

10. Fidel Castro Comments on Current Cuban Policies

In mid-September Fidel Castro reportedly told [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] --that he believes capitalism is on the way out, that the United States is "finished" as a major world power, that it is corrupt, two-faced, and insincere, and that American democracy is really a sham. He said he had no intention of letting up in his attacks, since in its "present state of confusion" the United States must be kept on the defensive. He expressed confidence that the Sino-Soviet bloc would win the ideological war and he therefore deemed it necessary to align Cuba with the Communist countries. Since this conversation, Castro has appointed an ambassador to Communist China, and Cuba has become the first non-bloc nation to accord diplomatic recognition to North Korea.

Castro went to considerable lengths in describing himself as the rising leader of Latin America and Africa, and he stated that only by taking an uncompromising attitude toward the United States could he keep faith with his obligation to the peoples of these areas. He specifically indicated concern about the attitude of the Betancourt government in Venezuela toward the Castro government, saying that if the Venezuelans were not with him, he could "undermine their economy...and bring them to their knees."

Castro said that he felt he had Cuba "very well in hand politically," and scoffed at reports of differences among regime leaders. He said he was unconcerned about the large number of defectors among his original supporters, since "only the weak ones" were taking such steps. He emphasized that the people's militia, which he asserted would be reliable and well trained, would make any armed aggressors "extremely sorry for their efforts."

Castro admitted that Cuba's economic situation was bad and that considerable difficulty was being experienced in "production." His comments on Soviet technical assistance were enthusiastic, however, and he praised the Soviet technicians guiding the operations of the Cuban Petroleum Institute. "With all these excellent people in Cuba," he said, "we will defeat the corrupt capitalistic system."

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