

YUGOSLAVIAN-CUBAN ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDSHIP

Our association want deportment about Cuba envisage in EPU Concil for human right.

* When the Soviet Union collapsed, 85% of Cuba's trade disappeared overnight, along with a \$6 billion annual subsidy. When Cuba was unable to find financial credits anywhere else, the government implemented a "periodo especial" a (special period) in October 1990, and concentrated its resources and efforts on restricting consumption levels. Buses almost disappeared and people had to wait sometimes 3 to 5 hours for them to arrive. Black-outs ("apagones") lasted for hours on end. They occurred so frequently that Cubans called the times when there was light, "alumbrones" (brief periods of illumination). There was almost a total absence of food, clothing, footwear, and personal hygiene products. The Cuban standard of living decreased by 34%. The gradual recovery, due largely to the development of the tourist industry, started in 1995 with a 2.5% growth, and continued the following year with a 5% growth. It was a victory for the Cuban people because they had overcome the special period without having to bend their socialistic ideals.

*In Cuba, sovereignty resides in the people. Over 97% of the people eligible to vote, vote in an electoral system which serves to nominate and then elect those best suited to fulfill their position. There are three Assemblies: the Municipal Assembly, the Provincial Assembly, and the National Assembly. In the Municipal Assembly, neighbors nominate their candidates who are finally selected by secret ballot vote by the entire constituency. The fact that candidates are not nominated by the Communist Party but by the people themselves, itself marks the democratic nature of the process. In the same way, the election of the members for the Provincial and National Assemblies are selected by secret ballot vote by the people directly. The last electoral process in Cuba began in June 1997 and finished on Feb. 24th, 1998. The previous election took place 5 years earlier, 1992/1993. The election process has two phases: it consists of (1) electing the delegates for the Municipal Assembly, and (2) electing the deputies to the Provincial and National Assemblies.

*The Cuban Constitution (discussed and created through numerous public meetings and adopted by secret ballot in a referendum in 1976) states, in the First Article of the Electoral System, Article 131, that: "All citizens with the legal capacity to do so, have the right to take part in the leadership of the State, directly or through their elected representatives to the bodies of People Power, and to participate for this purpose and as prescribed by law in the periodic elections and people's referendums through free, equal, and secret vote." In Cuba, you will find grass-roots democracy never seen anywhere else in the world, where the people themselves nominate their candidates for election. Although there is only one person running for one seat, that candidate must get more than 50% of a secret ballot vote to get elected, or another candidate is nominated for selection. Even Fidel Castro has to get 50% of a secret ballot vote to represent the electorate. Every candidate nominated faces the electorate on his/her own merit.

*The Communist Party is forbidden by law to play any role in the elections. The only publicity allowed candidates is a posted biography with a photograph of the candidate. They are not allowed to spend money on furthering their chances for selection. Neither are State organizations permitted to issue statements favoring any candidate.

*The National Assembly is the body with the highest power in the State, with constituent and legislative authority. Since it has 601 deputies it holds only 2 meetings a year. In its very first meeting it elects 31 of its members to act in its place. This group, called the "Council of State," meets regularly to make changes in the law, to consider domestic and foreign policy, to approve plans for economic and social development of the Nation. At present, the President of the National Assembly is Ricardo Alarcon, and the President of the Council of State is Fidel Castro. Both of these positions were voted by secret ballot by all the deputies of the National Assembly.

*Cubans, like most other Third World inhabitants, see the First World as their main emigration destination. However, the First World confers less and less visas for Third World émigrés, thus stimulating illegal exits. Cubans, like all other Third Worlders, see First World countries as places where people leave food on the side of their plates; where every house has running water; where there is an abundance of money and everyone lives happily ever after. The Cuban government, in an effort to protect their citizens from themselves, has made it difficult for any Cuban to just pack up and leave the island. There is a process in place for those Cubans who wish to leave Cuba. It begins with an invitation from someone in another country who is willing to sponsor the Cuban. The Embassies of both countries are involved and the sponsoring party must be able to support and take care of that Cuban while he/she is away from Cuba. The process takes time and money, approximately 3 to 4 months and \$500.

*There is not a lot of corruption in the government. Representatives have a high respect for their offices and a responsibility to their electorate. In the business sector there is a lot of corruption, particularly among middle-managers, managers, and supervisors. Cuba has insufficient financial systems in place to keep stealing in check, always a problem when you have a cash business, and Cuba must have hard money (cash) to buy what it needs on the international markets.

*It is funded by the National Foundation of Cuban Americans in Miami, which receives funding from the CIA. However, one of the most noteworthy observations to come out of the 1997/98 elections was the failure of the counter-revolutionaries in Cuba to increase their numbers. Counter-revolutionaries register their opposition to the political system in Cuba by casting a blank vote, or a spoiled vote at election time. In the last election, there was a significant decline in the protest vote, this despite the enormous pressure put on the electorate, via Radio Marti, to deposit blank or spoiled votes. In the National Assembly elections, the number of valid votes increased from 92.97% in 1993, to 94.98% in 1998. While the percentage of blank votes rose only slightly from 3.04% in 1993, to 3.36% in 1998, there was a significant decrease in the percentage of spoiled votes, from 3.99% in 1993, to 1.66% in 1998. The results of the 1998 election were even more striking in the city of Havana where one would expect more opposition. The percentage of spoiled votes declined by one third, from 10.34% in 1993, to 3.42% in 1998. In 1998, there were 4.15% blank votes in the capital city, thereby making the total protest vote in Havana 7.57% (3.42%+4.15%). Nationally, the protest vote in 1998 was only 5.02%.

*In the election of the National Assembly in 1998 in Havana, 97% of the eligible voters registered a vote, the lowest voter turnout on the island. This is quite significant when compared to the rest of the world where voter turnout is barely 50%

*Reports would have you believe that HIV/AIDS patients in Cuba are quarantined in asylums against their will. This is not true. Patients go to sanatorias (the English translation of sanatorium for sanatoria is inaccurate here) first and foremost to receive information and education about how to deal with their ailment and then treatment. It is true that there is some obligation on the part of the patient to do this, and is done to reduce the spreading of the disease. At the same time, the sanatoria offers the patient the best environment for therapy, nutrition, and medication. Patients are allowed to go out week-ends and to leave permanently after 3 months. At the Havana Tropical Medicine Institute patients get the best treatment available from psychologists, psychiatrists, epidemiologists, internal medicine specialists, social workers, and nurses. The disease, unfortunately, is spreading like wild-fire in all Third World countries, in the heterosexual community mostly, with Cuba being no exception.

*Two internationally recognized indicators of a country's well-being are its infant mortality and life expectancy rates. What are Cuba's?

Before the Revolution, in 1958, Cuba's infant mortality rate stood at 60 per 1000 live births (over 100 per 1000 in rural areas). By 1998, infant mortality had been reduced to 7.1 per 1000 live births (the same rate in rural areas). Mortality for children between 1 and 5 years of age was only 9.2 per 1000 children. Cuba's health care system is responsible for these incredible statistics, more amazing when you consider that in other Latin American regions the infant mortality rate is 33 per 1000 live births, and a mortality rate of 55 per 1000 children between 1 and 5 years of age. Since the Revolution, Cuba's life expectancy rate has risen 13.2 years, to 75 years of age, matching First World countries

*In 1999, the Latin American Laboratory for the Evaluation of Educational Quality (LLECE) tested 4,000 students in third and fourth grades in 100 randomly selected schools in 14 Latin American countries. Cuba's Elementary Education came out on top. The Cuban children scored 350 points on a scale of 400. Despite the economic blockade, the State maintained free education with a 1,585 billion pesos educational budget in 1999. School enrollment is 100% on the elementary level, and 95% on the secondary level. There is one teacher per 40 children compared to one per 103 in the world. While in 1959 Cuba had only 3 Universities, it now has 47 which have graduated 600,000 students. In 1953, less than 50% of Cuban children went to school, over 30% of the population was illiterate, and 10,000 of the existing 25,000 teachers were unemployed. Now, every child has access to free education, remains in school through 6th grade, and then continues on with secondary education. In most Latin American countries 50% of all enrolled children leave by 4th grade.

*The criminal rate is extremely low in Cuba. A high percentage of crimes committed are robberies against private property. Robberies amount to 70% of all crimes committed in Cuba, 60% of which are against property. Breaking and entering occurs in 10% of all cases and violence is used in less than 2%. 90% of murder cases stem from personal problems between the murderer and the victim, at a time when either one or both were intoxicated. Less than 10% was due to an attempt for financial gain.

Drug cases, mostly smoking marijuana and using pharmaceuticals, is still relatively low.

*The people of Cuba are demanding that the U.S. pay them \$181.1 billion for the loss of Cuban lives and the injuries of individuals since the Revolution (over 3,000 dead and over 2,000 injured), and for numerous acts of aggression towards the State since then.

*Cuba has had to overcome fierce anti-communist propaganda from the U.S. In an attempt to discredit Socialism in the eyes of the world, the U.S. State Department published an article in January 1998, which stated that, "Cuba is a totalitarian State controlled by President Fidel Castro, who is chief of State, head of government, first secretary of the Communist Party, and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. President Castro exercises control over all aspects of Cuban life through the Communist Party and its affiliated mass organizations, the government bureaucracy, and the State security apparatus. The Communist Party is the only legal political entity, and President Castro personally approves the membership of the Politburo, the select group that heads the Party. The Party controls all government positions, including judicial offices." The article is of course not true.

*The USA has ignored the 1992/93 and the 1997/98 elections in Cuba and chooses to believe that Cuba is a dictatorship led by one man, Fidel Castro. That Cuba has a one-party rule is undeniable. It is a one-party rule with a difference – the participation of the people in the decision-making processes. The Communist party is not a substitute for the people but serves to strengthen the power of the people. On the rare occasion that the U.S. recognizes the electoral system in Cuba, the U.S. complains that only one person runs for an individual seat. This is true, but what the U.S. fails to appreciate is that, that person has to get over 50% of a secret ballot vote to be elected, even Fidel Castro. Is it therefore better to have more than one pre-selected candidate in a run-off for a seat, spending endless amounts of money to persuade voters to choose from among them, or one candidate, chosen by the community, requiring 50% of the vote? The facts of the matter are that three generations of Cubans have fought unceasingly against the richest, most powerful nation ever to have existed in the history of humanity, and has succeeded in steadfastly resisting it. The U.S. is not happy about the present gains made in Cuba. It has been unsuccessful in supplanting the Cuban government as it now exists despite numerous aggressions over the last 40 years. If Vietnam was an embarrassment to the USA, Cuba is her shame

*Estimates for Havana suggest up to 4% of city dwellers lack full-time jobs due largely to the U.S. economic blockade which prevents raw materials from reaching the island which in turn prevents the development of industry. Unemployment is lower in rural areas. Many agricultural enterprises seek workers.

*Cuba's struggle against racism is unmatched anywhere else in the world. "Negros," "mulatos," "triguenos," and "blancos" mix well, but, of course, there are always a few who carry prejudices deep in their hearts, even in Cuba.

Justice for all!

For Yugoslavian-Cuban association of friendship

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