

# CUBANEWS

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## Cuba, seeing 2007 foreign arrivals drop, pours cash into tourism infrastructure

BY LARRY LUXNER

Canadian and European tourists keep flocking to Cuba — though the island is clearly beginning to lose some of its luster compared to cheaper Caribbean destinations.

For Americans, however, the communist island still holds enormous forbidden-fruit appeal. The Bush administration has taken drastic efforts to punish U.S. citizens and travel companies that violate Washington's 45-year-old embargo against Cuba — a policy that itself is increasingly being called into question by at least one Democratic presidential candidate and dozens of lawmakers of both parties.

Last year, 2.2 million tourists visited Cuba, down from 2.3 million in 2005. The 3.6% dip in arrivals was the first drop since 9/11, when tourism arrivals fell throughout the Caribbean.

Cuban officials attributed the poor showing to a relatively warm winter in Europe and other factors such as the U.S. embargo, which forced one cruise-ship operator to cancel its Cuba stop-

overs when it was taken over by a U.S. company.

But European and Canadian tour operators complain that Cuba just can't compete against Cancún or the Dominican Republic — especially since 2005, when the Castro regime revalued the Cuban peso by 8%.

"The problem is that Cuba has become an expensive destination," said Philip Peters, vice-president of the Lexington Institute and a veteran Cuba-watcher. "The exchange rate they use for the euro, and especially for the dollar — and the fees for exchanging money — have all combined to raise the cost of tourism in Cuba, and I think it's starting to pinch them."

Peters, who has written several reports on the island's tourism industry, pointed out that "Cuba is competing against places that have better service and more reasonable prices, and they're going to have to deal with that. The novelty begins to wear off at some point, and where they really get hurt is on return visits."

In 2006, tourism generated \$2.4 billion and

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## London-based IISC to be Europe's first institute dedicated to the study of Cuba

BY LARRY LUXNER

Great Britain's International Institute for the Study of Cuba (IISC) officially kicks off its activities Oct. 10 with a lecture by noted French journalist Ignacio Ramonet.

Ramonet is editor of *Le Monde Diplomatique* and author of "Cien Horas con Fidel" (100 Hours With Fidel). The book is to be published in English next month by Allan Lane, an imprint of Penguin Books, as "Fidel Castro: My Life."

"Ignacio's book on Castro has been a huge bestseller in both Cuba and Spain, and is sure to make a huge impact in the English-speaking world," said Stephen Wilkinson, assistant director of IISC. "No person alive has had the privilege of speaking as frankly with the Cuban leader. This will be a tremendous launch for our institute and we are very excited at the prospect."

Ramonet's free lecture is expected to be attended by 150 people, and is the first in a three-part series that also includes lectures by Philip

Peters of the Lexington Institute, whose Nov. 14 speech is entitled "After Castro: An American Perspective," followed by the University of Havana's Luis Alberto Montero-Cabrera, to speak Dec. 12 on "Cuba's Scientific Revolution."

IISC is a nonprofit research and academic institute run by London Metropolitan University. It was established in May and is headed by Wilkinson and executive director Patrick Pietroni.

"Our mission is to make an objective and rigorous appraisal of the Cuban social experience," Wilkinson told *CubaNews* in a phone interview from London. "We feel there may be some lessons to be learned with regard to policy issues such as health-care and education. And we think now is the right time to do this, because of the generational shift going on in Cuba."

Wilkinson said that London Metropolitan University, where IISC is housed, was formed 10 years ago by the merger of two polytechnic

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## Tourism — FROM PAGE 1

was still Cuba's top source of foreign exchange, though in 2007 nickel exports will likely exceed tourism in importance.

The government hasn't said how many tourists have visited Cuba so far this year, but Tourism Minister Manuel Marrero told the state newspaper *Opciones* that "in 2007, for the fourth consecutive year, the number will be greater than 2 million visitors."

According to Cuba's National Statistics Office, hard-currency revenues from tourism have totaled \$12 billion over the last six years.

The country's hotel capacity increased from 39,264 rooms in 2001 to just over 48,000 last year. During that period, more than 80 million overnight stays were reported —



LARRY LUXNER

World-famous bar lures tourists to Habana Vieja.

including 15.6 million in 2006 alone — and the average hotel occupancy rate was 60.7%.

The largest sources of tourism, in descending order, are now Canada, Great Britain, Spain, Italy, Germany, France and Mexico.

Cruise-ship visits have been negligible, however. Several years ago, the Cuban government cancelled a joint venture with an Italian firm to operate a cruise-ship terminal in Habana Vieja, claiming that cruise passengers' expenditures while in port didn't justify the expense of attracting such big ships.

As a result, relatively few cruise vessels call on Cuba — and even fewer will be coming this year, following Miami-based Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines' late 2006 takeover of Pullmantur Cruises.

Spain's Pullmantur had operated the 376-cabin *Holiday Dream* ship, a regular visitor to Havana. Those visits came to an abrupt halt after the RCCL acquisition. The Cuban government claims 230 local jobs and millions of dollars in revenues were lost because an estimated 12,375 tourists were prevented from visiting the island.

### CUBA SPENDS MILLIONS TO REVAMP FACILITIES

Faced with increasing competition from nearby Caribbean vacation destinations, Cuba announced plans in mid-May to spend \$185 million to improve tourist facilities.

The bulk of that money, \$162 million, will be earmarked for improving 200 non-hotel facilities such as golf courses, marinas, yacht clubs and theme parks.

The remaining \$23 million will go to build 50 boutique inns around the island — in addi-

tion to 10 already under construction — and to improve Cuban highways and airports.

In Holguín, Frank País International Airport has doubled capacity and can now handle 1,200 passengers an hour. Airport director David Benitez said this increase in capacity will prevent congestion during peak season, October to March. Heriberto Prieto, first vice-president of Cuba's Civil Aviation Institute, said nearly a dozen new Ilyushin planes were being added to the island's passenger fleet.

Peters said the Castro regime is starting to deal with other concerns as well.

"They're not doing anything about the exchange rate, but foreign airlines were complaining that landing and customs fees, and jet-fuel costs, were way out of line with the rest of the Caribbean, so the Cubans addressed all those problems," he said.

"Cuban tourism officials recognize that if they want to get to the next level in tourism, they need to diversify Cuba as a destination," he said. "They already have the sun-and-sand package tours. Now they must build more golf courses, fix up the hotels and improving the shopping experience."

Peters added: "They've been talking about this for a long time. But when it comes to



LARRY LUXNER

British cruiser Sundream docks in Havana harbor.

investment in Cuba, it's only serious when you see actual dollars being spent and ground being broken."

One example of this is the Monte Barreto hotel project in Havana's upscale Miramar suburb. For years, Leisure Canada Inc. has been talking about the project, though now, the Vancouver-based company says construction will finally begin in December on Phase I, which envisions 280 rooms.

It's the first of three phases that will build out to 737 all-suite units, says J.J. Jennex, Leisure Canada's director of investor relations.

"We are also moving forward at Jibacoa, where master planning of the 5.5-sq-km property remains ongoing," Jennex said in an email to *CubaNews*. "We currently envision five phases with the first phase highlighted by a golf course and a commercial village center. Master planning at Jibacoa will take place throughout the early part of 2008."

### WAITING FOR THE AMERICANS

Another place where money is being spent is Finca Vigia, Ernest Hemingway's estate southeast of Havana. The deteriorating house, where Hemingway lived from 1939 to

1960, was placed on the U.S. National Trust for Historic Preservation's list of most endangered places in 2005.

Work on the restoration probably won't be finished until late 2009 — held up in part by efforts to build a garage to house the novelist's long-lost 1955 Chevrolet convertible.

Tourism numbers won't really take off, however, until the United States permits its citizens to visit Cuba once again.

The Castro regime claims as many as five million Americans would visit the island annually if the travel ban were lifted — which is exactly what Sen. Chris Dodd (D-CT), contender for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination, wants to do.

Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL) doesn't go that far, supporting only travel to Cuba by Cuban-Americans who have family there. Most other Democratic candidates for president — and



LARRY LUXNER

Sign encourages use of euros at Cuban resorts.

all the Republicans — support keeping current U.S. travel restrictions in place until the Castro regime falls.

Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque said Sept. 18 that 85,000 Americans of Cuban origin visited Cuba in 2003 but that the number dropped to 37,000 last year after the Bush administration tightened travel restrictions in 2004. He said 59,000 other U.S. visitors flaunted the embargo and visited last year, down from 115,000 in 2003.

### OFAC TO TRAVELCITY: DON'T DO IT AGAIN

Yet Americans who fly to Cuba without permission are taking big chances — as are the companies that help them get there.

In August, the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control fined online travel company Travelocity \$182,750 for booking 1,458 Cuba trips between 1998 and 2004. This marked the first time the U.S. government has penalized a major online travel service for violating the embargo.

Travelocity spokesman Joel Frey told Reuters the company had unwittingly booked trips to Cuba due to technical problems and had not applied for a license.

"The trips to Cuba were unintentionally permitted to be booked by consumers online because of some technical failures several years ago," Frey said in a statement. "In no way did the company intend to allow bookings for trips to Cuba. The company has fully cooperated with OFAC and implemented corrective measures." □

## POLITICS

# After Raúl speech, Cubans are more critical than ever

BY DOMINGO AMUCHASTEGUI

Something big is taking place in Havana and throughout Cuba today, and experienced foreign correspondents like Marc Frank of Reuters and Mauricio Vicent of Spain's *El País* are keeping a close eye on it.

People all across Cuba are criticizing the socialist experiment, its many shortcomings, the need for diverse market relations, frustrated expectations, absurd policies in economics and other fields, and the erosion of basic social services like public health, education, housing and transportation.

Such criticism is emerging in tens of thousands of public meetings at workplaces, *barrios* and political organizations where Raúl Castro's last July 26th speech is being debated. These discussions have no hidden agendas, restrictions of any sort or bureaucratic arrangements.

It is yet another crucial episode along the road to "*repensar el socialismo cubano*" — to change it, reform it, and adapt it to the pressing needs and demands of the Cuban people after nearly 20 years of extreme hardship.

For many, nevertheless, the predominant tone is not to renounce socialism itself but to promote badly needed changes to make socialism a more viable, efficient, productive and legitimate option.

Such debates are not new at all; they've been going on for over a year. In 2005 — during a speech at the University of Havana — Fidel warned that if the revolution didn't tack-

le the current challenges, it would die because of its own inability to be creative and adapt.

Several weeks later, Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque and Central Bank Chairman Francisco Soberón made similar predictions before the National Assembly.

The most recent symposium — held in early September in Havana under the title of Socialist Transition, and sponsored by the prestigious magazine *Temas* — offered a host of critical presentations, this time not just by ordinary citizens but also by renowned intellectuals such as lawyers, judges, economists, sociologists and young political leaders.

Again and again, speakers questioned the notion of absolute state property, instead advocating individual, family and cooperative property, not just in agriculture but in manufacturing and services as well.

Is this by any chance a gross manipulation by state and Communist Party officials?

No, according to the predominant thinking in Havana and beyond. Moreover, the vast majority of those actively involved in such debates make this process in motion seem like a preamble of the coming changes and reforms, in a drastic modification of existing policies.

It shouldn't be forgotten that in his last public speech, Raúl stressed an urgent need for major changes in concepts and institutions. He didn't elaborate any further, but the statement was extremely unusual, to say the least.

At the Socialist Transition event, former

attorney-general Ramón de la Cruz Ochoa said that "weakness of the institutions is manifest," and that the role of the institutions of justice is to augment and serve as a guarantor "with the necessary autonomy to all citizens of Cuba in the face of any illegality or arbitrariness, regardless of the source," pointing in particular to the role of Poder Popular.

University of Havana philosophy professor Jorge L. Acanda insisted on the role the market must play, whether central or secondary to the system. Renowned sociologist Aurelio Alonso argued that "a mixed economy should be legitimized, including not only foreign investment but national investment as well."

Carlos Lage Codorniu, president of the Federation of University Students and the son of Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage, characterized the situation as a "transformation in the way of thinking and building the Cuban socialist project." The 26-year-old leader emphasized a critical need to "strengthen credibility in institutions and organizations, and their reconversion in real spaces of participation."

If these statements express — as they seem to do effectively — a growing consensus and a preamble of the changes and reforms to take place in the near future, then Cuba's transition to its own form of socialism might be on the right track. □

*Former Cuban intelligence officer Domingo Amuchastegui has lived in Miami since 1994. He writes regularly for CubaNews about politics in Cuba and the South Florida exile community.*

## Official media expose delays in fixing housing, food shortages

Cuba admits that its housing construction program is experiencing serious delays, especially in eastern Cuba, where 40% of the island's planned building projects still haven't begun.

Spanish news agency EFE, quoting state-run weekly *Trabajadores*, reported Sept. 24 that, with barely three months left in the year, about 27% of scheduled construction of 72,000 homes "is not even in the final phase." Provinces experiencing delays in construction are Villa Clara, Camagüey, Las Tunas, Holguín, Granma, Guantánamo and Santiago de Cuba.

Among the causes for the delays, *Trabajadores* cited "insufficient land in [provincial] capitals" for designated construction, and delays in the distribution of materials.

In June, Vice President Carlos Lage critically reviewed the housing program because of the delays and fraud in construction last year. "Nothing justifies fraud or deceit like that which occurred last year, when a number of houses were reported to be finished and they were not," Lage said at that time.

He added that the current delay in building plans for 2007 are not the result of a lack of resources, and he emphasized that there must be "greater effort" exerted in the construction materials industry.

Another problem dragging on the completion of the plan, according to Cuban press reports in recent months, is excessive bureaucracy, about which the official daily *Juventud Rebelde* in June said is "worse than Ulysses' odyssey."

Last year, Cuba reported the construction of 110,000 houses —

the biggest one-year total since Fidel Castro took power in 1959 — although even that fell short of the goal of 150,000 housing units. Official figures indicate Cuba has a 600,000-unit housing shortage.

Cuba's agriculture industry faces similar problems.

In his July 26 speech, Raúl Castro highlighted the need to boost salaries and raise domestic food production to substitute for massive increases in the world price for basic food products Cuba imports.

Besides the rising price of oil, he cited huge leaps in the cost of imported powdered milk and rice. "We face the imperative of making our land produce more," he said.

Yet as David Adams of the *St. Petersburg Times* reports, "how far Cuba is prepared to go in achieving those goals remains the subject of enormous speculation. That would require abandoning, or at least rethinking, some of the rigid socialist egalitarian policies long advocated by Fidel Castro."

Adams says some Cuban economists argue that the island has no option but to accept limited market reforms.

"About 60% of farms are run by the state, but 25% of that land is uncultivated and overrun by the thorny *marabu*. And though cooperative and small private farms account for only 30% of the agricultural land, they produce 60% of the food grown," he wrote.

"Most analysts question whether Raúl Castro is willing to push private farming while his brother is still alive. So, ears pricked up during his speech when he dropped the biggest hint so far of which direction he is leaning. 'To reach these goals, the needed structural and conceptual changes will have to be introduced,' he said."

## POLITICS

# Don't be so quick to dismiss Cuba's upcoming elections

BY DOMINGO AMUCHASTEGUI

As *CubaNews* went to press, photographs and biographies of candidates in Cuba's Oct. 21 local elections were being posted in public places throughout the island's 169 municipalities.

More than 37,000 nominees are competing across Cuba, with between two and eight candidates for each of Cuba's 15,236 voting districts. Voter registration is automatic for all Cubans 16 years and older.

According to the rules, a candidate must receive 50% plus one vote to be elected. If no candidate in a given district gets such a majority on the first round of voting, a second runoff election will take place Oct. 28.

Tomás Amaran Díaz, secretary of Cuba's National Electoral Commission, said the nomination meetings have had an 84% attendance average. He also said that of the candidates chosen to date, 29.2% are women and 20.2% are under 35, figures similar to past elections.

Following elections on the municipal and provincial levels, there will be national elections sometime in early 2008.

The National Assembly is comprised 49% by local and provincial officials, with the remaining 51% consisting of candidates nominated because of their positions within the government, the Cuban Communist Party and other institutions.

In other words, the 49% represents the most democratic body within the National Assembly, validated by direct election, since the other 51% — the "nomenklatura" — are there because of the leadership positions they already hold. But this 51% can be nominated from different precincts or *circunscripciones*, not necessarily corresponding to their place of residence in many cases.

In 1990-91, during the debates leading up to the Fourth Party Congress, this mechanism was strongly criticized in numerous public meetings. Yet it still hasn't been changed.

## ELECTIONS NOT AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY

Many overseas experts tend to dismiss these elections and the Poder Popular itself. But it would be a major blunder to do this.

Reforms and changes to take place in Cuba down the road will have to be channeled through this institution one way or another.

Consider that five years ago, many nomenklatura candidates received a lot fewer votes than they did in previous elections.

Moreover, 11% of the votes cast in those elections came back blank, annulled, with abstentions, etc. — the highest percentage ever. That caused considerable concern within the Cuban leadership, though few observers outside Cuba paid attention to this.

Another perspective also demands attention. For decades, there's been a growing sense of dissatisfaction with Poder Popular in the hearts and minds of ordinary citizens.

Yet instead of offering effective solutions to Cuba's many problems, shortages and hardships, the local delegates and national *diputados* must show up at regular public meetings empty-handed — forced to deliver apologies, excuses and justifications of various sorts.

Even the Communist Party newspaper *Granma*, during the National Assembly's last session, stated that "deputies took advantage of the hearings held yesterday with important government leaders, to stress the people's concerns and dissatisfaction."

These coming elections are not just another ordinary political maneuver, but sort of a barometer, measuring what's going on.

How will the concerns and dissatisfaction of the Cuban people manifest themselves? Will abstention figures grow? Will punishment voting grow? Will government candidates lose even more votes than five years ago?

Or, on the contrary — and as a result of the current winds of change prevailing in Cuba — will the people at large give them greater levels of support? These are important issues that need to be followed carefully.

## CUBANS WONDER WHETHER FIDEL WILL RUN

Another special dimension of the current electoral process is whether or not Fidel Castro will be nominated. This will depend not only on his state of health but also on his ultimate decision whether to retain some form of institutional power.

Fidel has held the presidency of the Council of State since 1976, though he's been Cuba's unchallenged leader since 1959.

"Fidel would have to convince the people

not to be re-elected," said Culture Minister Abel Prieto, in a Sept. 12 article filed by the Associated Press. "Fidel has to stay on top, and even Raúl would totally agree with that."

Castro was re-elected to his sixth term as council president by the National Assembly in March 2003, following direct elections in which 97% of eligible Cubans participated. He still holds that title despite having ceded power to Raúl over a year ago following his emergency intestinal surgery.

"I'm convinced that the immense majority of our people, the sweeping majority, are going to want Fidel to continue as president of the Council of State," Prieto told AP. "I don't know what he would say about the state of his health, and I think it depends a lot on that."

Equally important will be the extent to which that 51% of candidates officially nominated from the top will be replaced.

As Raúl Castro and Carlos Lage have said before, new blood is needed — in particular, blacks, women and younger people.

According to official statistics, 88% of the local assemblies for nominating candidates have been held, and a whopping 76.4% of previously elected delegates were replaced — the highest figure ever.

Most certainly, this is a clear indicator of changes now expected at the national level.

These are some reasons why Cuba's 2007-08 elections are crucial. Deputies elected to the National Assembly for the next five years will be key players in the coming changes. Their role — and their votes — will be enormously important. □

## Cuba: 10% GDP growth, 1.9% unemployment

Alfonso Casanova, an official of Cuba's Ministry of Economy and Planning, predicts Cuba's 2007 GDP will grow by 10% this year.

Casanova told participants at the 15th session of the Cuba-Spain Business Cooperation Committee that "Cuba's economic growth will be determined by structural changes in areas related to the GDP, as well as increasing exports of products and services, energy saving, and geographical re-orientation of foreign trade."

Meanwhile, Cuba claims unemployment of only 1.9% — a rate that's likely exaggerated and impossible to verify independently.

Maria Victoria Coombs, director of employment at the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, said Cuba's challenge is to keep that rate as low as possible without disrupting efficiency and productivity.

"We defend equal opportunity employment regardless of gender or race," she said, noting that 66% of Cuba's eligible workforce

consists of women. Since 1995, more than 1.47 million jobs have been created. However, there's a deficit of workers in the construction sector, threatening future development in this area, said Coombs.

During the late 1990s, self-employment opportunities opened up due to the closing of factories and state-run enterprises hurt by Cuba's economic crisis.

Although economic problems persist, the Castro regime has cracked down on self-employment, slashing by more than half the number of occupations allowed to be pursued by Cuba's so-called *cuentapropistas*.

Not surprisingly, low wages are a big part of the dissatisfaction among those employed in the public sector. The goal of "to each according to his work" is a long way from being achieved, and people who resort to self-employment — which offer much more lucrative rewards — face increasingly bigger obstacles that eventually force them to return to state jobs.

— BY OUR HAVANA CORRESPONDENT

## POLITICAL BRIEFS

### EU TENTATIVELY STUDIES CLOSER TIES WITH CUBA

The European Union held informal exploratory talks with Cuba in late September on resuming closer ties after years of tension over human rights issues, an EU diplomat said.

Reuters reported Sept. 25 that the foreign ministers of EU presidency holder Portugal and Slovenia, next in the EU chair, plus European Development Commissioner Louis Michel, met Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

"It was an informal meeting authorized by the [EU] council to test the waters. No document was signed. The important thing was that the meeting happened at all," the diplomat told Reuters.

The 27-nation EU reached out to Cuba in June, inviting a Cuban delegation to Brussels to explore a thaw in ties on the condition it agreed to discuss human rights in Cuba. Cuba's Foreign Ministry rebuffed the offer, saying talks could only happen when the EU lifts sanctions imposed in 2003.

EU-Cuba relations soured that year after Brussels froze diplomatic contacts with Havana following the arrest of 75 Cuban dissidents in a crackdown. The EU eased restrictions on some lower-level contacts in 2005.

The EU diplomat said the ministers agreed to meet again in early 2008 under Slovenian presidency ahead of a planned EU-Latin America summit.

### TINY NAURU APPEALS TO CUBA FOR HELP

David Adeang, a high-ranking minister from the minuscule South Pacific island nation of Nauru, concluded an official two-day visit to Cuba.

Adeang, Nauru's minister of foreign affairs and commerce, visited Cuba at the behest of his counterpart, Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque.

Adeang headed Nauru's delegation to the first session of the very pompous-sounding "Inter-Governmental Joint Commission for Economic Cooperation Between Nauru and Cuba."

Nauru, located south of the equator, measures only 8 sq miles and is the world's only republic without a capital city. Its 10,000 people got rich on phosphate exports derived from bird droppings but today — with its mines nearly depleted — Nauru faces environmental and financial disaster.

### POLICE BREAK UP PROTEST, ARREST 21 DISSIDENTS

Cuba cracked down on a recent demonstration organized by the island's leading woman dissident.

Martha Beatriz Roque told Agence-France Presse that at least 21 dissidents were detained and prevented from joining the protest outside the Justice Ministry in Havana.

Roque, an economist who's been jailed twice for her opposition to the Castro regime, went to the ministry along with five other protesters to deliver a letter to Justice Minister Maria Esther Reus demanding better treatment for political prisoners.

During the protest, Roque said a crowd of about 100 government supporters gathered across the street to taunt them, calling them "mercenaries" and *gusanos*, everyday insults the government uses for foes of the one-party system.

Soon after "some 15 agents of state security and three women police officers forced me onto a bus," she said. Police then dropped her off at her home.

## “ In their own words ...

"In Cuba, the long rule of a cruel dictator is nearing its end. The Cuban people are ready for their freedom. And as that nation enters a period of transition, the United Nations must insist on free speech, free assembly and, ultimately, free and competitive elections."

— **President Bush**, speaking Sept. 25 before the UN General Assembly.

"It was an embarrassing show, the *delirium tremens* of the world's policeman, the intoxication of imperial power, sprinkled with mediocrity and cynicism."

— **Felipe Pérez Roque**, Cuba's foreign minister, who stormed out of the UN General Assembly after Bush referred to Fidel Castro as a "cruel dictator."

"Those who present themselves as the greatest democracy on Earth are in reality a tyranny, the biggest dictatorship. Bush showed us total disrespect."

— **Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega**, in his speech to the UN General Assembly.

"He is dying, he is dead, he will die the day after tomorrow. Well, here I am."

— **Fidel Castro**, mocking rumors of his death in a Sept. 22 interview on Cuban state TV, following an absence from public view of nearly four months.

"The people in Cuba have to see that socialism is also material. You cannot deny human beings their material needs. There's a need for people to feel that the virtues of the revolution are present in the food on the table."

— **Carlos Lage Codorniu**, 26-year-old student activist and son of Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage, in a Sept. 11 interview with Spanish news agency EFE.

"There is an injustice in this case."

— **Richard Klough**, attorney for five Cuban spies who are asking the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for a new trial. Lawyers for the "Cuban Five" say the June 2001 convictions were based on insufficient evidence.

"Unless the regime changes, our policy will not change. The question is not, when will the U.S. change its policy? The real question is, when will Cuba change its policies? We are prepared to work with Cuba if there is real reform."

— **U.S. Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutiérrez**, speaking Sept. 17 at the Heritage Foundation, in the first of a series of programs on the future of post-Castro Cuba.

"The information was complete: the names of those implicated in the plan; day, time and hour where the assassination could occur; the type of weapon the terrorists had and where they kept their arms; and along with all that, the meeting place of those elements planning the action as well as a brief summary of what had occurred in said meeting."

— **Fidel Castro**, claiming in a Sept. 12 essay in *Granma* that in 1984, Cuba gave U.S. officials information about an extreme right-wing group that was planning to assassinate President Reagan during his planned trip to North Carolina.

"I have read the cases in Florida, and you're going to have a very steep mountain to climb here, and you know it."

— **Circuit Judge Jeri Beth Cohen**, telling state attorneys Sept. 27 they'd have a hard time proving that reuniting a 5-year-old girl with her father — pig farmer Rafael Izquierdo, who wants to take his daughter back to Cuba — would harm her.

"It was a very emotional moment for all of us. We felt powerless."

— **Adlin Sukhwani**, a passenger on a Carnival cruise ship that on Sept. 25 crossed paths with a flimsy inflatable raft filled with Cuban refugees trying to make it to Florida. U.S. Coast Guard officials later returned the migrants to Cuba.

"The dream of every baseball player is to get to the Major Leagues, and I want to be part of the world's best league too."

— **Alexei Ramirez**, 25-year-old top slugger of Cuba's last baseball season, telling Reuters why he defected Sept. 20 while in the Dominican Republic.



**IISC**—FROM PAGE 1

schools; today, it ranks among Britain's largest universities, with 35,000 students.

"Part of the rationale for IISC is to have a site of expertise on Cuba that's located beyond the Washington-Miami-Havana nexus so that it can be as objective as possible," he said. "We feel that there's been a lack of objectivity which affects policy-making. People don't look at Cuba objectively enough."

Wilkinson added that "there is no center like this in Europe, and in fact, outside of Miami there's no center like this anywhere. That's why it's so important to do this."

**'COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT OF GOVERNMENT'**

IISC is, in fact, very similar to the University of Miami's Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies (ICCAS), with one crucial difference: ICCAS receives about \$1 million a year in funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development.

On the contrary, said Wilkinson, "we are completely independent of government. We have set up a foundation called the Cuba Studies Trust that will raise funds for our educational work. We will need millions of dollars over the next three to five years, and we plan to raise quite a large amount of money."

IISC aims to have, by 2010, a fully functioning institute employing a full-time staff of 16, with four sub-units: a policy unit, a research



London Metropolitan University, home of new IISC.

unit, an academic center and a travel and consultancy service.

The policy unit, under the directorship of professor Margaret Blunden, plans to make objective appraisals of Cuban policy in the public interest, and for use by policy-makers and planners around the world.

The research unit will carry out projects in collaboration with the University of Havana and other institutions in Cuba, in the areas of medicine, biochemistry, sports medicine and education.

The academic center will include a master's program in Cuban studies; undergraduate modules in Cuban history, literature and culture; modules and courses for other institutions, and evening courses for adult learners.

Finally, the IISC plans a consultancy and travel unit that will offer "accurate and effective advice and support to businesses and investors seeking to take advantage of opportunities in the Cuban market."

According to the institution's website, "our office in Havana is an essential link that ensures close and immediate communication with the island. For filmmakers, TV producers and journalists, the IISC can help ensure effective results when working in what can be a perplexing and idiosyncratic environment. We can help smooth the application process



IISC's Patrick Pietroni (left) and Stephen Wilkinson.

for visas and provide on-the-ground support for media teams visiting the island."

The IISC also plans on publishing an *International Journal of Cuban Studies* — a peer-reviewed, online and open-access academic journal that will appear three times a year, with articles in English and Spanish.

The journal is to be edited by Pietroni and professor Jean Stubbs of London Metropolitan University, and should begin publication in early 2008.

"It will be online, because we want to make it accessible to everybody, including universities in the Third World that usually can't afford subscriptions," said Wilkinson.

The two men heading IISC have years of Cuba-related experience.

Between 1997 and 2002, Pietroni led delegations of over 100 British doctors to Cuba to undertake bilateral exchanges between each nation's unique health-care system. This culminated in a meeting between the Cuban and British ministers of health. Pietroni has published widely on health matters and has been editor of two international journals.

Wilkinson first visited Cuba in 1986. He has a doctorate in Cuban literature and has written numerous articles on such issues as the history of US-Cuba relations, Cuban attitudes towards homosexuals and the nature of the Cuban state.

Among other things, Wilkinson has contributed to the Economist Intelligence Unit's reports on Cuba, and has consulted on several TV programs about the island, most recently Channel 4's documentary "638 Ways to Kill Castro." Last year, Wilkinson's book "Detective Fiction in Cuban Society and Culture" was published by Peter Lang.

Wilkinson said that for now, it costs nothing to join IISC.

"You can sign up and subscribe to the mailing list for free," he told *CubaNews*. "Eventually, as we progress, there may be a form of associate membership where we ask people to pay. But a present, we want to be as accessible as possible." □

*Details: Dr. Stephen Wilkinson, Assistant Director, International Institute for the Study of Cuba, Room #AB2-22, Tower Bldg, London Metropolitan University, 166-220 Holloway Road, London N7 8DB, Great Britain. Tel: +44 20 7133-2405. Email: admin@cubastudies.org. URL: www.cubastudies.org.*

## Cuba says embargo has cost it \$89 billion

Washington's 45-year-old embargo has cost Cuba more than \$89 billion to date, claims the Castro government in a 56-page booklet presented to the UN General Assembly.

Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque said the controversial U.S. policy caused \$3 billion in losses over the past year alone to the Cuban economy, which had a 2006 GDP of around \$40 billion, according to the CIA World Factbook.

The U.S. embargo "has reached levels of schizophrenia and made the last year notable for the ferocious and cruel way the blockade has been applied," Perez Roque told reporters. The Bush administration, he said, is bent on "persecuting Cuban interests and attempting to beat our people into submission with hunger and disease."

Havana's report said U.S. patents and other provisions of the embargo prevent it from purchasing current medical technologies, pesticides and even materials for blind children because Braille products are produced primarily in the United States.

Every year, the Cuban government calls

on the UN General Assembly to condemn the embargo; nearly every country on Earth supports that resolution, with the notable exceptions of the United States, Israel and a handful of tiny Pacific islands such as Palau and Micronesia.

Occasionally, other nations like Uzbekistan and Albania have sided with the United States, but their numbers are dwindling.

Despite the harshness of the embargo, recent exemptions to Washington's 45-year-old policy have made the United States one of Cuba's top suppliers of imported food.

According to U.S. Commerce Department statistics, about \$141 million worth of food products were exported from the U.S. to Cuba in the first five months of 2007.

"Cuba is good business for America," said Daniel Erikson, an expert with Washington-based Inter-American Dialogue.

Since 2003, food sales to Cuba have regularly exceeded \$300 million annually. In 2006, Cuban state purchasing agency Alimport bought from U.S. companies \$343 million worth of wheat, corn, rice, lentils, soybeans, chicken, pork and powdered milk.

**FOREIGN INVESTMENT**

# Amid business worries, Spain resumes ties with Cuba

BY OUR HAVANA CORRESPONDENT

Madrid and Havana have established a Spanish-Cuban Joint Committee that resumes Spain's cooperation projects on the island — projects that had been interrupted for four years in response to European Union sanctions against the Castro regime.

The agreement comes as Spanish business executives worry that blocked official credits to Cuba are hurting their business deals on the island — especially in the face of increasing competition from Venezuelan and Chinese investors.

Leire Pajin, Spain's international cooperation minister, said after the Sept. 29 signing ceremony in Havana that the deal includes support for small business, the environment, food security and joint efforts in Haiti and other countries. He declined to specify how much aid Cuba would receive in 2008 — the first year of the agreement — because some projects are still in the planning stages.

"We are going to resume cooperation," said Cuba's minister of foreign investment and economic cooperation, Marta Lomas. "The challenge is to demonstrate to other European countries that we can work together based on respect and equality."

Spanish news agency EFE said talks on the committee had been taking place since May. The committee will lay the foundation for cooperation in Cuba for the next four years, a similar period to that set with other countries.

At the European Council meeting in June, Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos tried to postpone the elimination of EU measures. Spain has ignored those measures as well as a provision that says that "every time a delegation visits Cuba, it must meet the government, but also the dissidents."

Spain's contribution in Cuba was suspended in June 2003 after the EU stepped up its protests against the Castro regime following the conviction of 75 dissidents and the execution of three ferry hijackers.

Those measures did not affect humanitarian aid, but the Cuban government rejected it. The April visit by Moratinos — who was accompanied by Pajin and Spain's secretary of state for Iberoamerica, Trinidad Jiménez, was the first by an EU foreign minister since 2003.

**SOLVING THE DEBT PROBLEM**

Spain's new policy toward Cuba under Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero includes the search for a solution to the problem of Cuban debt, currently estimated at 1.72 billion euros (\$2.4 billion).

In 2006, bilateral trade came to 769 billion euros (\$1.08 billion), with Spanish exports to Cuba totaling 629 million euros (\$887 million) and imports from Cuba totaling 139 million euros (\$196 million). That gave Spain a trade surplus of 490 million euros (\$691 million).

This makes Spain Cuba's No. 3 trade and investment partner after Venezuela and China.

But Javier Gomez Navarro, president of the Superior Council of Spanish Chambers of Commerce, urged solutions from his own government to unblock credits and increase investment in Cuba, to prevent Spain from losing out to Germany and the United States as suppliers to the island.

Speaking at a Sept. 29 meeting of the Spanish-Cuban Council on Business Cooperation at Havana's Hotel Nacional, Gomez Navarro urged Cuban authorities to help out by using accumulated debt with Spain to generate new investments for which many formulas exist.

Total Spanish investment in Cuba is esti-

mated at 850 million euros (\$1.2 billion), making the island Spain's third largest partner in Latin America after Argentina and Mexico.

Spain is still the top investor in Cuba — both in number of projects and amount of investment — followed closely by Canada and Italy.

Spain's most important investment lie in the tourism sector, where Spanish companies led by Grupo Sol Meliá account for nine of the 12 foreign companies in that sector.

**FIDEL SAYS AZNAR PUSHED U.S. TO BOMB SERBIA**

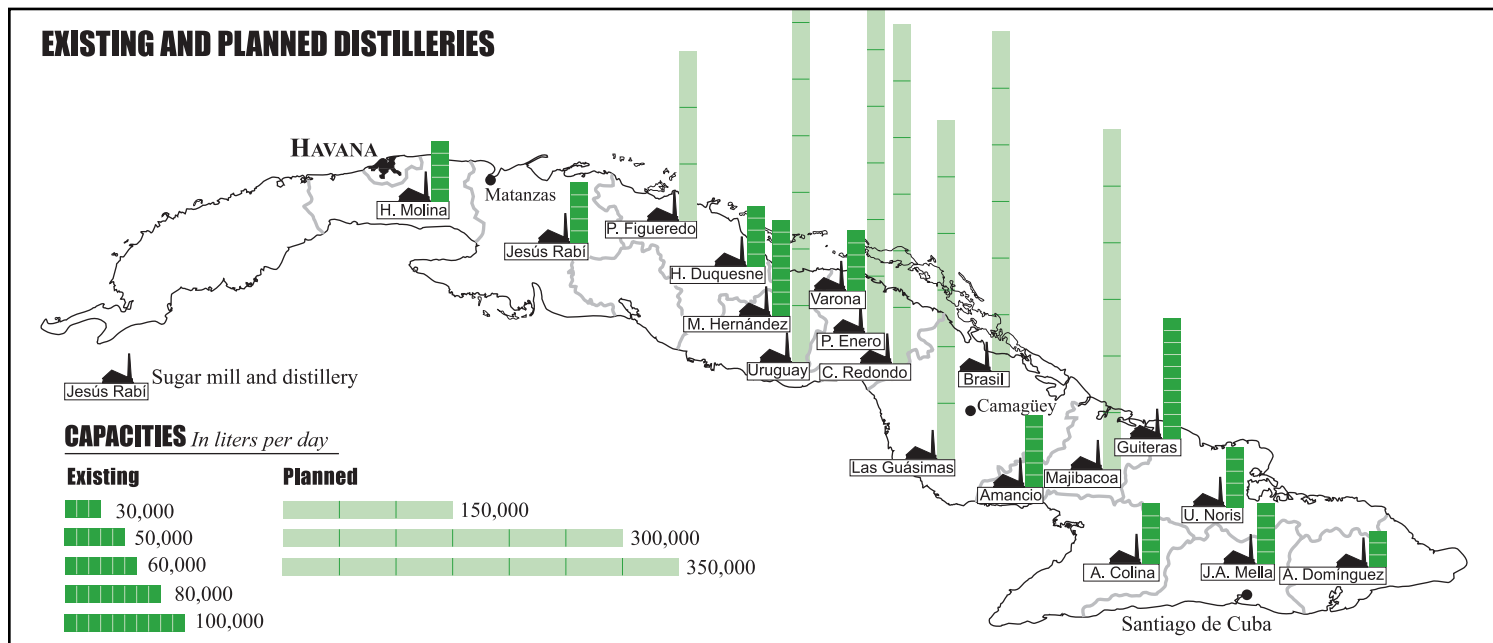
Meanwhile, as ties between the Zapatero government and Cuba return to normal, Fidel Castro has accused Zapatero's predecessor, José María Aznar, of urging former President Clinton to bomb Serbian media during NATO's 1999 bombing campaign.

The official *Juventud Rebelde* newspaper on Sept. 30 published what Fidel said was a transcript of an Aznar conversation about strategy to force the Serbs to stop attacking ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

He says Aznar discusses the possibility of a ground war if NATO's bombing campaign fails, urging a stepped-up air campaign. "My idea is that to win this war communications must be cut between the Belgrade government and the people. Its vital to cut all Serbian communications, radio, television and telephone," he is quoted as saying.

Castro didn't explain how or when he got his hands on the transcript, and does not identify the U.S. official or publish the U.S. official's part of the conversation.

Spain's ties with Cuba reached their lowest point ever under Aznar, whose Popular Party remains opposed to Zapatero's efforts to reach out to Havana as long as Fidel is in power. □



The above map shows how Cuba plans to boost ethanol production from sugar. For more information, refer to the September 2007 issue of *CubaNews*, page 4.

## NEWSMAKERS

# Peter Kornbluh makes career of exposing old secrets

BY ANA RADELAT

**P**eter Kornbluh has spent his life prying secrets from the U.S. government — and so far, he's had plenty of success.

Kornbluh is director of the Cuba Documentation Project at the National Security Archive, a Washington-based nonprofit group. For years, he's specialized in the U.S. relationship with Latin America — especially Cuba, Chile and Nicaragua.

Much of Kornbluh's research is done by ferreting out state secrets, usually through Freedom of Information Act requests.

"I FOIA all the time. That's what I spend all my time doing," Kornbluh told *CubaNews* in a recent interview.

His tenacity usually pays off.

In 2000, he wrested once-classified sections of a report commissioned by President Kennedy on the botched paramilitary 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. The documents show that the commission members who wrote the report — a panel that included Gen. Maxwell Taylor, former Attorney General Robert Kennedy and former intelligence chief Allen Foster Dulles — were highly critical of the operation to overthrow Fidel Castro.

They determined that planning the Bay of Pigs invasion as a covert CIA operation should have been recognized as a mistake as early as November 1960, five months before it actually took place.

Kornbluh has also turned up key documents and tapes that reveal Fidel Castro's complicated relationship with JFK — as well as attempts to set up clandestine meetings and secret efforts at rapprochement.

## NOT THE NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY

Unfortunately, the National Security Archive is frequently confused with the top-secret National Security Agency, which has a vastly different objective. That's why Kornbluh prefers not to use the abbreviation NSA to describe where he works.

"Sometimes in Latin America, people hear our name and think we're the CIA library or a member of the national security bureaucracy," he said, "but we're certainly not that."

The National Security Archive was founded in 1985 by former *Washington Post* reporter Scott Armstrong. Kornbluh, 51, joined the institution a year later.

"Armstrong wanted to create an institutional memory in Washington," Kornbluh said. "Journalists and politicians can come here and have declassified documents at their fingertips."

The archive employs some 25 people and is headquartered at George Washington University — which happens to be exactly where Kornbluh was born — though it receives no funding from that institution.

Rather, it relies on financial support from foundations and a variety of media-related in-

stitutions that advocate access to public information. The archive also derives income from the sale of digitized subscriptions to its document collections.

"We go around the world to get the full picture from various archives," Kornbluh told us. "There was a period of time after the collapse of the USSR where it was possible to get access to Soviet archives, and in the former Soviet-bloc countries as well. But as you get into more recent times, it's harder, of course."

as the historical foundation for a 40th anniversary conference in Havana on the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

In 1988, he obtained a storage list of thousands of documents relevant to the history of that crisis. Those included documents pertaining to a U.S. sabotage campaign known as Operation Mongoose, secret letters between Kennedy and former Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev that ended the crisis in fall of 1962. The list indicated where in the State



Peter Kornbluh visits Havana during a 1999 mission to study US-Cuba counter-narcotics collaboration.

In 1997, on the 30th anniversary of Che Guevara's death, Kornbluh released a selection of key CIA, State Department and Pentagon documents relating to the guerrilla leader's 1967 assassination in Bolivia.

And in 2001, he organized a 40th anniversary conference on the Bay of Pigs in Havana. Several former CIA agents attended the reunion, prompting Kornbluh to remark that "history can become a common meeting ground for even the worst of enemies."

## FREQUENT VISITOR TO CUBA

To Kornbluh, U.S. and Cuban history has been long entwined, usually painfully.

"In the 1800s, there were two efforts by the United States to annex Cuba," he said. "It's a country whose historical weight in the region dramatically exceeds its geographic size."

Kornbluh, who's been to Cuba more than 25 times, grew up in Ann Arbor, Mich., where both his parents were professors in labor relations. He earned his undergraduate degree in Latin American studies at Brandeis University, and in 1979 returned to Washington, where he got a master's degree in international relations from GWU.

Some of Kornbluh's early research served

Department the files could be found.

Kornbluh's group used that list to file dozens of FOIAs for more than 10,000 pages of still-secret records. Eventually all the documents were released, after the archive went to court to force the CIA to declassify records that the agency declared could still be "blueprints" for future operations against Cuba.

## FOIA PROCESS REQUIRES LOTS OF PATIENCE

Kornbluh has also discovered secret plans for "beisbol diplomacy" in 1975.

Hopes for a game between Cuban and American players were fostered by former baseball commissioner Bowie Kuhn and several U.S. officials. One supporter, former assistant secretary of state William Rogers, argued to his boss, Henry Kissinger, that a bilateral baseball game might be as successful as the "ping pong" diplomacy that opened the door to China. But Kissinger nixed the plan.

"I did have a major coup 10 years ago, when I got the inspector general's secret report on the Bay of Pigs declassified, and we got a huge amount of press on that," he said.

Kornbluh described the National Security Archive as "the nation's leading nonprofit research facility specializing in the declassifica-

tion of U.S. documents, and the leading international proponent of FOIA laws and access to information.”

Kornbluh said response time varies from one agency to the next. “The CIA takes a whole lot longer to respond than the Federal Aviation Administration,” he quipped. “It’s a multi-year process. I often have to wait seven to nine years just from the State Department.”

He added: “I’ve had discussions with Cuban officials about getting greater access to their archives, not only for me but for their own citizens as well.”

And the scholar continues to dig.

In May, he released documents describing new links between Cuban exile Luis Posada Carriles and the 1976 bombing of a Cubana

Miami, a Democratic Party-controlled Congress and an evolving post-Castro era in Cuba may provide the international and domestic circumstances to move forward toward more normal interaction,” he said.

#### BOOK TO CHRONICLE US-CUBA TIES SINCE 1959

Kornbluh is currently working on a book marking the 50th anniversary of the Castro era, tentatively to be called “The United States and Cuba: 50 Years of Relations with the Cuban Revolution.”

“Since the 50th anniversary of the revolution will become a focal point for debate over its legacy as well as over the direction of U.S. policy, we are compiling a major indexed col-

list in Latin American politics at American University, Kornbluh said he hopes the book “will put that history under one cover.”

To do so, the two scholars are collecting some 1,500 records from the vaults of the U.S. government and other countries that have dealt with Cuba over the years.

“If you rely only on U.S. documents, you end up with what I call informational imperialism,” he told *CubaNews*. “You have only one side of what is often a multilateral, or at least a bilateral, story. So in the case of the Bay of Pigs, you had a situation where until the Cubans started releasing a number of their documents, instead of the victor telling the story, it was basically the loser telling the story.

“And in the case of the Cuban Missile Crisis, this wasn’t a one-sided affair. In addition to the United States, Russia and Cuba itself, all the other countries including Canada and Great Britain were players in one way or another. You needed to get the full picture.”

#### THE CIA’S FAMILY JEWELS

The National Security Archive’s latest coup was the release in June of about 700 pages of declassified CIA documents detailing illegal covert operations going back to the 1960s.

Known as the “family jewels,” the file was drawn from the memories of CIA officers who responded to inquiries from White House and congressional investigative panels in 1973.

While former CIA Director William Colby revealed in 1975 that the documents detailed assassination plots against Fidel Castro and other foreign leaders and spying on American citizens — and while congressional panels spent years amplifying the documents — they had never been released to the public.

Kornbluh said his archive filed a FOIA request for the documents 15 years ago and finally received the documents because the CIA wanted to avoid a court fight over their release. He said the secret missions detailed in the family jewels “ranged from the cockamamie to quite sinister.”

The very first case in the documents involved several failed attempts to poison Castro with special pills that were supposed to take three days to act — so that all traces of the poison would be eliminated from Fidel by the time he died.

The CIA recruited ex-FBI agent Robert Maheu, who was a top aide to billionaire Howard Hughes in Las Vegas, to approach mobster Johnny Roselli and ask the gangster to help in the plot. Several people failed in their attempts to place the pills in Castro’s food. The plan was dropped after the Bay of Pigs invasion, but other clandestine U.S. plots against Castro’s life continued.

Although the family jewel documents are revealing, Kornbluh is more concerned about what’s *not* there. The opening pages of the report — which likely discussed Castro assassination plots — are all blacked out. So are many more in the report, while other pages are heavily redacted.

“Nobody knows what’s missing,” said the patient scholar.

Leave it to Kornbluh to eventually find out. □

*“We go around the world to get the full picture from various archives. There was a period of time after the collapse of the USSR when it was possible to get access to Soviet archives ... But as you get into more recent times, it’s harder, of course.”*

— PETER KORNBLUH, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL SECURITY ARCHIVE’S CUBA DOCUMENTATION PROJECT

Airlines flight that killed 73 people. Kornbluh said the information in the documents pressured U.S. authorities to arrest Posada, who was later cleared of charges of lying to U.S. immigration officials.

Yet Kornbluh believes the end of the Bush administration will lead to a whole re-examination of the relationship between Washington and Havana.

“A new U.S. president, changing opinion in

lection of declassified documents spanning the last five decades,” he said.

Although the history of U.S.-Cuba relations “is dominated by examples of U.S. aggression,” he said, there’s also an “untold story” of efforts at promoting dialogue and negotiation between the two. He said those efforts began with Kennedy and continued through the two terms of the Clinton administration.

Working with William LeoGrande, a special-

## Cuba seeks to toss Dell out the Window

Cuban authorities are preparing to quit the Windows operating system and use the GNU/Linux free software instead, thus avoiding any sanctions for using Windows by its owner, Microsoft Corp.

According to a Sept. 15 report in *Cubanow*, over 3,800 technicians have been trained in Linux. In Ciego de Avila province alone, 600 people are taking intensive four-month courses to learn how to use Linux and replace the Windows operating system.

The move is apparently aimed at breaking Cuba’s dependence on programs that are under the control of U.S. companies.

It also anticipates any claims by the patent’s owners for the use of this system in Cuba, which cannot be paid because of the U.S. embargo, among other reasons.

Linux was developed in 1991 as an alternative to the Windows program created by Microsoft. It provides users with the freedom to access its source codes and to modify them, thus enhancing the privacy of information. And it’s all free of charge.

“Among other advantages, it allows compatibility with the equipment we have in the

country and its immunity to the majority of the computer viruses,” said *Cubanow*.

As Cuba prepares to dump Windows, one of the world’s top computer makers appears to be in a Cuba-related pickle of its own.

A group of Brazilian physicists has launched a campaign among the country’s academic community to boycott the Brazilian subsidiary of PC maker Dell. The campaign follows Dell’s demand that its products not be handed over to citizens of five countries including Cuba.

According to the daily paper *Folha de São Paulo*, Brazilian nuclear physicist Paulo Gomes of Federal Fluminense University tried to purchase two computers for his laboratory in mid-September. He was asked to sign a document vowing not to use them in the production of weapons of mass destruction and not to hand them over to citizens of countries hostile to the United States.

“We will not transfer, export or re-export, directly or indirectly, any product(s) acquired from Dell to Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, Syria, or any nationals thereof, or to

See *Dell*, page 15

## US-CUBA RELATIONS

# Revived AmCham Cuba to stress business, not politics

BY LARRY LUXNER

Someday, in the not-too-distant future, U.S. multinationals will once again be doing business in Cuba — and AmCham wants to be ready for that day.

With Fidel Castro's inevitable passing in mind, the American Chamber of Commerce of Cuba in the United States has decided to re-emerge from its long slumber.

"This is an opportune time for discussion about change in Cuba," said the organization's acting executive director, Carol de Graffenreid. She cites "the turnover of the Cuban government to Raúl and the increased interest in starting a relationship with Cuba with the next administration — whoever that may be" as key factors behind AmCham's imminent revival.

AmCham's long-time chairman, Ed Bartholomew, said the group has maintained its Washington office even though it's been dormant for the past three or four years.

"We entered a period in which the relationship between Cuba and the United States have been on hold, from the standpoint of both governments," he told *CubaNews*. "AmCham took a back seat to wait for more positive developments. Now that there's a change in the environment, our intent is to have AmCham gradually become more active while positioning itself to play a long-standing role in facilitating involvement by U.S. companies."

## A LONG AND COLORFUL HISTORY

AmCham Cuba was founded in the late 1950s by Clarence Moore, publisher of the *Times of Havana*. After Castro came to power in 1959, the organization became an AmCham in exile, regrouping in Florida in 1960 under the direction of both Moore and Ken Crosby, an executive with Merrill Lynch.

Among its nine listed purposes and objectives, this AmCham in exile aimed "to advo-

cate to governments and private organizations and individuals the adoption and maintenance of the principles of democracy and free enterprise."

In 1961, the chamber was moved from Miami to New York, but reinstated in Florida in 1979. At its height, AmCham Cuba had well over 50 active corporate members.

In 2003, when Crosby died at 87, companies listed on the AmCham board of directors included Marriott, BellSouth, Chiquita Brands International, Quantum Financial Advisors, Fluor Daniel, Goya Foods and the law firm of Porter Wright.

Bartholomew, retired director of international management consulting at Ernst & Young, said AmCham Cuba was always recognized by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in exile. He said it'll return to Cuba as soon as possible — though it will not serve as a mouthpiece for either Washington or Havana.

"We are a business organization, not a political group. We do not advocate any particular political agenda," he said.

"Two things make us different: We represent only American companies, and we do not have special relationships either with the U.S. government or with the government of Cuba. If you know what AmChams do in all the countries where AmChams exist, that's our model," said Bartholomew, who has been active in overseas AmChams from Bahrain to the Philippines.

He said AmCham Cuba has maintained its Washington office through the generosity of its vice-president, Jon Utley, and that the organization would continue to keep Miami attorney Carlos Porro as its Florida-based liaison.

"What we want is to move towards being active in Washington and Miami, and mobilizing the interest of those companies that want to do business in Cuba when conditions permit," he said.

## LUNCHEON SPEAKERS AND A FREE SUBSCRIPTION

De Graffenreid, whose professional life has included careers in microbiology, psychology and venture-capital finance, is currently president of DDC Inc., a consulting firm that's set up a joint venture in Ukraine.

In 1998, she went on a month-long medical mission to Cuba, and has been fascinated with the island and its people ever since.

"We're not interested in fighting any political wars," she said. "This will not be an organization for political reform. Rather, we want to

put people engaged in the business marketplace in touch with each other and with the opportunities that will arise in Cuba."

Dues for corporations and individual memberships haven't yet been announced, though corporate membership in AmCham Cuba will include a free subscription to *CubaNews* — as it did in the past. AmCham also plans to revive its series of monthly luncheon speakers.



EDGAR MATIAS

This is what the once-elegant American Club along Havana's Prado — where AmCham Cuba used to hold its meetings — looks like today. Below, clipping from an American Club bulletin dated Sept. 30, 1956.



"It's going to be business-oriented, though we have no plans to lobby or advocate any particular position" Bartholomew said. "Right now, conditions permit companies to export food to Cuba on a cash-only basis. We're quite prepared to carry their water, but there will come a day when the other side of the market comes into play."

Asked what position, if any, AmCham Cuba might take with regard to U.S. companies whose properties were expropriated by the Castro regime and now have outstanding claims against Havana, Bartholomew said: "We would be guided by the practices of AmChams around the world, and at this point in time, we haven't studied it enough to know how we would react if this issue came up." □

Details: Carol de Graffenreid, Acting Executive Director, AmCham Cuba, 6263 Soft Shade Way, Columbia, MD 21045. Tel: (410) 730-7027. Email: rodricks@comcast.net.

Or: Ed Bartholomew, Chairman, AmCham Cuba, 3615 Glebe Road, Arlington, VA 22207. Tel: (703) 538-9871. Email: ebartholom@aol.

## BOOKSHELF

# Five new books examine Cuba's past, present and future

Periodically, *CubaNews* offers glimpses and reviews of books we think will interest our readers. This month, we present five new books; one is a look at Fidel Castro's early years, the next is an analysis of U.S. laws that restrict Cuban-American travel to the island, the third deals with post-Castro transition, and the last two are nostalgic novels.

## THE BOYS FROM DOLORES

The Colegio de Dolores was a small, select Jesuit institution located in Santiago de Cuba. It was a school that for decades offered the sons of Cuba's most affluent and ambitious families an elite, rigorous education, preparing them for lives of achievement and leadership.

And it was here in the 1940s, among the school's 238 elite students, that one could find the three Castro brothers — Ramón, Fidel and Raúl.

While Fidel's political awareness and desire for power would begin to shape in the halls and classrooms of Dolores, for most of his classmates, a different idealistic dream of Cuba would be born — one that would bind them forever in exile.

By unearthing the stories of *"The Boys From Dolores"* (Pantheon Books; ISBN: 978-0-375-42283-6; \$26.95) Patrick Symmes presents a unique work of investigative history. In its 384 pages, he recreates not only the birth of Castro's Cuba, but the dream of a Cuba that no longer exists.

Castro's path would dramatically alter the lives and fates of his classmates, and it is through their stories and voices that the emotional and psychological affects of dislocation and exile come vividly to life. Symmes' remarkable work also succeeds in capturing the political and social complexities and contradictions of Cuba.

"Symmes, whose *Chasing Che* retraced Che Guevara's transformational 1952 motorcycle trip through Latin America, writes a history of the Cuban revolution that also explores the qualities that define what it is to be Cuban," said *Publishers Weekly*.

Adds *The Times of London*: "Arresting, idiosyncratic, and utterly engaging, this is a book as unusual and interesting as Cuba itself . . . Deftly done . . . Fascinating . . . Symmes tells the story with alacrity and verve."

Symmes has made over a dozen trips to Cuba in the last decade; his understanding of Cuban society is said to be unrivaled among U.S. journalists.

*Details: Liz Calamari, Publicity Director, Pantheon/Schocken Books, 1745 Broadway,*

*21st Fl., New York, NY 10019. Tel: (212) 572-2565. Email: ecalamari@randomhouse.com.*

## LOVE, LOSS AND LONGING

U.S. travel policy has separated Cuban-Americans from their families on the island for nearly 50 years, but new regulations put in place in 2004 reached a new height of cruelty for the Cuban-American community. In 2004, the Bush Administration reduced the number of times exiles are permitted to visit their families in Cuba from once every year to once every three years, with no exception for family emergencies.

The new restrictions also narrowly redefined family to include only grandparents, parents, siblings, and children; other relatives are no longer considered "family."

The book, *"Love, Loss and Longing: The Impact of U.S. Travel Policy on Cuban-American Families,"* is a joint publication of the Latin America Working Group and the Washington Office on Latin America, based on a photo exhibit that has toured the country.

The photo exhibit's showing at Tinta y Café in the heart of Miami's Little Havana illustrated that most Cuban-Americans want to see change in U.S. policy towards the island.

A 2007 Florida International University poll of Cuban Americans in South Florida found that 64% favor lifting the current restrictions on family travel and returning to the pre-2004 regulations; 65% support beginning dialogue with the island; and 55% support allowing unrestricted travel to the island.

*Details: Claire Rodriguez, Latin American Working Group, 110 Maryland Ave., NE, Box 15, Washington, DC 20002. Tel: (202) 546-7010. Email: crodriguez@lawg.org.*

## LOOKING FORWARD

In *"Looking Forward: Comparative Perspectives on Cuba's Transition,"* Marifeli Pérez-Stable and her colleagues imagine Cuba's future after the "poof moment" — Jorge I. Domínguez's vivid phrase — when the current regime will no longer exist.

Marifeli Pérez-Stable is professor of sociology and anthropology at Florida International University and vice president for democratic governance at Inter-American Dialogue. She is also the author and editor of a number of books including *"The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy."*

Written in an accessible style that will appeal to all interested readers, this 360-page volume (ISBN 10: 0-268-03891-0; price \$27.00) does not try to predict how and when the Castro regime will end, but instead considers the possible consequences of change.

Each chapter — prepared by an expert in the field — takes up a basic issue: politics, the military, the legal system, civil society, gender, race, economic transition strategies, social policy and social welfare, corruption, the diaspora, memory, ideology and culture,

and U.S.-Cuba relations.

The author of each chapter considers three questions: How have other new democracies handled the basic issue in question? How might Cuba's unique conditions affect this area in transition? And finally, what are the likely outcomes and alternatives for a Cuba in transition?

Contributors include Gustavo Arnavat, Jorge I. Domínguez, Daniel P. Erikson, Damián J. Fernández, Alejandro de la Fuente, Mala Htun, William M. LeoGrande, Carmelo Mesa-Lago, Lisandro Pérez, Jorge F. Pérez-López, Marifeli Pérez-Stable and Rafael Rojas.

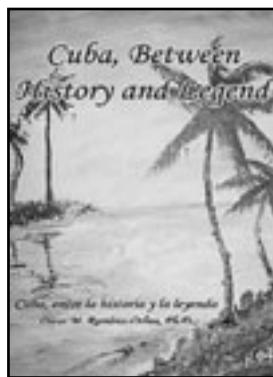
*Details: University of Notre Dame Press, 310 Flanner Hall, Notre Dame, IN 46556. Tel: (574) 631-6346. Fax: (574) 631-8148. Email: undpress.1@nd.edu.*

## CUBA, I REMEMBER YOU

Writer Oscar Orbea has written two new bilingual books on Cuba. The first is *"Cuba, Between History and Legend"* (\$17.95), which he says contains "tales of romance, adventure, death, pirates, witchcraft, passion and more."

The second is *"Cuba, I Remember You"* (\$19.95) — "stories of family, love, persecution, humor, nostalgia and freedom." Both books can be ordered for \$29.95.

Orbea, born in Camagüey in 1955, emigrated with his family to the U.S. in 1966 after finishing elementary school in Cuba. He graduated *summa cum laude*



from Loyola-Marymount University in Los Angeles with a double major in Spanish and French and a minor in Italian.

Orbea lived in Italy for a time before returning to the United States and getting his doctorate of philosophy in romance languages and literature from UCLA.

*Details: Alhambra Books, PO Box 2145, Antioch, CA 94509. Tel: (925) 978-2727.*

"Bookshelf" is an occasional feature of *CubaNews*. If you would like your book, report, novel or scholarly publication to be featured in an upcoming issue, please email a press release to [larry@cubanews.com](mailto:larry@cubanews.com).

## BUSINESS BRIEFS

### CUBAN-RUSSIAN TRADE EXPECTED TO JUMP 60%

Trade between Cuba and Russia will grow this year by 60% compared to 2006, according to a forecast made here on Sept. 19 by officials of Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Trade, reports the Itar-Tass news agency.

Alejandro Mustellier, co-chairman of the Cuba-Russia Business Council, said that with a view to better developing the Russian market, "we continue to expand the knowledge of our entrepreneurs about it." He pointed to the necessity of finding new spheres where relations between the two countries' business executives can develop successfully.

According to Cuban government statistics, bilateral trade reached \$300 million in 2006; however, the potential exists for much more trade, mainly in transportation, pharmaceuticals, tourism and telecom.

The Cuba-Russia Business Council, chaired from the Russian side by Ara Abramyan, was established in 2005 with 66 companies; today, there are now over 80 corporate members.

In related news, Russian oil major Lukoil is considering building an oil refinery in Cuba jointly with Venezuelan state oil and gas company PDVSA, the Tass news agency reported Sept. 18. No other details were provided during the Russian-Venezuelan business forum in Moscow, which was addressed by Lukoil's vice-president, Andrei Kuzyayev.

### SHOPPING MALL OPENS VIRTUAL STORE

Havana's Plaza Carlos III shopping mall has opened a virtual store for its clients at [www.carlostercero.ca](http://www.carlostercero.ca). The website allows users anywhere in the world to make purchases for relatives or friends in Cuba, using MasterCard or Visa credit cards.

Generally, purchases are delivered within the next 72 hours. The products available include electrical appliances, food (juices, drinks and canned food), cosmetics and computer accessories.

Plaza Carlos III, now celebrating its 10th anniversary, has 39 outlets in Havana.

### ON-THE-JOB STRESS JUST AS BAD IN CUBA

Cuba shows rates of work-induced stress similar to those in the United States and Europe, and in some professional sectors the malady affects up to 80% of employees, according to experts quoted Sept. 24 by the state-run newspaper *Trabajadores*.

Research shows an incidence of work-related stress to be 30% to 40% depending on the sector; at the same time, studies carried out with professional groups have come up with results that double those percentages.

The weekly said that Cuban experts have arrived at "similar results" to those found by research carried out in Europe and the U.S. in 2000; those surveys showed that in Europe the disorder affected one-third of the work force, while in the United States it rose to 40%.

Although the *Trabajadores* article didn't establish causes specific to Cuba, it did mention types of work-induced stress such as

"welfare stress," which affects countries with a growing services sector with workers dedicated to healthcare, education, commerce and tourism, as is the case with Cuba.

The need to put himself in the place of another has an emotional cost for the worker, psychologist Jorge Román Hernández of the National Workers' Health Institute, told the weekly. He described stress as the "response of a person who very often does not notice that he become unmotivated in his work."

Hernández said "work-related stress affects the quality of the job being done and leads to absenteeism and low productivity, from which it becomes a concern not only for health-care providers, unions and workers but also for employers." He added that "being understood and respected by one's colleagues helps a great deal towards emotional stability, including in circumstances that are to a certain point unfavorable."

### SURINAME, CUBA PROMOTE CULTURAL TIES

Cuba will strengthen cultural cooperation with the Dutch-speaking South American nation of Suriname.

Caribbean Net News of the Cayman Islands reported that Suriname's minister of education and human development, Edwin Wolf, signed an agreement with his Cuban counterpart, minister Abel Prieto Jimenez, during a week-long visit to Havana.

The agreement facilitates exchange programs for artists and technical personnel.

In November, two Cuban music experts will visit Suriname to draft a cooperation project with Surinamese colleagues. The project is aiming at improving the skills of Surinamese trumpet players and saxophonists.

Currently both nations are exploring the possibility of expanding cooperation into other fields like literature, fine arts, drama and film.

At the moment, an unspecified number of Cuban doctors are working in Suriname, especially in rural areas, while Surinamese patients on a regular basis are traveling to Havana to undergo eye surgery offered by the Cuban government.

Under the so-called Spaarlampen project, Cuba is also providing tens of thousands of energy-saving light bulbs to distribute to households throughout Suriname. Energy minister Gregory Rusland said that the project has been a success, with electricity bills in some areas reduced by as much as 10%.

### CUBA ESTABLISHES ARBITRATION COURT

Justice and fairness are key rules for Cuba's International Trade Arbitration Court that will operate over the next 24 months with 21 judges and seven mediators, state-run Prensa Latina reported Sept. 15.

The CCAC, a branch of Cuba's Chamber of Commerce, replaces the Foreign Trade Arbitration Court that for over 40 years determined relations between Cuban companies and their overseas counterparts.

Judge Ydael León said one of the distinctive features of this court, consisting of lawyers, economists and trade experts, is the use of mediation to settle controversies.

The specialists must have "equanimity, serenity and a diligent ability to explain clearly the pros and cons of the argument in order to reach a balanced solution," said the judge.

CCAC also consists of a president, lawyer Rodolfo Davalos, and two vice-presidents, Armando Castanedo and Narciso Cobo Roura.

Chamber of Commerce Chairman Raúl Becerra said the predecessor court settled 478 suits since 1990.

### CUBA, IRAN SEEK TO ELIMINATE TRADE BARRIERS

Cuba and Iran have signed a trade agreement on tariff preferences aimed to stimulate the export of 140 products.

The accord, signed by Raul de la Nuez, Cuba's minister of foreign trade, and Sayed Masoud Mir Kasemi, his Iranian counterpart, includes the list of products to be covered by preferential tariffs.

Cuban sources said the island will benefit from an Iranian credit of 200 million euros; this will allow Cuba to buy inputs for the textile industry, as well as rail cars to transport food and cement, equipment to modernize Cuba's rail network, for the production of high-density polyethylene tubes, and for irrigating systems used by the sugar industry.

Iran buys from Cuba biotechnological and pharmaceutical products as well as raw sugar. A biotech production center was recently built in Iran with Cuban technical assistance, according to the Cuban government.

### VENEZUELA WILL FUND CUBAN RAILWAY PROJECT

Cuba and Venezuela have agreed on a new area of cooperation after approving a loan to finance the recovery of the island's deteriorating railroad infrastructure.

Executives from Venezuela's Banco de Desarrollo Económico y Social (BANDES) and the Banco Exterior de Cuba signed the agreement that will provide \$100 million for the improvement of railway lines, signaling systems and railroad communications.

Cuban Transportation Minister Jorge Luis Sierra declared that when completed, the project "will allow train speeds to increase from 40 to 100 km per hour, and will have a direct impact on the country's railway transportation capacity."

He added: "With this loan the railway tracks will be totally restored to the original design parameters for cargo or passengers."

Sierra recalled that the Cuban railroad system suffered considerable deterioration during the special economic period that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. He noted that with the Cuban economy now on an upturn, the country needs a totally revamped railroad system.

The transport minister also said that Cuban specialists are working in Venezuela on a project to upgrade the railroad system of the South American nation, abandoned for more than 30 years.

Both Sierra and BANDES President Rafael Isea said that joint efforts like this one, to deal with problems common to both countries, are developing within the framework of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA).

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Taiwan responds to *CubaNews* article

It was with pleasure that I read your article "Special report from the 'other' China: What Cuba can learn from tiny Taiwan" (*CubaNews*, September 2007, page 1).

Today's Taiwan is a land with a sovereign government that finds itself in a political situation similar to the economic position Cuba endured during the Cold War and that still lingers today — that is, one of isolation.

Cuba has enjoyed full representation and membership in the United Nations since 1945. When its revolution took place in the 1950s, Cuba was able to retain its UN seat despite the discomfort of several Security Council members with the new Cuban government.

This is because these countries understood and respected the fact that the United Nations is a comprehensive body and ought not to exclude any state based on the composition of its government.

Indeed, the common membership of countries who find themselves at odds with one another is the lynchpin of the UN's role in international affairs: to provide an equal and open forum for the peaceful resolution of international disputes.

This key concept seems to be lost on the Chinese government, which is ruthlessly bent on the political isolation of Taiwan.

Beijing has never had any qualms over wielding its veto power in the Security Council to shoot down any proposal regarding Taiwan's membership.

As if this were not enough, the People's Republic of China further ensures the annual defeat of Taiwan's application by using its strong economic ties with a majority of the world's nations as leverage to ensure these countries side with Beijing whenever Taiwan's proposal is brought up in committee.

One trading partner that China leans on to accomplish this is, of course, Cuba.

Cuba's reliance on nearly \$2 billion of

annual trade with China, along with heavy Chinese investment in domestic Cuban industries, makes it rather difficult for Havana to break rank with Beijing when bilateral Sino-Cuban trade is on the line.

Unscrupulous officials in Beijing are all too willing to hold any economic incentive hostage — no matter how necessary it is for the welfare of a foreign ally. Therefore, despite the fact that Cuba surely understands the importance of comprehensive inclusiveness, its UN representative must stand in opposition to the proper representation of Taiwan, year after year.

Taiwan seeks UN membership not for political aggrandizement, but for the enhancement of security across the Taiwan Strait and in the greater Asia-Pacific region.

If Taiwan gains full membership in the UN, the ensuing dialogue before the forum of nations will bring about a peaceful solution to the age-old dispute between Taipei and Beijing.

It should be noted that Taiwan's membership in the UN does not rule out the future possibility of unification. One need merely consider East Germany and West Germany at the end of the Cold War to verify this.

Membership for Taiwan ensures that a lasting resolution to cross-Strait tensions will be arrived at through open and honest debate without either party's hand being forced. If Beijing is truly confident in its claim to represent Taiwan in the UN, why should China refuse to defend this claim before its peers in the General Assembly?

As the security of millions through peace in the Asia-Pacific region hangs in the balance, it is my strong belief that this issue should be stifled no longer.

— Eddy Tsai, Director, Press Division  
Taipei Economic and Cultural  
Representative Office, Washington

## ASIA BRIEFS

## CHINA'S YUTONG EXPORTS BUSES TO CUBA

Chinese automaker Yutong Group Co. Ltd. has delivered 200 mass-transit buses to Cuba, the first such China-made vehicles ever exported, a company spokesman told the Xinhua news agency Sept. 25.

In accordance with a Sino-Cuban export agreement, Cuba will import 5,348 buses or coaches from Yutong — which is based in Zhengzhou, capital of central China's Henan Province — between now and 2009.

The buses, worth around 300 million yuan (\$37.5 million), will first be transported to Lianyungang, in eastern China, from where they will be shipped to Cuba.

Yutong is a large enterprise group with bus manufacturing as its core business; it's also involved in auto parts, engineering and property development. The group reported 10.14 billion yuan (\$1.27 billion) in 2006 sales.

Yutong began exporting coaches to Cuba in 2005; by late last year, it had shipped over 1,200 coaches to the island. Yutong also exports coaches to other countries in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia.

## HANOI-HAVANA RELATIONS GET A BIG BOOST

Vietnam's new ambassador to Cuba has pledged to spare no efforts to boost bilateral economic, trade, cultural, scientific and technical cooperation.

Vu Chi Cong made the commitment while presenting his credentials Sept. 27 to José Ramón Machado Ventura, vice-president of Cuba's Council of State.

Separately, the two communist countries agreed to help each other in rice production after a visit by Vietnam's construction minister, Nguyen Hong Quan, to the Guillermo Moncada rice farm in Holguín province.

Meanwhile, Fernando Remirez de Estenóz, head of the Communist Party's External Relations Commission, said Cuba is "determined to fortify solidarity and cooperative ties with Vietnam on the path of socialist construction." He made the vow while receiving Le Minh Hien, member of the Vietnam Fatherland Front Central Committee in Havana.

## Dell — FROM PAGE 9

any other country subject to restriction," Dell's export compliance document states. But the demands angered the Brazilian physicist, who refused to sign the document.

"I do not have to justify my actions before anyone, and I am not obliged to follow U.S. policies. I am a buyer. I am not receiving a donation," Gomes told *Folha*. "Besides, I have ties with Cuban physicists and I will not renounce those."

Dell spokeswoman Amy King told reporters that the company is obliged to follow U.S. laws and regulations regarding exports and would not comment on specific cases.

*CubaNews* tried but failed to get the Texas-based PC giant to comment on the case.

Meanwhile, Gomes has sent a report on the controversy to Brazilian Minister of Science and Technology Sergio Rezende and to the Brazilian Physics Society, which, according to the scientist, will recommend to its members that they stop buying Dell computers.

"The corporate heavyweight is attempting to comply with U.S. law, and this has put it in an uncomfortable position," notes Cuba's Communist Party newspaper *Granma*.

"It is yet another demonstration of the extraterritorial nature of the absurd American law that sustains the blockade against Cuba."

*Granma* adds: "One of the most interesting elements in this case, another on the long list of extraterritorial applications of the U.S. blockade, is that the Fluminense Federal University is the Brazilian government's com-

petition, which is why the Ministry of Science and Technology requested explanations from Dell about its attempt to control national scientists in the use of that firm's products."

Augusto Cesar Gadelha, secretary of information science policy at the ministry, rejected Dell's justification that it was merely trying to comply with U.S. laws.

He countered that Dell's Brazilian subsidiary is a Brazilian company and receives money from the state, consistent with Brazil's Computer Science Act.

"The secretary of Information Science Policy is surprised that a Brazilian company located in national territory is making demands based on the norms of another country in the sale of its products," Gadelha said in an official statement distributed to the press. □

**GEOGRAPHY**

# Forgotten Las Tunas is among Cuba's least-known provinces

BY ARMANDO H. PORTELA

The province of Las Tunas has existed since 1976, when the former province of Oriente was split into five new territories. A piece of neighboring Camagüey was also carved to form the southwestern part of Las Tunas.

With 6,588 sq kms (2,544 sq miles), its largely flat territory accounts for 5.9% of Cuba's land area. Inland soils are of excellent agricultural quality. Bad draining and salinity often hampers farming in the lowlands. The province has some 41,100 hectares (101,560 acres) of saline soils, roughly equivalent to 7.5% of agricultural lands.

Water resources in the province are restricted by long and recurrent droughts, combined with poor management and neglected infrastructure. Reservoirs have a shared capacity of 350 million cubic meters (92.5 billion gallons), while groundwater aquifers retain up to 159 million cubic meters (42 billion gallons) of fresh water. But every year, by

*This is the second-to-last in a series of monthly articles on Cuba's 14 provinces by Armando H. Portela, who has a Ph.D. in geography from the Soviet Academy of Sciences. Portela currently resides in Miami.*

the end of the dry season, water reserves are increasingly being pushed to their limits.

Large-scale assimilation of Las Tunas occurred mostly after Cuba's independence, as the sugar boom of the early 20th century lured U.S. capital and immigrants from Spain, various Caribbean islands and other Cuban provinces. At that time, the land was covered with a combination of tropical forest and shrubby savannas. Today, forests cover only 12% of the province; relics of the original landscape are confined to the rocky shores and mangrove swamps.

Farming is the base of the economy, with 83% of the land devoted to agriculture. Rolling and flat plains with sugar-cane plantations, grazing or vacant lands form the typical landscape of Las Tunas.

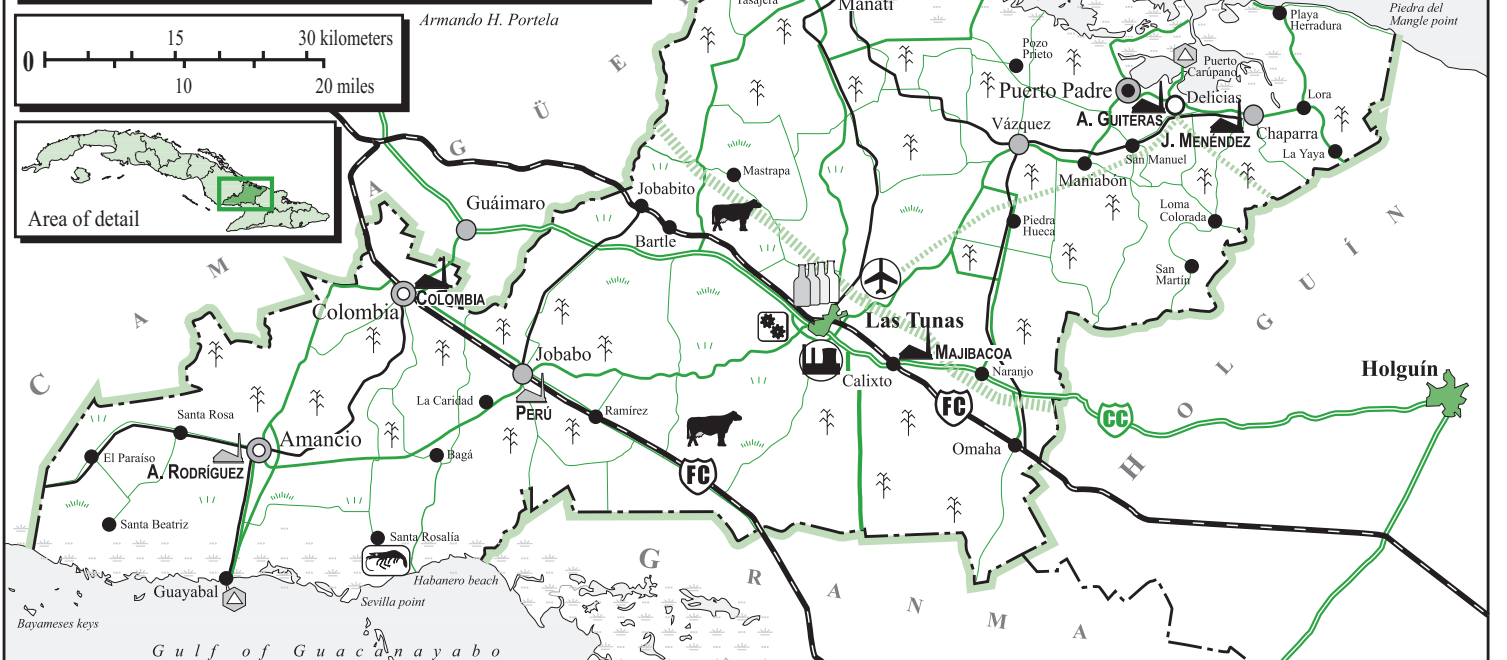
**POPULATION**

Las Tunas had 531,859 inhabitants in 2006, with 32.2% of that concentrated in two cities: Las Tunas, the capital, with 150,511 people (up from 20,431 in 1953) and Puerto Padre, with 31,854. Other important towns are Amancio (26,658), Colombia (22,295), Jobabo (20,000), Chaparra (17,000), Manatí (15,000), Vázquez (10,000) and Delicias (9,000). All except Vázquez are *bateyes* associated with sugar mills.

A prominent factor of the province's demographics is the explosive growth of urban settlements. Amancio, Colombia and Jobabo — with barely 3,000 to 6,000 inhabitants in the 1950s — have quadrupled or sextupled their populations since then.

A rapid increase in the province's urban population has exacerbated a chronic housing problem. Over 151,000 *tuneros* — nearly a third of the population — live in dwellings considered in to be in bad shape even by lenient Cuban standards.

<b>Population</b>		<b>Transportation</b>	
	Las Tunas (142,000)		Central road
	30,000 - 40,000		Other paved roads
	20,000 - 30,000		Unpaved roads
	10,000 - 20,000		Central railroad
	5,000 - 10,000		Main railroad
	Less than 5,000		Domestic airport
<b>Land use</b>			Port
	Sugar cane		Sugar bulk terminal
	Pasture lands	<b>Industrial facilities</b>	
	Cattle ranch		Sugar mill
	Shrimp farming		Sugar mill (dismantled)
<b>Miscellaneous</b>			Glass bottle factory
	Swamps		Steel plant
	Resort		Smelter
			220 Kv powerline
			110 Kv powerline



## AGRICULTURE

Sugar is the backbone of the economy — a fact that's unlikely to change even after the recent downsizing of Cuba's sugar industry, which left the province with four active mills to produce sugar and another one, Amancio Rodríguez (Francisco) making only molasses. Two mills were dismantled: Perú (Jobabo) and Argelia Libre (Manatí).

Before the downsizing in October 2002, Las Tunas accounted for 8% to 10% of Cuba's sugar production. That ratio has actually increased as a result of sharper cutbacks in other provinces. Current grinding capacity has dropped to 32,000 tons of sugar cane, or 61.6% of the 51,700-ton capacity of a decade ago.

In 2003, Las Tunas produced 281,000 tons of raw sugar, making it Cuba's top producer. That crop was worth \$48.6 million at average market prices during the grinding season, down from the 479,600 tons produced a year earlier (worth \$72.8 million) and only a sad fraction of the 725,000 to 750,000 tons produced annually in the late 1980s and worth in excess of \$400 million at the preferential prices paid by the former Soviet Union.

Sugar-cane plantations now cover 92,300 hectares (228,000 acres), down from 198,300 hectares (490,000 acres) in the mid-1980s.

Las Tunas has some of the largest sugar mills in the island. The Antonio Guiteras (Delicias) mill has a daily grinding capacity of 12,470 tons of cane; it is currently the top producer in Cuba. In 2003, the Guiteras mill produced 120,000 tons of raw sugar, or roughly 6% of Cuba's total output. But that's down dramatically from the mill's record production of 218,200 tons in 1985.

Two other large mills, Jesús Menéndez (Chaparra) and Colombia (Elia), have daily grinding capacities of 9,000 and 6,000 tons of cane respectively, but are working at a vastly reduced pace these days. This year, the Menéndez mill produced 71,700 tons (or 60% of its 120,000-ton capacity), while Colombia produced 39,300 tons of sugar (50% of normal output). Another mill, Majibacoa, was built in the 1980s and this year produced 50,000 tons.

During the 1980s, grazing lands covered over 220,000 hectares (544,000 acres), sustaining an average annual production of 30 million liters of fresh milk — or barely 60 liters per capita. Since then, production has fallen even more following the economic havoc of the '90s.

Cattle raising has traditionally shown poor yields, forcing Las Tunas to supply its dairy needs from outside the province.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

The two-lane Central Highway and the Central Railroad link Las Tunas with the rest of the island, and a network of secondary roads and railroad branches reaches all large settlements and economic hubs. Roads and railroads are reportedly in very poor condition.

The bulk terminals at Guayabal and Carúpano handle sugar shipments from the neighboring provinces of Camagüey and Holguín besides its own Las Tunas production. In their heyday, the two handled over a fifth of Cuba's sugar exports. A minor shipping facility exists at Manatí bay, in the northwest.

A domestic airport in the city of Las Tunas handles around 200 commuter flights a year. Las Tunas lags well behind other territories in tourism development. Its four-star, 180-room Hotel Cobarrubias, on the north coast, represents only 0.5% of Cuba's national hotel capacity.

## INDUSTRY

Other industrial facilities include the Duralmet factory, which produces prefabricated forms for various industrial and construction uses.

A stainless steel smelter using Italian design and technology opened in 1992. Currently working under the brand name Acinox, it's capable of producing 150,000 tons of stainless steel slabs per year, but at 100,000 tons the plant it's working well below capacity.

A gargantuan bottle factory, designed to churn out 300 million glass bottles per year, was finished in the early 1980s. The investment was a resounding failure as silica sand — the key ingredient — had to be brought from Pinar del Río at the opposite end of the island. Plastic containers and aluminum cans made this facility obsolete even before it was finished. Finally, Las Tunas produces around 70,000 tons of common salt per year for domestic use. □

## Harvest to begin early in sugar belt

Sugar milling will begin a month early this year in an effort to harvest cane left standing from the previous season and get a jump on the new crop, Reuters reported Sept. 17, quoting top Cuban sugar officials.

Unseasonal rainfall and heat combined with industrial and organizational problems to make the 2007 harvest one of Cuba's worst ever. Output was estimated at only 1.1 million tons of raw sugar, compared to the 1.5-1.6 million tons that had been planned.

This year's dry season, which corresponds with the harvest, is expected to begin on schedule in November and continue through April without major weather issues.

Officials in eastern Holguín and Las Tunas provinces, where output was around 200,000 tons in 2007 compared with the 385,000 tons planned, said milling would begin in late November.

"Holguín will have a big influence in the coming harvest so we want to start milling in November ... the cane is very tall and has a good yield," said Violeta Mesa, the province's top sugar official.

Eduardo Prawit, who's in charge of harvesting and transport in neighboring Las Tunas province, told local radio "we are preparing to start milling in late November ... there is a lot of cane from the previous harvest." Other provinces were expected to participate in what's known as "the little harvest" before the season officially begins in January.

Plans had called for Cuba's 2008 crop to weigh in at 2 million tons, but that may now be scaled back due to this year's poor performance. Similarly disappointing harvests in recent years have forced Cuba to import 200,000 to 300,000 tons of low-grade whites annually from Colombia and Brazil.

Cuba consumes a minimum 700,000 tons of sugar per year, and 400,000 tons are destined for an agreement with China.

Meanwhile, Las Tunas provincial newspaper *Periodico 26* warns that this coming harvest is going to be more difficult than ever.

Repairs by the engineers are 57% complete, rail and motor transport 56% and 49% respectively, and 64% of farm machinery has been serviced, according to an article by Juan Soto Cutiño.

"Although repairing the sugar mills and the machinery to cut, lift and transport the cane is always the goal of the workers, the province needs these objectives to materialize — maybe more than ever on this occasion," said the Sept. 22 article.

"It needs technological support able to respond to the demands of a long and intense harvest — it should begin this year and extend for several months into 2008 — but with a level of complexity not seen in Las Tunas in years," said the article, blaming "intense and continuous rains" for the looming disaster.

"Despite a good start to the preparations, the collectives in charge of setting up the sugar mills and machinery are asking the supply companies for better administration, mainly in the supply of welding and cutting gases," according to the story, explaining that 3,500 items — including combines, harvesters, lifting gear, tractors, carts, trucks, locomotives and cage cars — must be readied for the coming *zafra*.

In a recent report to members of Cuba's National Assembly, Sugar Minister Ulises Rosales del Toro said the island's average yield in the last harvest was a disappointing 34 tons per hectare.

Even so, he said, 122 sugarcane producers are above the 54 ton/ha mark. Rosales del Toro said that in eastern Cuba — where yields have fallen the most due to drought — the last harvest saw an average yield of 44.1 tons/ha.

The minister urged officials to increase the link between worker pay and what is actually produced. He also mentioned assuring the proper training of all workers and the "consolidation of agricultural extension procedures" for achieving maximum yields and higher concentrations of sucrose in the plants.

These days, said Rosales del Toro, Cuba grows more sugarcane on less land. Yet availability of sugarcane seed is still a problem that needs to be solved. He indicated that "work continues in that direction, and that in the not-too-distant future, there will be enough seed banks for our requirements." □

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

If your organization is sponsoring an upcoming event, please let our readers know! Fax details to *CubaNews* at (301) 949-0065 or send e-mail to [larry@cubanews.com](mailto:larry@cubanews.com).

**Oct. 4:** "US-Cuba Immigration Issues," Washington. Speakers: Lisandro Perez of Florida International University's Cuban Research Institute; Capt. Edwin H. Daniels, chief of the U.S. Coast Guard's Response Division, and Doris Meissner, senior fellow at the Migration Policy Institute. No charge. *Details: Paul Wander, Inter-American Dialogue, 1211 Connecticut Ave. NW, #510, Washington, DC 20036. Tel: (202) 463-2932. Email: meetings@thediologue.org.*

**Oct. 10:** "Fidel Castro: Life and Legacy," London. Speaker: Ignacio Ramonet, editor of *Le Monde Diplomatique* and co-author of "Fidel Castro: My Life." Inaugural event at the International Institute for the Study of Cuba. No charge. *Details: International Institute for the Study of Cuba, London Metropolitan University, 166-220 Holloway Road, London N7 8DB. Tel: +44 20 7133-2405. Email: admin@cupastudies.org. URL: www.cupastudies.org.*

**Oct. 16:** "The Imperative for a New Cuba Policy," Washington. Event co-sponsored by Center for International Policy, New America Foundation and US Council for International Business. Speakers: George McGovern, Wayne Smith, Philip Peters, Alfredo Duran, Joe Garcia, Antonio Zamora, Robert Muse, Marvin Lehrer. *Details: Abigail Poe, CIP, 1717 Massachusetts Ave. NW, #801, Washington, DC 20036. Tel: (202) 232-3317. Email: abigail@ciponline.org.*

**Oct. 25-26:** Vermont Focus on Cuba, Burlington, Vt. Larry Luxner, editor and publisher of *CubaNews*, to speak on "Cuba Today: Business, Politics and Trade." Lectures at Champlain College, Burlington City Hall, Ohavi Zedek Synagogue and other Vermont institutions. No charge. *Details: Marisha Kazeniac, Executive Director, Vermont Institute on the Caribbean, 16 Ludwig Ct., Burlington, VT 05401. Tel: (802) 864-4334. Email: info@institutecarib.org.*

**Oct. 27:** FUNDarte and Eventus, in collaboration with Miami-Dade County Auditorium, present "Habana Abierta" in concert. Cost: \$34 to \$75. *Details: Miami-Dade County Auditorium, 2901 West Flagler Street, Miami, FL 33135. Tel: (305) 547-5414. URL: www.fundarte.us.*

**Nov. 14:** "After Castro: An American Perspective," London. Speaker: Phil Peters, vice-president and chief Cuba policy analyst at Washington's Lexington Institute. No charge. *Details: International Institute for the Study of Cuba, London Metropolitan University, 166-220 Holloway Road, London N7 8DB. Tel: +44 20 7133-2405. Email: admin@cupastudies.org.*

**Dec. 3-5:** 31st Miami Conference on the Caribbean Basin, Inter-Continental Hotel, Miami. Event features workshops on agribusiness, apparel, energy, financial services, telecom and tourism. Cost: \$650. *Details: Caribbean-Central American Action, 1818 N Street NW, #310, Washington, DC 20036. Tel: (202) 466-7464. Fax: (202) 822-0075. URL: www.c-cao.org.*

**Dec. 12:** "The Scientific Revolution in Cuba: Highlights and Future Prospects," London. Speaker: Luis Alberto Montero-Cabrera, Consejo Cientifico, University of Havana. No charge. *Details: International Institute for the Study of Cuba, London Metropolitan University, 166-220 Holloway Rd, London N7 8DB. Tel: +44 20 7133-2405. Email: admin@cupastudies.org.*

## INTERNATIONAL STOCK PHOTOS

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