.

During his visit to Spain, Castro had to take questions about a possible return to pluralism in Cuba. Latin American heads of state like Nicaragua's Violeta Chamorro and Spain's Socialist Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez have raised the issue. Finally, Fraga has flatly declared that Castro should listen to the "book of life" and realize that a time for change in Cuba has come.

Castro has traditionally blamed the American hostility for his iron grip on power and American blockade for shortages in Cuba.

In Spain, Castro was treated with all consideration and respect of his rank. He was discreetly counseled to listen to his people's plight for pluralism — not threatened by an embargo or insulted by an adversary country.

Still, Castro refuses to yield an inch of his personal power. He has refused to face the scrutiny of a free press. He has shown his weaknesses.

And, possibly, with his unfortunate and ill-advised trip to the Hispanic Summit, Castro has carved even deeper his own political grave.

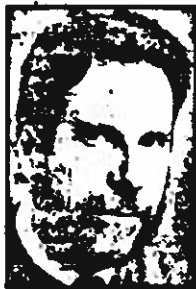
Romeu is an assistant professor of mathematics at State University College at Cortland.

WRONG MOVE ON CUBA

Trade Curbs Will Hinder Democracy

By JORGE ROMEU

This week, by a vote of 59 to 3 with 71 abstentions, the United Nations passed a non-binding resolution against the United States condemning the "Law for Cuban Democracy," a measure recently passed by the U.S. Congress.



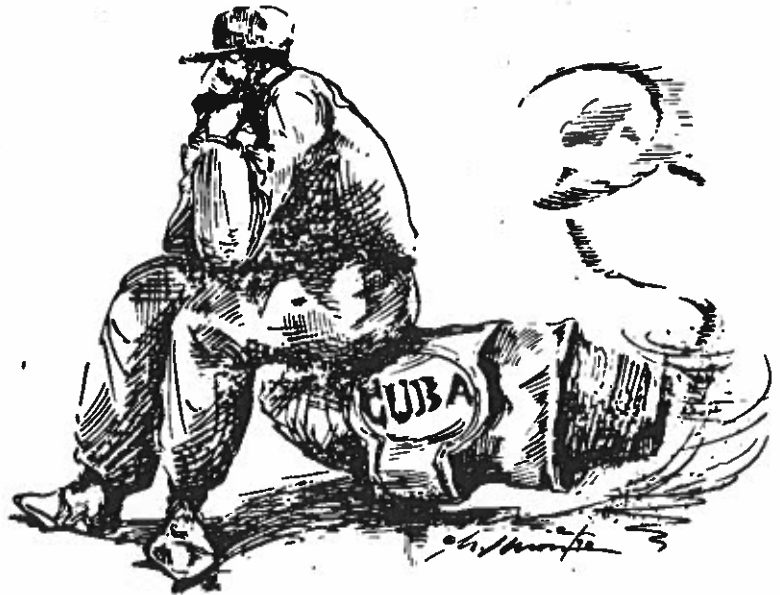
Romeu

Also known as the Torricelli Law, for the New Jersey member of Congress who introduced it, this measure says U.S. subsidiaries in third countries are banned from engaging in any commerce with Cuba, and that ships transporting goods to Cuba cannot dock in American ports for six months. Similar measures strengthen the U.S. embargo against Castro's government, which will only be lifted when Washington certifies that there is a democratic regime in Havana.

The voting pattern in the U.N. was revealing. The three countries that backed Torricelli were the United States, Israel and Romania. Close American allies and business partners like Canada, France and Spain voted against the United States. Most of our friends in Western Europe abstained.

The results can be interpreted in different ways, given the large number of abstentions. If you favor Torricelli, you can say that only a minority of 59 countries were against it (adding the abstentions to the "Nays"). If you are against it, you can say that only three nations approve of it. Either way, it is obvious that this American law does not make many of our foreign leaders very happy. Nor does it have the monolithic support of the Cuban exile community.

The reason is simple. In the minds of some of us, the Torricelli law would not only be detrimental to U.S. foreign policy, but also to a



quick and positive resolution of the Cuban Problem.

First, American subsidiaries in foreign countries would find it difficult to comply with such law without damaging these countries' economies. They generate foreign trade and employment in these countries, some of which are going through the same hard times we are going through here. Such a measure would be hitting their citizens (read voters) where it hurts most: in their pockets. Their politicians, who would not like to lose the next election, would likely disavow Torricelli as an intrusion in their internal affairs. A first symptom may well have been the recent U.N. vote where our closest friends sent us a silent message.

Secondly, Latin America, a high priority in American foreign policy, would take Torricelli lightly. There is a history of American intervention in the subcontinent. Some of these countries may fear that they would, perhaps in the future, suffer from the same treatment if their policies clashed with those of the United States. They would not like to set such a precedent.

Third, Torricelli would provide Castro with yet another fig leaf to cover his inept economic policies (e.g. sugar is rationed in Cuba because of the American embargo.) And it would give the kiss of death to the growing dissident movement inside Cuba. Here is where this writer, too, takes exception against Torricelli.

Currently, the courageous dissidents operate as an unrecognized but ever-growing opposition

movement. With Torricelli law, they may be portrayed as an internal Fifth Column. Their viability will be highly compromised.

Fourth, Torricelli thwarts the possibility of a transformation from within the Cuban establishment, following the Portuguese, Spanish or Paraguayan models. Castro can now say to his comrades: "I am your best life insurance."

Fifth, embargoes don't seem to work any more. Even in the case of little Haiti, it has not worked.

Finally, there are still some who believe (or choose to believe) that the Cuban government is "little David" fighting the American Goliath; or that Castro is still preferable to a U.S. "puppet government" in Cuba, which they think will result if communism falls through the American embargo. Many in Europe and Latin America would rather see a Chilean or Nicaraguan transition toward pluralism. And these countries would perhaps be willing to back such a move and even put pressure on Havana to achieve it.

The Torricelli law means well, aiming to bring pluralism to Cuba. However, its side effects are considerable and serious. We have just seen the first one — the recent U.N. motion.

It would be more efficient to propose, on moral grounds, a multilateral embargo. Such a measure, if achieved, could obtain the same results, but without being perceived as a uniquely American agenda. The side-effects of Torricelli would then disappear.

Romeu, a native of Cuba, lives in Syracuse.

well in school. For example, 17-year-olds who have four or more kinds of reading materials — books, magazines, newspapers and encyclopedias — in their homes scored 25 points higher on the 1990 NAEP reading exam than kids with two or less. Youngsters with this variety of reading materials available also tend to have higher average scores on the NAEP math exams.

Whether or not they are readers, parents can show their commitment to their children's education by their TV-watching rules. "America's Smallest School" says that the number of youngsters who watch three or more hours a day continues to grow. Thirty-one percent of 17-year-olds watched three or more hours in 1972; 50 percent did so in 1990. These kids spent at least as much time in front of the tube every year as they spent in school — assuming they went to school regularly. Parents seem to know they have a responsibility here. Almost two-thirds say they have rules about television watching on school days, but, looking at the number of hours kids put in, you have to conclude that the rules aren't worth much or that parents don't enforce them.

If youngsters don't go to school, they can't benefit from what school has to offer. Here, too, many parents are failing their children by not making sure the kids attend school every day. In 1988, one eighth grader in five was absent three or more days a month — or about six weeks per school year — and 12 percent were late three or more days a month.

This kind of involvement in their children's education is hard work for parents. They have to be around the house to supervise; they have to put pressure on the kids to turn off the television and do their homework or read something; they have to make sure the kids go to school even when there is some little reason for staying home. As "America's Smallest School" makes clear, many parents are not taking on this difficult job. But it's hard to think of anything more important they can do for their kids.

"America's Smallest School" is available for \$5.50 from ETS Policy Information Center, Rosedale Rd., Princeton, N.J. 08541.

Reader correspondence is invited. Write to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. Copyright 1993 by Albert Shanker. Mr. Shanker's column appeared as a paid advertisement in *The New York Times*, Sunday, February 7, 1993.



...A FIELD TRIP TO THE SCHOOL LIBRARY.

Human rights in Cuba

To the Editor:

I would like to respond to the two letters which appeared in the Jan. 25 *New York Teacher*, regarding the plight of the Cuban professors expelled from the University of Havana last year.

The first writer who classifies himself as a "former reactionary" is in error with respect to the Cuban human rights record and its relation to the U.N. Human Rights Commission. Actually, Cuba was condemned for not allowing the U.N. rapporteur to enter the island last year to report violations. In addition, last Dec. 10th, anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Human Rights in the U.N., the Cuban government-sponsored mobs (*Brigadas de Respuesta Rápida*) were set loose and several well-known human rights activists such as Elizardo Sanchez were beaten unconscious. Calling such behavior simply "over reacting," justifying these atrocities with the excuse of the American embargo or worse records elsewhere (even when it is difficult to compete with as bad a record as Cuba's) opens a can of worms. The same can be argued by the reactionary white government of South Africa and other similar political dinosaurs. These human rights activists, far from being people who are pursuing the "reintroduction of the old masters," as the writer argues, are people who seek the same political freedom that our friend here uses to air his disagreement with our human rights work and write about it in our union's newspaper. Have you been fired or beaten by a mob lately, just because you wrote your letter defending the socialist system in Cuba, Mr. Juan Luis? Have you heard of the Golden Rule?

With respect to the second letter, I would like to remind this writer that last year over 2,500 made it to Miami in rafts (and God only knows how many more drowned trying). There are over one million Cubans in exile and several thousands in political prison in the island. Wouldn't it be easier for Castro to legitimize his 34-year-old party

rule by conducting an internationally supervised, multi-party election, just as Pinochet, in Chile, the Argentine and Uruguayan juntas and the Sandinistas, in Nicaragua did? Why is Castro so afraid to hold free elections? Is he afraid that the Nicaraguan political upset will be repeated in Cuba?

Our problem is not to justify one dictatorship while condemning another. We are for pluralism and human rights across the board: in Chile, in Nicaragua, in South Africa and, of course, in Cuba.

JORGE LUIS ROMEU
Cortlandt, N.Y.

Cubans seeking freedom

To the Editor:

In your issue of Jan. 25, you printed letters by two very misguided individuals whose views reflect barely a minuscule minority of Cubans in the United States.

Perhaps, someone should lend them a copy of Armando Valladares's book *Against All Hope*. Perhaps, they should spend five minutes in conversation with the 34 people who arrived in Miami by stolen helicopter last year or with the 50 more who arrived there by plane more recently. None of these individuals seemed to be too concerned about the "free education and health care" they were leaving behind. The operative word for everyone is "freedom."

When was the last time anyone heard of a group commandeering a helicopter or airplane and flying to Cuba because of the "social justice, self-determination and independence" which exist there? My parents, brothers and I have been here 31 years and have not

Write us!

Readers are urged to share their thoughts with other United Teachers members. Write: "Letters to the Editor," *New York Teacher*, 260 Park Ave. South, New York, N.Y. 10010. Please try to keep letters brief (250 words or less). The paper reserves the right to edit letters for space reasons, but will not alter the writer's point.

New York Teacher - February 22, 1993.

ADERS' PAGE

COMMENT

Cuban Human-Rights Groups Operate Inside and Outside

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU
The U.N. Human Rights Commission last month condemned Cuba for "continued violations of fundamental human rights and individual liberties."



Romeu

The organizations are complementary, because consciously or not, one works for and supports the other.

The internal human-rights organizations are formed by activists inside Cuba who protest government abuses, argue their cases before the constituted authorities and report them to human-rights organizations all over the world.

A well-known internal activist is Elizardo Sanchez, who was beaten unconscious by government-sponsored mobs Dec. 10, the anniversary of the U.N. Human Rights Declaration, and then arrested by the Cuban government on charges of "public disorder."

Others are brothers Gustave and Sebastian Arcos Bergnes, who head the Comité Cubano Pro Derechos Humanos, for which Sebastian was recently sentenced to several years in prison.

The exiled human-rights organizations disseminate abroad the reports our colleagues inside Cuba gather and send us. We also search for support from sister international organizations.

It is because such human-rights violations become known outside Cuba that the internal organizations can operate. Twelve years ago, when I lived in Cuba, the dissidents and human-rights activists were either invisible or neutralized inside the prisons.

Internal and external Cuban human-rights organizations are like

the strings and the box of a guitar: the internal groups produce lovely music that the external ones amplify so it can be heard wherever it is needed.

Inside Cuba or any other totalitarian state, human-rights groups start by demanding their right to exist. They request from the government the status of a legal association. When this right of peaceful assembly is denied as in Cuba, such denial becomes a flagrant and overt violation. Then human-rights groups edit newsletters disseminating such "dangerous" political material as the U.N. Declaration of the Rights of Man.

For such activities Cubans are thrown into prison under the charge of "enemy propaganda." Cuban human-rights activists also report abuses specifically to the U.N. Rapporteur for Cuba, which is no longer allowed in the country. For this, in 1989, Elizardo Sanchez and others were prosecuted and convicted.

Abroad, Cuban human-rights activists constantly monitor the short-wave stations and the international press for violation report and we share this information among our different organizations.

Oscar Alvarez and Ariel Hidalgo in Miami are the official representatives of several internal human-rights organizations. Through telephone and other contacts they obtain current information we all use.

Freedom House in Washington, D.C., and Americas Watch and Amnesty International officials in New York City also have shared information with us.

We then take these cases to the best jury: public opinion. We present our cases to the media, the professional associations, the unions and the authorities.

We take these cases to the U.N. Commission in Geneva and write reports and articles, give talks and seminars and in every way and means imaginable share this information with others in the international community.

Disseminating human-rights information is very important because, in general, we deal with five different groups of people, three of which we really want to reach.

The first two groups, the outright hostile who still defend Cuba as the last bastion of socialism and the completely convinced that human rights are systematically violated in Cuba are not of much concern to us.

Two other groups — the indifferent and misinformed — can be shown facts they are not aware of, and their minds and hearts can be touched. Lack of information is no sin, just a rectifiable condition.

The prejudiced are the worst, and there are many of those. Recently, a learned professional referred to Radio Marti, the Voice of America program for Cuba, as "the American station that broadcasts propaganda to Cuba." I courteously asked if he spoke Spanish, which he didn't. This left me wondering how he could know whether Radio Marti was a propaganda station for it broadcasts only in Spanish. This is a classical example of prejudice.

By denouncing human-rights abuses in Cuba we are setting the record straight for the misinformed and prejudiced. But most important, the Cuban government cares about international opinion, for it may hurt its chances of receiving needed economic aid and tourism.

Therefore, providing information about human-rights abuses gives us Cuban activists the only lever we can use to protect our brothers and sisters working inside the island and to promote a peaceful, swift and certain evolution toward pluralism in Cuba, with social justice and respect for human rights.

Romeu, an associate professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland, is a member of the Human Rights Committee of the American Statistical Association and chair of the Human Rights Committee and a board member of the National Association of Cuban-American Educators.

COMMENT

Europe's Cost of Living Soaring

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

Before and since the last election campaign the questions have kept coming up: Can we compete in the industrialized world? Are we losing markets abroad because of our high salaries and production costs? Or is it something else?



Romeu

I, too, have long wondered about this. Every year I pay twice as much for my British professional society's annual dues as I pay for the American Statistical Association. How can my British colleagues afford it?

Last summer we had the opportunity to verify and compare European prices. Due to the Quincennial, the International Fair in Seville and the Olympics, air fares to Spain were twice as expensive as to England. So we took the long way to Madrid.

Our first stop was London, where a 30-minute train trip from the airport cost eight pounds (\$16). A room in the YWCA ran \$75 a night. This price, as all others in Europe, includes the 15 percent VAT (value added tax), equivalent to our sales tax.

London is expensive and beautiful, like New York in many aspects. A two-deck bus costs \$1.60, and there are no free transfers. Their excellent subway ("tube") costs \$1.40 during off-peak hours. \$2.40 during peak hours. Those who travel to the suburbs pay considerably more. A daily pass (about \$7) allows you to ride as many times as you want, during off-peak hours.

If you are really traveling on a shoestring budget, the King Cross youth hostel charges three pounds a night (\$6) for a cot to put in the gym and use of a shower. The subway to get there adds \$3 more.

The British Museum, a true marvel, is completely free. However, entrance to the Tower of London costs over \$12 per person. The least-expensive theater seats are seven and eight pounds (\$15-16). A sight-seeing boat trip along the River Thames starts at five pounds (\$10).

Londoners enjoy modern supermarket chains like ours. We used Tesco's. Prices looked quite similar to the ones found in our local chain — except they were in British pounds. A half-pound of chicken breast cost \$1.95; a package of cheese singles ran for \$1.30; a two-liter package of orange juice, \$3. A small bottle of Matheus Rose, \$5.50. A liter of Scotch went for about \$15.

A low-level statistician makes about \$30,000, and a more senior position requiring a masters degree, \$40,000 or \$45,000, which compares to salaries around here — except that life there is more expensive.

Moving on to France was a relief (An expensive one, considering that the ferry costs over \$40 one way; the combined bus-ferry fare is cheaper).

A French two-star hotel bedroom for two cost 160 francs (\$30). But the shower was \$4 extra per person. Renting a car was not expensive. But gasoline, as Ross Perot has constantly reminded us, was. A liter cost 5.2 francs (about \$1.25). There are 3.75 liters in a gallon.

France also has very modern su-

permarkets and we tried the Auchan's chain. A liter of orange juice cost 85 cents, pear juice, \$1.50, and banana juice, 95 cents. A loaf of bread was 30 cents and a bottle of table wine, \$1.50. Dinner in a modern, self-service family restaurant is about \$6 per person.

The modern "Formule 1" hotel chain, comparable to our Motel 6 chain, offers three bedrooms for \$26, showers included. Their hotels are always in the outskirts. But reserve early — they were always packed full.

European superhighways are excellent. Tolls vary. In France, they were reasonable. But as soon as we crossed to Spain, prices skyrocketed. A segment as long as from Syracuse to Utica cost \$16. Speeds of 90 mph to 100 mph are not uncommon.

Spain, which recently joined the European Community, has greatly raised its standard of living (and its prices!) in the past five years. An engineer in a small city makes the equivalent of \$30,000 to \$35,000 today — well over 50 percent more than in 1987.

Five years ago, we paid \$60 in Spanish pesetas for a dinner for 10. Last year we repeated the experience in the same restaurant, paid with our VISA, but it cost \$160.

Everywhere we went in Europe, we saw people spending money: in cafes, restaurants and hotels. Cars were plentiful. We saw banks almost in every corner, so there must be plenty of money to save. And there was a construction boom taking place.

Should we be taking a second look at our management strategies?

Romeu is a native of Cuba and an associate professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland.



COMMENT

Cubans Know How to Beat the Heat: Straw Fans, Icy Lemonade and Siestas

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

A short time ago, my old friend Herb asked me how Cuba's senior citizens handle the heat during the hot Caribbean summers. My answer was: Get a straw fan, sit on the porch drinking icy lemonade, surrounded by shade trees, and rock the heat away!



Many people ask me similar questions, knowing that I come from Cuba. They assume that our long summers are much warmer than the ones here and they want some good tips on how to deal with them. But there are several misconceptions regarding the Cuban summer — or that of Puerto Rico and other Caribbean islands.

First, our summers are really not as hot as those here. Temperatures seldom rise beyond 90, and they usually hold steady in the mid-80s. Then, as opposed to Syracuse where we get two months of summer, in the Caribbean we get two months of winter! And houses are constructed accordingly.

Our traditional houses have many large windows and doors and rooms with high ceilings for the breeze to go through. They yield to a shady patio with fruit trees. The floor is cool ceramic tiles or cement. And the roofs have red adobe tiles that absorb the heavy sun.

Older houses, especially in the villages and cities away from Havana, are often made of wood or brick and have the traditional Spanish central patio. These patios, inherited from Andalusians and Moors, are in the center of the house, and their terraces have hanging plants and some source of running water, usually a fish tank

or small fountain, because the green plants and the water sound are so refreshing.

Newer city apartments have balconies where people sit to catch the ever-present sea breeze. Cuba is long and narrow and the breeze just runs through from 10 in the morning until 5 in the afternoon. With 3,000 kilometers of sea coast dotted with excellent beaches, no Cuban is further than 50 miles from the sea. In summer everybody swims to forget about the heat and just sit in the warm, blue ocean water.

For those in the countryside, there are other ways to deal with the long, hot summer. To work the fields under the noon sun not a pleasant task. You do not want to be working in a cane field during the noon hour! It becomes a real oven. So we adopted the institution of the *siesta*. From 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. the slow summer heat takes over and everyone who can goes home or under a tree. When it cools off, work resumes and continues until dark, around 7 p.m. or 8 p.m.

Diet is also an important way to deal with the summer heat. You definitely do not want a heavy meal, but a light one rich in roots (yucca, malanga, name, jams and potatoes) and fish. Warm-water Caribbean fish are light and easy to digest. And there are also real treats, like the *ajiaco*, a traditional dish that combines roots and meat and will give you energy to go for the entire day.

Then there are the fruit shakes! There are so many familiar light fruits in the Caribbean islands such as guavas, mangoes, bananas, oranges and lemons. But others, just as tasty, we have never seen in Syracuse: guanabana, mamey, ancón, caimito, marañón, just to mention a few. They are delicious in any form, but in a cold shake they can cool you inside for hours.

Finally, because of daytime activities, sometimes you get to forget about the heat. However, it definitely catches you in the early night hours, because there is no way you can go to sleep with it! Still there is still one way to defeat it: the Malecón!

The Malecón is a six-lane avenue that meanders for miles along the Havana seashore. It has a pedestrian walk between three and 12 meters wide. In the summer, thousands of people sit all along it until midnight, when it cools off and one can turn in. The very young skate or just run around; teen-agers walk up and down, just like they do here in the malls. Young lovers seek darker places to be alone, and families and friends gather to chat and socialize.

In pre-Castro days, ice cream and popcorn vendors as well as those peddling local snacks — *churros*, *granizado*, *piruli* and others — would delight the night-watchers. Today, all forms of private enterprise are outlawed in Cuba and the delicious fruits, shakes and refreshments have all but disappeared from the Cuban diet. Either they are no longer grown by the small farmers who cannot sell them in the market, or the government exports them to obtain "hard" currency.

Today, people just sit and talk on porches and in parks, or stroll at nights on the still-beautiful Malecón to get the breeze — and perhaps watch sorrowfully as a young *jinettera* seeks a foreign tourist to exchange her favors for a shopping trip to the tourist store and some coffee, soap, meat and a pair of pantyhose ...

It is always difficult to take the heat, no matter where you are. Just live through it and make the best of it you can...

Romeu, a native of Cuba, is a professor at SUNY Cortland and lives in Syracuse.

COMMENT

NAFTA Will Widen Market, Send Positive Message South

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

During my nine-day visit to Mexico City, on my daily walks down its beautiful main artery, Paseo de la



Romeu

and Mexico.

In addition, we had several discussions on the impact and consequences of NAFTA during our four-day Fulbright orientation program.

The speakers who dealt with the Mexican political process, economy, ecology or even with the education system raised issues somehow connected to it.

On the one hand, Mexico's Republican history includes several foreign wars, invasions, interventions and territorial losses. And this has made Mexicans nationalistic and distrustful of foreigners.

Also, having a lower industrial development and standard of living, Mexicans worry about how their culture, language, family structure and customs will be affected by the faster paced American way of life.

On the other hand, Mexicans feel NAFTA is a beautiful opportunity to continue their extraordinary economic growth, to modernize their society and to better their everyday lives.

In turn, we Americans, with higher salaries and tougher environmental laws, often fear that U.S. entrepreneurs will just walk across the border with our jobs and that we will end up losing more than we could ever obtain from this trade agreement.

However, to accurately assess the possible impact that NAFTA may have on Mexico and the United States, we have to look deeper not only into their history and present situation, but into the international context.

Mexico, with its 90 million people, is just across the Rio Grande. Hence, transportation costs are minimal. In addition, Mexico has shown a degree of political stability rare in Latin America.

Its peaceful presidential successions every six years since 1929 have provided the social and political climate that have converted Mexico into one of the strongest economies in the region.

Mexico's political system is indeed singular. The same party, the PRI — Partido Revolucionario Institucional — has held power since its founding in 1929.

However, several other political parties, including conservatives, socialists and communists, are also active and have newspapers and other media. Mexico's most salient political characteristic is that presidential re-election is forbidden.

As a result, every six years a new team with new ideas comes to power, even if from the same political party. And this has allowed the opportunity for peaceful change.

For example, in the mid-1980s, President Lopez Portillo, who nationalized the private banks, was followed by presidents De La Madrid and Salinas de Gortari.

They not only sold the banks back to private industry, but also hundreds of other former state enterprises that were not doing well. This privatization policy set the strong economic development that present-day Mexico is undergoing.

More recently, starting with the national elections of 1988, opposition parties have gained much political ground in what constitutes a real government effort to open up the system to a more pluralistic society.

Anti-pollution laws also have been passed. And however difficult and slow it may be to implement these changes, it shows a real effort by Mexican authorities to take the country within the parameters of the other two NAFTA members.

Mexico's economy, another singular development, is essentially composed of very energetic small and middle-size enterprises. There

are hundreds of small shops, which constitute a sizable potential consumer base.

But most important, Mexicans lack and want, and are not able to buy, many of the everyday products we take for granted. This is possibly the strongest American incentive in favor of NAFTA.

Few Americans still need a VCR, a color TV or a stereo system. Our American market is almost saturated. However, there are 90 million Mexican consumers who, under NAFTA, will become our natural customers — or will become someone else's if NAFTA doesn't go through.

Of course, to buy these goods, Mexicans need to earn the money. And, of course, some jobs will go there so they can become paying customers. But many more jobs will be created in the United States from the transportation of goods, their production, sales and from the services derived from these new activities.

There is a final political issue to consider here, a global issue. The world is moving into larger economic units. We already have the European Common Market and the Pacific Rim; in the future other blocs will be forming.

In the 19th century the United States had the vision to create a huge nation — market — that developed its present security, economy and might. But for today's standards, it is no longer large enough.

NAFTA will provide that size. Having Mexico in it will not only provide a larger economic base but also send a positive message to our Latin American neighbors south of our border. It also may help deal with some of our illegal immigration problems.

There is no doubt NAFTA poses great challenges to all three countries that are a part of it. But if their leaders and their people are creative enough to work them out together, NAFTA may well prove the best deal of the century for all.

Romeu is an associate professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland.

Our Man in Havana?

Gorbachev Tries to Make Castro Ease Up on the Reins

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

MIKHAIL Gorbachev, the Soviet Communist Party leader, is visiting Havana, Cuba, this week. He is there trying to persuade Fidel Castro to open up his system. That is, trying to convince Castro to implement some sort of *perestroika* in Cuba.

Gorbachev may suggest Castro allow some form of private enterprise, as is currently occurring in the Soviet Union. For example, Castro may allow the farmers to sell their produce in the markets or the plumbers and electricians to work on their own after their daily shift.

But Castro, himself, tried something like this in the early 1980s, just after the political debacle of the Mariel Boatlift, and it didn't work. That is, it worked much too well for some of the enterprising farmers and plumbers who were getting too rich and setting a bad example. Then, Castro simply wrote the whole experiment off and started the current process of "correction of errors," the antithesis of Soviet *perestroika*.

Gorbachev knows of this very well and that Fidel Castro is a tough cookie. In the early 1960s, after Nikita Khrushchev removed the Soviet missiles from Cuba without even consulting Havana, Castro put in jail most of the "Old Guard," the old Cuban Communist Party top bosses. Castro then let the Soviet government know that they were better off putting up with him than risking losing Cuba altogether.

But Castro also knows well that Gorbachev, in turn, is also a very tough cookie and that Gorbachev turned around the Communist Party's political strategy, in spite of the resistance of the conservatives in the Soviet Politburo. Gorbachev is convinced that communism, to remain an issue in the last decade of the 20th century, has to evolve and acquire a new face. Hence, Gorbachev has to persuade Castro to implement, if nothing else, a limited promotional *perestroika*.

But to be fair, Castro's position is very different from Gorbachev's. The new Soviet leader can afford to criticize the errors committed in the past because the perpetrators were others, and they are dead. Castro, in turn, could never do this. He has no one to blame but himself. He has run Cuba as a personal fiefdom for 30 years, with a tight group of friends who are very much alive and constitute the backbone of his political power.

On the other hand, Gorbachev knows perfectly well that Cuba has performed for 30 years three important functions for the Soviet Union.

First, Cuba has been an efficient public relations bureau for Soviet communism in Latin America and the Third World. Through Cuba, the Soviets have

introduced their product to this new market and have obtained footholds in them from time to time.

Second, Cuba has acted as a surrogate for the Soviet Union, both politically and militarily, when it was not convenient for them to act directly. Cuba has been an active member of Third World organizations, supporting the Soviet bloc interests for years. And, for a term, Cuba even presided over the Non-Aligned Movement. If fighting Soviet political battles weren't enough, Cuba also has sent its soldiers (Angola, Ethiopia), where Soviet troops never would have been able to set foot without provoking the military retaliation of the West.

Finally, if things really ever got so bad, Cuba would represent a beachhead behind the enemy lines, or at least a diversionist object to throw at the United States to gain time while fortifying Soviet military positions in the homeland. This provides a valuable bargaining chip in U.S.-Soviet relations.

In exchange for these very tangible services, Cuba has received during 30 years a generous subsidy from the Soviet Union. Some say about \$8 million a day.

Why, then, would Gorbachev risk a collision with his tropical friend?

Precisely because the first and most important function that Cuba performs, that of public relations stunt, is not working at all.

Cuba, under Castro, represents an outdated model at a time when the Hungarians have allowed the organization of restricted independent political parties, when the Polish have created a Senate of freely elected representatives and have recognized the Solidarity trade union, and when even the Soviets have elected a patriarch to their new Parliament.

In a decade when even Latin America countries like Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Peru, Ecuador, and now Paraguay and shortly Chile have moved (or will move) toward a pluralistic form of government, it is inconsistent that Cuba remains a bastion of Stalinism. This will not attract the attention or the interest of Latin American masses. And the image portrayed by Cuba will be much more damaging than beneficial for Soviet propaganda.

Yes, Gorbachev is in Havana trying to make Castro comply with the human rights conventions and trying to liberalize the Cuban economy and the social structures, at least to a minimal level.

Then, has Soviet leader Gorbachev become "Our Man in Havana"? No, he has not. But, maybe in a way, he may very well be.

(Romeu, who lives in Syracuse, is an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland. He and his family lived for two decades under the regime of Fidel Castro.)

Dissimilar Elections

In Paraguay, It Buys Time; in Panama It's a Weapon

By JORGE LUIS ROMEU

TWO apparently similar electoral processes have just taken place in Latin America last week: one in Paraguay and the other in Panama. However similar they may seem at first glimpse, they are radically different in more than one way.

It is true that both Panama and Paraguay have suffered stern authoritarian dictatorships under democratic cover. It is also true that, in both cases, the presidential candidate supported by the government predictably has been expected to win. It is still true that both governments were compelled to organize elections because of internal and international political pressure and economic problems — not their love for democracy. And finally, the prime objective for conducting these elections has been to buy time.

But here is where the similarities end.

If we perceive elections as some sort of innocuous popularity contest where the winner takes all, then both processes are identical. However, if we believe that elections are complex, multi-stage processes with profound consequences, then we can point out the following radical differences between the two:

In Paraguay, Alfredo Stroessner's regime represented a stable (34 years) political system with a powerful and well-organized political base: the Colorado Party. In Panama, by contrast, Gen. Manuel Noriega has governed for less than a decade with a heterogeneous group more interested in short-term material gain than in a long-range political stay.

In Paraguay, Stroessner was deposed by his own followers when he became a burden for the continuity of the system. The Colorado Party is now rapidly trying to evolve in order to survive. It apparently has accepted the principle of power-sharing in a pluralistic democracy and is now willing to give up its monopoly of power not to lose it all later on.

The opposition, apparently, has understood this change in attitude and is willing to play the game to take the country back into the democratic path. Between these two political forces they may achieve it, sparing the nation the blood bath and destruction of an open power struggle.

Hence, the time that the Paraguayan election is currently buying is, hopefully, the necessary one to make the transition to a mutually agreed pluralistic democracy.

In Panama, on the other hand, Noriega doesn't seem to care much about the opposition, its role or a return to formal democracy. A shrewd operator, Noriega has successfully wrapped himself in the national flag, as so many other dictators conventionally do, to obtain some sort of legitimacy and support for his government. The opposition, apparently

overconfident of American support, hasn't been wise enough to find a way out of government for him and his entourage.

Hence, each side seems to be using the electoral process to destroy the other. And the futile time they are currently buying may prove just enough until their next inevitable clash.

How can such a difference exist between such two apparently similar processes?

Maybe because Paraguayans have finally understood there are three stages in an election, and Panamanians haven't.

First, in an election the government recognizes the existence of alternative power groups (the opposition) with valid interests and solutions to the national problems (their platform). Second, these alternative groups are allowed to share their ideas with the nation as a whole (the political campaign). Finally, the election itself permits one of these groups to take charge under two conditions: to hear and take into account what other groups have to say and to relinquish power after a finite period of time.

This political reality, which in our days has been acknowledged by several European and American governments, apparently has been accepted in Paraguay.

In the 1970s, for example, in post-Franco Spain as well as in post-Salazar's Portugal, all political groups accepted pluralism to avoid civil war. The same occurred in Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay in the early 1980s. And the same is taking place in Chile.

At the other end of the political spectrum, in the Eastern European countries, we are starting to observe the same political behavior. In Poland, Solidarity has been legalized and allowed to present candidates in an open election. And in Hungary, restricted political associations have been allowed. Apparently, what wasn't possible for Dubcek during the Spring of Prague in 1968 or for Imre Nagy in Budapest in 1956 is becoming feasible today.

Dictators from the right and from the left, Gen. Andres Rodriguez of Paraguay and Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski from Poland, may finally have realized that to function efficiently as a nation the consent and contribution of all its citizens is required. Noriega, apparently, has failed to grasp this.

Inadvertently amidst these noisy ones, a third Latin American presidential election has taken place this week, too. In Bolivia, for the second time since its return to pluralism in 1985, the citizens went to the polls to select a president in a three-way race: left, center and right.

There is hope. Time is working for democracy, these days. Let's pray for the best.

Romeu, who lives in Syracuse, is an assistant professor of mathematics at the State University College at Cortland. He and his family lived for two decades in Cuba.

SYRACUSE Post-Standard - May 12, 1989.

Cuban Dissenting Faculty Expelled

By Jorge Luis Romeu

During the past 15 months, over 30 faculty members have been expelled from engineering and teacher's colleges in Havana, Cuba. These Cuban educators were fired for signing and peacefully delivering a petition to President Fidel Castro. Their petition requested, among other things, a peaceful opening of Cuban society, compliance with the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the restoration of university autonomy (academic freedom) and democratization of the country (pluralism).

The Human Rights Committee (HRC) of the National Association of Cuban-American Educators (NACAE), which is lobbying for this case with several international organizations, has received letters from two of the expelled professors. They are Ing. Felix A. Bonne Carcasses, a full professor, and Ing. Miguel Morales Acosta, an assistant professor, both of the engineering university Instituto Superior Politecnico Jose Antonio Echevarria.

In an April 5, 1993 letter these faculty members announced that several of the expelled professors have formed a

new organization called Corriente Civica Cubana (Cuban Civic Current - CCC). The CCC is intended to be a civil-rights advocacy group, composed of professional people supporting a peaceful restoration of civil rights in Cuba. They have requested that NACAE help them make their case with American public opinion, especially among similar university and professional people. They want international public opinion to know that they continue to be harassed by the Cuban government, arrested and physically threatened, in order to coerce them to abandon their current peaceful dissenting positions.

In a second letter dated April 10, 1993 to Dr. Eduardo Zayas-Bazan, president of NACAE, the same two faculty members explained that CCC has also been created to help them combat the ostracism to which any Cuban professional is subjected once he or she adopts a civic and (peacefully) critical dissenting position against the current Castro regime.

For many years, as with the rest of the communist countries in the Eastern Bloc, few dissenting voices have been heard from Cuba. The reason is the total government control of the citizen and of all

means of expression. As occurred in the Eastern Bloc, Cuban government control is finally eroding and the hidden but always present dissent is starting to be heard.

With this note, NACAE and CCC are respectfully requesting solidarity from our fellow professionals and educators in operations research and management science for those less fortunate in Cuba. We ask that you dedicate some interest and find out more about this well-known case by requesting information from NACAE, Amnesty International or Americas Watch. We also hope that you raise the issue with your other professional societies and that you write letters of support on behalf of these expelled Cuban faculty to: President Fidel Castro Ruz, Palacio de la Revolucion, Havana, Cuba; or Hon. Fernando Vecino Alegret, Minister of Higher Education, Ministerio de Educacion Superior, Calle 23 esquina F, Havana, Cuba.

You can rest assured that your letters will not be wasted. The Cuban authorities carefully weigh international opinion. Their treatment of dissidents and conscientious objectors will not be the same once it is known that the international community is aware and watching.

Jorge Luis Romeu, professor in the Department of Mathematics, SUNY-Cortland in Cortland, N.Y., is chairman of the Human Rights Committee (HRC) of the National Association of Cuban-American Educators (NACAE).

EDITORIAL

continued from page 6

Now is a most exciting time to be an OR professional. The processes we use in doing our professional business are changing, and we all want ORSA to evolve to the new realities.

In the coming months you are likely to hear a great deal more about new organizational forms for ORSA and TIMS. Any such new form would represent much more than administrative merger; it would herald the creation of a vibrant, technologically state-of-the-art professional organization

for MS/OR people for the 21st Century.

Such a new organization would reach out, beyond its own membership. It would speak to perspective consumers, to opinion makers, to managers and planners. It would facilitate the use of technology to deliver its product, to educate its students, and to bring the fun of the scientific method as applied to important real-world problems to grades K-12.

There are new joint ORSA and TIMS committees currently charged with: (1) assessing evolving information technologies in order to recommend Society

positions and responses, and (2) identifying needs and services of our current and potential members. We will hear from these committees at the Phoenix ORSA/TIMS meeting.

You are our customers. ORSA exists to serve its members. We want to hear from you about how to do it better. Call (617) 253-3604, write or E-mail (rclarson@mit.edu). I will arrange a time and place in Phoenix at the next ORSA/TIMS meeting to speak personally with all of you who contact me about the stimulating issues before us.