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Memorandum

Fidel and Raul Castro: Preparing for the Dynastic Succession in Cuba



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NIC M 87-10002

FIDEL AND RAUL CASTRO:
PREPARING FOR THE
DYNASTIC SUCCESSION IN CUBA

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Information available as of 6 July 1997
was used in this report.

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PREFACE

This Memorandum, prepared by Brian Latell of the NIC Analytic Group, complements NIE 85-87, *Cuba: The Faltering Revolution*. Unlike that broad assessment of deepening political and social crises, this is a "Castrocentric" analysis. It views internal Cuban conditions and key foreign policy issues from Castro's point of view, emphasizing his preoccupations, proclivities, and attitudes. It examines his leadership and performing style and estimates how particular Cuban audiences, and the population generally, are reacting to him during a period of acute and worsening hardships. []

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Consequently, it is both more impressionistic and speculative than the Estimate, reflecting the author's interpretations and insights. Its principal conclusions—that Fidel Castro's continued hegemony is more in doubt than at any time in about a quarter of a century and that major discontinuities in the leadership and direction of the revolution are probable if present trends continue—describe a more urgent situation than that presented in the Estimate. I believe it is important to present these alternative views because of the implications for the United States of such a potential fundamental change in Cuba. []

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Although the author has exploited information and reporting from many sources, the Memorandum is based predominately on the millions of words Castro has spoken on the record between January 1986 and June 1987. That net public performance includes 39 speeches, 12 lengthy interviews, "dialogues," and press conferences. []

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The Memorandum is intended to provide a base of evidence and analysis to stimulate further thought and research on the issues it raises. It is not a coordinated Intelligence Community product. Rather, it is a provocative, and unique work that I believe makes an important contribution to the national security process. I would welcome your comments and reactions. []

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Robert Vickers
National Intelligence Officer
for Latin America

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KEY JUDGMENTS

Fidel Castro's continued hegemony in Cuba appears to be more in doubt than at any time since the early 1960s. Unless he is able soon to restore economic and social stability and to assuage his domestic and Soviet critics, it will be increasingly probable that his younger brother Raul, and top military and party officials associated with the latter, will feel compelled to gradually circumscribe his authority. Such a process may in fact have already begun, and, if so, serious threats and unprecedented opportunities for US interests could result.

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Five powerful trends are eroding Castro's position:

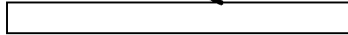
- The Cuban economy, stagnant for nearly a decade, is likely to continue deteriorating through the remainder of the 1980s and probably beyond, unless Moscow substantially augments its aid.
- Cuban-Soviet relations have been under mounting stress over the last year or so as Castro has sharply criticized Moscow and has pressed radical and dogmatic policies that are exacerbating internal problems. (See annex.)
- Popular unrest and apathy have reportedly reached unprecedented levels. Although no organized opposition has coalesced, crime, vandalism, juvenile delinquency, sabotage, overt acts of opposition, and defections of high-level officials have become matters of great official concern.
- The quality and credibility of Castro's leadership has conspicuously diminished, and his popularity is reportedly lower than at any time since he came to power in 1959.
- Meanwhile, Armed Forces Minister Raul Castro has been playing a larger and more assertive role. He and key allies, including most of the country's top generals, gained substantial new power last year at the party congress.

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An analysis of all of Fidel Castro's recorded public appearances since January 1986 reveals a leader remarkably different from the bombastic and confident revolutionary of the 1960s and 1970s. He has become more defensive, even at times apologetic, and has seemed to vacillate, and to appear uncertain and confused. He has not addressed a mass rally in three years, and now speaks mainly before small and presumably more reliable groups in various halls in Havana. Although it is not clear why he has so dramatically changed his leadership style, his comment in April 1986, "We do not want to stir the masses," may provide a partial explanation.

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Thus, Castro appears politically vulnerable:

- The uniformed services have long been under the command of his brother and *raulista* generals, and there have been numerous signs since late 1983 of serious dissatisfaction in the military. The recent defection of Brigadier General del Pino Diaz provides compelling evidence of this.
- Raul Castro and his associates now seem to constitute the largest single bloc in the Politburo and Secretariat, and they are probably viewed in Moscow as more reliable and stable than his brother.
- Unlike in the past, it is now doubtful that Fidel Castro could mobilize a mass of supporters large and enthusiastic enough to override a determined and well-organized opposition that included his brother.

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In any situation in which Fidel Castro's hegemony were threatened, the greatest danger is that he would revert to form and lash out boldly and dangerously to bolster his position:

- He is under increasing pressure to export tens or hundreds of thousands of dissatisfied Cubans to the United States, and could soon be more inclined to take bigger risks.
- In the past when under intense pressure he was more likely to seek international outlets for his frustrations by increasing support for revolutionary groups and covert operations.

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Estimates of how a new collective leadership under Raul Castro would perform are highly speculative at best, although it does seem probable that in the short term Havana would move into closer alignment with Moscow. The Soviet civilian presence on the island would probably grow, and Cuba would receive greater economic support. Unpopular military commitments overseas—particularly in Angola—might be scaled down, and a new regime could succeed in reducing social tensions and improving economic performance. Cuba might then win greater backing and respectability in Latin America and the West.

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But, although Raul Castro has consistently expressed strong nationalistic and anti-US attitudes, he is less likely than his brother to base international decisions on personal grievances or resentments. Thus, from the US perspective, a dynastic succession in Cuba could mark the end of an era characterized by Fidel Castro's visceral and intractable hostility blocking every chance of reconciliation. Over time, it might even be increasingly likely that pragmatists in the leadership would want to begin improving relations with the United States even at the expense of their ties to the USSR.

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DISCUSSION

Introduction

1. Fidel Castro has become increasingly preoccupied since early 1986 with problems and dilemmas that are more daunting than any he has confronted since winning power in 1959. The Cuban economy has been stagnant for nearly a decade, and, unless the Soviet Union provides sizable new subsidies, the already miserable conditions of most Cubans will continue to deteriorate through the remainder of the 1980s and probably well beyond. Meanwhile, popular support for the regime appears to have fallen to an unprecedented low, and, most distressing for the leadership, Cuban teenagers and young adults seem to be the most disaffected and apathetic. Rising levels of crime, juvenile delinquency, sabotage, and resistance to the draconian realities of daily life have become so intractable, in fact, that, for the first time in his long rule, Castro has had no alternative but to tolerate high levels of unrest and opposition to his regime. EO 12958
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2. He has coped with this spreading crisis by exhorting the populace to work harder and to endure greater sacrifices, and by adopting harsh policies intended to purify the revolution and elevate morale. However, his recent appeals and prescriptions have seemed only to rouse many Cubans to greater cynicism, defiance, and despair. In part this is because he has tended to hector and berate his audiences, to intimidate them with warnings of greater austerity and hardships ahead, and to find fault nearly everywhere. Few major segments of the population have escaped his public wrath. On different occasions he has denounced workers, peasants, students, teachers, bureaucrats, party officials, and others for assorted shortcomings and abuses. Only the military and security services have been spared, though even the military was the target of indirect criticism in February 1986 in Castro's report to the Communist Party's Third Congress. EO 12958
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3. His performance reveals a leader increasingly isolated from and in conflict with his people. He has demonstrated both a deepening distrust of the populace and unprecedented doubts about his ability to inspire and mobilize them. He has not spoken at a large mass rally in Havana since 1984, a significant departure from his practice of appearing at least a few

times every year in the capital's Revolutionary Plaza before enthusiastic crowds numbering in the tens and even hundreds of thousands. Instead, he has been speaking in various theaters and conference halls before carefully selected audiences of regime stalwarts. This uncharacteristic withdrawal from the masses may be due at least in part to his fear of being booed or heckled and possibly also to security concerns as popular opposition to his personalistic rule has increased. Any demonstration of opposition to Castro at a large public event would be unprecedented and cause him acute embarrassment at home and abroad. EO 12958
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4. It seems all the more remarkable, therefore, that, as internal tensions have mounted and his popularity has diminished, Castro has put himself on a collision course with the Kremlin. (See annex.) During the same period that the new Soviet leaders have campaigned energetically for *glasnost* and the "airing" of Soviet society, he has moved sharply in the opposite direction. As General Secretary Gorbachev has experimented with market mechanisms, decentralized planning and management, and has called for greater intellectual freedom and expression, Castro has mounted an extreme "rectification" campaign and has reverted to many of the most radical and repressive policies pursued by him so disastrously in the 1960s. Over the past two years he has abolished the farmers' free markets and other experiments in individual private enterprise which for a period had helped to relieve acute shortages of some consumer goods. He has also terminated most material incentives while demanding that workers toil only for the love of "constructing socialism"; he has railed against materialism, corruption, and "neocapitalism." EO 12958
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5. Meanwhile, Soviet displeasure with Havana is intensifying. Moscow has indicated that it does not intend to augment the approximately \$4.5 billion in annual economic assistance that Cuba receives, and, in fact, is probably intent on reducing it. Castro has tried to make the best of this in public, but it must infuriate him that the USSR has conspicuously sought to distance itself from his country's economic and social problems. In coverage of the closing session of Cuba's party congress last December, for instance, *Pravda* highlighted Castro's admissions that needed economic



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assistance "could not come from abroad" and that "Cuba must resolve its problems by its own efforts and with its own resources." An article in *Kommunist* in August 1986 noted the need for the Cuban regime "substantially to accelerate the progress of building socialism." Another article, in the Soviet journal *Foreign Trade*, singled Cuba out among the CEMA countries because of its need to build "the material and technical base of socialism and (to) improve the well-being of the Cuban people." [redacted]

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6. Moreover, Castro himself was recently the target of unprecedented criticism in the Soviet press. On 27 May 1987 *Pravda* reprinted an article on Cuba from the *Washington Times* that included the author's assertion that the Kremlin would like Castro to be "more predictable and controllable." Since other portions of the original article were expurgated by Soviet editors, the inclusion of this critical observation was obviously deliberate. (See annex.) [redacted]

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7. It is probably of considerable significance, moreover, that, as Castro has been placed on the defensive, his brother Raul has begun to play a larger and more conspicuous role. The latter probably consolidated his claim to the succession at last year's party congress when his wife, top generals long associated with him, and other so-called *raulistas* in the leadership were promoted. Together, they now appear to constitute the largest single bloc in top party councils. It is also significant that the younger Castro has been more active in his civilian leadership capacities over the last few years and has been more visible, speaking on a variety of public issues. These and other changes in his role have spurred increasing speculation that he and



Figure 1. The Castro brothers at the Third Communist Party Congress. [redacted]

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his associates—many of whom maintain close ties to Soviet leaders—have acquired substantial new power in areas previously the exclusive domain of Fidel Castro. [redacted]

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8. Considered together, these and other important developments probably presage major discontinuities in the leadership and direction of the Cuban revolution over the next few years. As long as Fidel Castro refuses to yield to rising popular dissatisfaction and Soviet impatience, threats to his hegemony no doubt will multiply. Popular unrest will continue to spread, the economy will continue to deteriorate, and his popularity and legitimacy will continue to erode. Nonetheless, nearly everything Castro has said and done over the last year or so suggests that he is determined to stay on the radical course he has set. As at other dangerous junctures in his 40-year public career, he seems once again to have staked his own political survival on an unlikely personal crusade. Although in all of his earlier crusades it also seemed probable that he would fail, the odds against him this time are much greater. Thus, if he continues to refuse more reasonable counsel and remains committed to policies that are widely perceived in Cuba and the USSR as self-centered and counterproductive, it will become increasingly unlikely that he will be able to preserve his hegemony. [redacted]

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Cuba's Deepening Domestic Crisis

9. In a recent speech Castro implicitly admitted that Cuba's social and economic problems are more intractable and pervasive than any he has faced since the early, tumultuous years of the revolution. In other appearances he has acknowledged that the crisis is still mounting, that large sectors of the population have become either apathetic or counterrevolutionary, and that no easy solutions are in sight. These are remarkable admissions for a number of reasons. Most important, they may suggest that discontent is even greater now than it was in 1980, when more than 125,000 Cubans left the island on a boatlift from Mariel and another two million (in a population of 10 million) wanted to do the same. In addition, unlike the problems he faced at the time of Mariel—or in 1965 when he launched a similar boatlift from the port of Camarioca—it is clear from what he has said in public that Castro is uncertain about how to deal with the mounting unrest and alienation he faces. [redacted]

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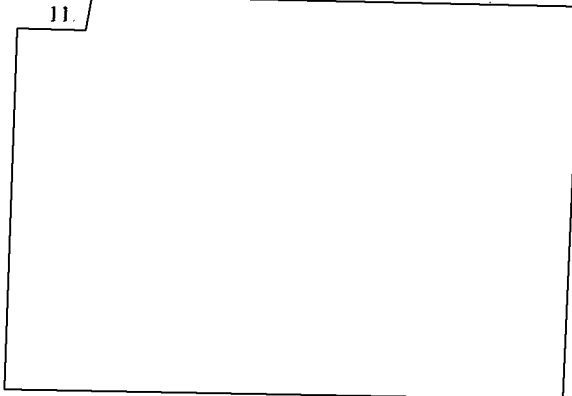
only tended, however, to fan already high levels of discontent [redacted]

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13. Castro has been almost totally preoccupied with these and other internal problems. In all but one of his recorded speeches and other public appearances in Cuba since early last year he has dwelled on domestic issues while virtually ignoring international and foreign policy concerns. With the exception of a period during 1969 and 1970, when he devoted nearly all of his and the regime's energies to an unsuccessful national campaign to harvest 10 million tons of sugar, he has never been so consumed with domestic issues. But, as in all such previous periods when he was distracted from the international causes and issues that he normally prefers, Castro's intense involvement in managing the current crisis has been highly counter-productive. He has personally made and implemented decisions of all types, while riding roughshod over the bureaucracy, and ridiculing and demoting officials who have displeased him. [redacted]

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14. Although Castro's proclivity to micromanage during periods of acute stress has always been a key characteristic of his leadership style, in other respects his handling of the current crisis has been significantly different. Perhaps most important, he has been unable to devise any bold initiatives (like the 1965 and 1980 boatlifts) that would provide immediate and substantial relief from popular pressures. Similarly, he has failed to distract the populace as he often was able to in the past by enlisting them in mass mobilizations, by provoking an international incident, or by embarking on some startling new policy. Unlike in the past, it seems that Castro has been unable to persuade any significant number of Cubans that most of their country's problems are due to "imperialist hostility" and the US "blockade." [redacted]

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12. These and other destabilizing trends have apparently gained momentum since April 1986 when, on the anniversary of the Bay of Pigs invasion, Castro launched a harsh campaign of "rectification." He has publicly attacked corruption, inefficiency, materialism, neocapitalism, and other counterrevolutionary behavior in an intensely personal crusade. He denounced Cubans who are "apathetic and negligent ... who do not want to participate in the struggle ... irresponsible people," and condemned "those who shamefully play at capitalism." His attacks became more strident as the year wore on, culminating in a major speech on 26 December, when he imposed a sweeping new austerity program intended to improve productivity and conserve hard currency. Throughout the rectification campaign he has insisted, more dogmatically than ever before, that true revolutionaries should be motivated only by moral imperatives and "internationalist" responsibilities and not by materialistic needs. These harsh appeals and prescriptions have

15. Thus, Castro has had no choice but to acquiesce impotently in perhaps the highest levels of popular unrest he has ever faced. He even seemed publicly to acknowledge this when, in a speech last October, he spoke angrily about "counterrevolutionaries and worms" who receive "all the benefits" of the revolution. He used that formulation again in the same appearance, implicitly dividing the Cuban populace into two camps: the revolutionary family and the worms and counterrevolutionaries. By making this distinction, Castro suggested how widespread the passive resistance to his regime has become. For years he has employed the term "worms" to describe Cubans who emigrated to the United States, and others still on the island who want to leave, but generally it connotes largely passive opposition. His references to "counter-

revolutionaries" however, seem to acknowledge that more active and violent enemies have also been present. Castro has never before made such an admission without simultaneously launching some audacious move aimed at controlling such pressures. [redacted]

Castro's Fading Charisma

16. Various sources confirm that the quality and effectiveness of Castro's leadership have eroded considerably. One, whose reporting has been generally reliable, said early this year that his popularity is at "an alltime low." [redacted]

[redacted]

For the first time in his long reign, moreover, it has become clear that Castro is worried about his image, popularity, and ability to sway mass audiences. [redacted]

[redacted]

17. As his popularity and confidence have declined, significant changes have become evident in his public performing style. He is more defensive, even at times apologetic—an extraordinary departure from his previous bombastic style. At times he has seemed to vacillate, to appear uncertain, and even be confused. On a few occasions recently he has admitted explicitly that he had been wrong and "made mistakes." Such confessions, although made in the spirit of "self-criticism" that he has promoted throughout the Cuban establishment, are unprecedented for him. Occasionally, he has also revealed what appears to be a concern that he no longer attracts the fawning interest of Western journalists and intellectuals as he did in the past, and on a few occasions has been sharply critical of the US media that he generally courts. [redacted]

18. Perhaps the most remarkable and counterproductive change in Castro's rhetorical style, however, is his new tendency to mordantly criticize the Cuban people. In an extraordinary excess in a speech in June 1986, for instance, he attributed the country's serious problems to flaws in the Cuban national character. "I am concerned," he said, "with our native tendency to chaos and anarchy, our lack of respect for the law, and ... to do whatever comes to mind." In a July 1986 speech, he heaped criticism on "the people of Santiago"—

Cuba's second largest city. Though he made it clear that he was aware of how damning such a sweeping denunciation was, he persisted by calling on other leaders present to "speak to the people of Santiago to awaken their shame, because there is a lack of shame in Santiago." He then bitterly attacked the high rates of absenteeism among workers in the city. "The 25-percent rate of absenteeism is unjustifiable. It is truly scandalous." [redacted]

19. Castro's estrangement from the masses has also been evident in surprising changes in his public performing style. He has not appeared before a large mass gathering of Cubans since July 1984. In fact, since January 1986 he has delivered only a few speeches outdoors on the island, and it appears that in each of those cases—dedications of a brewery, a hospital, a genetic engineering center and at a ceremony eulogizing a former Politburo member in Revolutionary Plaza—attendance was small and carefully controlled. All of his other appearances have been in various theaters and convention halls in Havana. Castro has even avoided crowds on the two most important revolutionary holidays. His speeches last year and in 1985 on the 26th of July were in provincial towns, where the regime could easily provide security and deliver reliable, albeit small, audiences of stalwarts. [redacted]

20. Since 1984 Castro has not talked in public at all on 2 January, the other major revolutionary holiday, although in all but one or two previous years since coming to power he had only passed up that opportunity once. These changes are extraordinary for a leader, who, in some previous years, spoke at least a dozen times at rallies of hundreds of thousands of Cubans. Perhaps the explanation for his more restrained approach is, as he commented in an April 1986 speech, "We do not want to stir the masses." It is clear that he has not entirely lost his taste for appearing before large, sympathetic crowds, for he spoke at large rallies in Nicaragua in January 1985 and in North Korea in March 1986. [redacted]

21. Castro broke with another tradition this year when he failed to assign a rallying name to 1987, as he did to 1986, for example, which he called the "Year of the 30th Anniversary of the Granma Landing." In every previous year since winning power he had done this, announcing the slogan usually on 2 January; the slogan served as a propaganda centerpiece through the remainder of the year. The slogan that he no doubt intended to use this year, "Now we are truly going to build socialism," which he used in closing a speech on 26 December 1986, had to be discarded. Reportedly it

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generated considerable dismay and anger among Cubans who believed that they had been building socialism for the previous quarter century, and it heightened the fears of many others that the hardships of daily life would only go on getting worse. As a result, Castro uncharacteristically retreated. In subsequent public comments, he apologetically retracted the slogan, and praised the populace for their accomplishments in building socialism since the early 1960s. It is probably for similar reasons, moreover, that in several appearances he has dropped the familiar "fatherland or death" slogan that had always been his standard closing refrain. He may have concluded that it, too, tends to arouse excessively negative feelings during a time of deepening domestic troubles. [redacted]

Neocapitalism and Other Vices

22. Castro attributes Cuba's internal crisis partly to "objective" causes. In this category he includes the natural disasters (a severe hurricane and prolonged drought) that have taken a major toll on the economy. He has also frequently emphasized that international factors largely beyond Cuba's control—US economic sanctions, low commodity prices worldwide, unfavorable exchange and interest rates, debt service obligations, and assorted barriers to international trade—impede Cuba's economic diversification and growth. He has often angrily blamed the United States and the European Economic Community for causing or exacerbating such problems. [redacted]

23. It is clear, however, that he places most of the blame for Cuba's plight on what he calls "subjective" or human factors. He has railed so often against corruption, crime, materialism, neocapitalism, and counterrevolutionary attitudes, in fact, that it seems he detects such shortcomings nearly everywhere in Cuban society. He has been particularly harsh in his criticisms of workers. On 26 June 1986 he condemned workers who are "spoiled" and "politically underdeveloped," and on other occasions he has berated them for complacently expecting material rewards for their labors. He compared them unfavorably with "intellectual workers" who, he said, are "receiving superior political development," whereas "the workers, who comprise the vanguard, are becoming politically underdeveloped." And, if attacking the proletarian vanguard so stridently were not enough, in a speech in December 1986 he also criticized the peasantry for showing "signs of corruption." [redacted]

24. Cuban youth—as well as, occasionally, their teachers—have also been among his principal targets. He has repeatedly demanded that they work and study more. In July 1986, for example, he sounded like

the demanding and irate parent of an entire wayward generation when he complained that "in this country students do not study hard enough." About a week later he carped again about those "not always enthusiastic about their studies." He believes the present generation is spoiled. "Now there are laws that protect adolescents, sometimes even to an excessive degree," he said, insisting that youths "who are wandering the streets" get more involved in organized activities. Castro has also admitted publicly that idle and "anti-social" young people constitute a serious social problem. This was implicit in unusually candid remarks he made in June 1986. "The lumpen are beginning to retreat. You can already see more policemen on the streets ... the beaches. Steps have been taken ... banning beer on the beaches. ... I understand you can go to the beaches now, the number of bullies has decreased." But, in a speech on 5 April 1987, at the closing of the congress of the Union of Young Communists, he seemed to admit that at least one beach, a once fashionable one near Havana, has been taken over by unruly youths who use drugs and alcohol. [redacted]

25. Castro is particularly incensed that large numbers of Cuban youths have rejected his incessant preaching about the virtues of voluntarism and internationalism. He has insisted that they eschew materialism and neocapitalism and commit themselves in the same way that he and his guerrilla colleagues did in the 1950s and 1960s. Referring to those years, he told a provincial party meeting in January 1987 that "I do not remember a single case in which an individual received material incentives to do what he did. ... All the great things that this country has accomplished have been done with revolutionary spirit ... not for money." [redacted]

26. Castro has leveled some of his bitterest attacks on what he calls neocapitalism. The case that appears to have rankled him the most is that of an unnamed individual who acquired two trucks and earned hundreds of thousands of pesos as an independent hauler. Castro also complained heatedly about "people painting and selling paintings, even to state institutions, earning more than 200,000 pesos in a year." After all, he pointed out, "these are not the paintings of Picasso or Michaelangelo." Other examples of "neocapitalist profiteering" that Castro has publicly condemned include "wheeler-dealers who dared to go to the garbage dumps and collect cans of discarded goods in order to refurbish and sell the cans," as well as "a man who sold coathangers," and another "who bought chocolate bars in Lenin Park and then sold them for a higher price somewhere else." On several occasions,

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furthermore, he excoriated peasant farmers for pocketing exorbitant profits by growing garlic and selling single cloves in the farmers' free markets for a peso. That, he declared, "was not a case of peasants working and sweating honestly." Perhaps the most imaginative of these neocapitalists was a Cuban who apparently made a fortune designing and producing a distinctive line of costume jewelry; according to Castro, he bought a large supply of plastic toothbrushes, and then made them into necklaces [redacted]



Figure 2. Raul Castro in civilian attire. [redacted] ©

27. These vignettes dramatize at once the perty of life for most Cubans and the deepening estrangement between them and their increasingly forbidding and didactic leader. Judging from the examples of the abuses that he has cited, moreover, it is clear that many Cubans were remarkably successful entrepreneurs during the period when limited free markets were allowed to operate. Since 1980 Castro has repeatedly warned his audiences that worse times lie ahead and has demanded that they struggle more selflessly. Like some fundamentalist prophet of doom, he has insisted that holocaust, war, and plagues threaten Cuba with extinction. Though it has been clear through the entire decade that such grim and apocalyptic preaching is counterproductive—especially with the younger generation—in some respects he has taken to even greater extremes over the last year or so. [redacted]

28. As a result, the gulf between the once charismatic Castro and the populace seems to have widened to the point where today his ability to inspire and mobilize is at its lowest level ever. His extreme denunciations of neocapitalism and his insistence on equating all entrepreneurial impulses with corruption and counterrevolution also seem to place him firmly at the extreme hardline fringe of world Communist leaders. In a major speech last October he even seemed inadvertently to equate Communism with hardship and constant struggle. "What is Communism?" he asked, "A society of abundance? Can we equate the idea of Communism to something so crude, vulgar, or absurd?" [redacted]

Raul Castro and the State Within the State

29. As the quality and credibility of Fidel Castro's leadership have eroded, the influence and visibility of his younger brother, Raul, have markedly increased. Raul Castro was born in 1931 and has officially been first in the line of succession since January 1959, and is second in every party and government chain of command behind his brother. Beginning in 1959 his power derived almost exclusively from his position as armed

forces minister, but since 1985 he has played a more prominent civilian leadership role as well, and now often appears in public in civilian clothes. These and other developments gave rise to speculation that he would assume a larger leadership role at the party's Third Congress last year, and that perhaps he would even succeed his brother as first secretary. [redacted]

30. Although the younger Castro did not acquire a new title at the congress, his position was considerably strengthened. At least four of the 14 Politburo members—including his wife and a senior general who became full members—are close associates, as are at least five of the 10 alternates. Now there are also at least six *raulistas* in the nine-man party Secretariat. In addition to the Castro brothers, moreover, only Raul's associates Jorge Risquet and Jose Machado Ventura serve simultaneously on the Politburo and the Secretariat, suggesting that the coordination between policymaking and implementation may now be largely in the hands of *raulistas*. Finally, the younger Castro's claim to the succession was made all the more secure during the party congress because his potentially strongest rival, former Interior Minister and revolutionary veteran Ramiro Valdes, was removed from the Politburo. [redacted]

31. These changes were undoubtedly welcomed in Moscow, where Raul Castro and leading *raulistas* have long been Soviet favorites. Since the guerrilla struggles of the 1950s, in fact, when Raul Castro was already affiliated with Cuba's prerevolutionary Communist Party, he has been widely viewed as the most unwaveringly pro-Soviet leader in Fidel Castro's original entourage. Judging from the frequency of his travels to the USSR and Eastern Europe, as well as from his public statements, he has also emerged as one of the regime's most important interlocutors with leaders in those countries. Unlike Fidel Castro, moreover, who manages to avoid lengthy public discussions of Cuban-Soviet relations and who rarely uses Soviet or Marxist

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anniversaries for speaking appearances. Raul Castro performs frequently as a predictable and uncritical friend of the Soviet Union. For all these reasons, and because of Raul Castro's reputation as an effective administrator, Kremlin leaders are probably more comfortable dealing with him than with his mercurial brother [redacted]

32. The younger Castro's position has been so conspicuously strengthened, in fact, that by the end of last year he actually felt compelled to speak on the record in an apparent effort to clarify his and his brother's roles. In a lengthy published interview utterly without precedent in the 34-year history of their collaboration, Raul Castro defended Fidel Castro's record as a military leader and administrator in a way that suggested the latter had been under attack by military and other officials. "I would like to point out," he told the interviewer, "that Fidel has the traits and virtues of a military leader... a modest and unassuming way of dealing with people, and the ability to formulate ideas and transmit them in a precise manner." Raul Castro has never before felt it necessary to publicly vouch for his brother this way. The full text of the interview has been widely circulated in Cuba and internationally. First published in December 1986 in the Ministry of Interior journal *Moncada*, it has been reprinted in *Bohemia* (a large-circulation magazine), and *Granma* (the party newspaper), and was broadcast in its entirety by Havana Radio. [redacted]

33. Even more interesting than his defense of his brother's military skills was Raul Castro's extraordinary discussion of his own role. He said that "regarding what is said about a state within a state, I want... to make some things clear." He went on to discuss his leadership of the Second Front during the guerrilla insurgency against the Batista government in 1958, but undoubtedly intended the historical reference to refute current speculation that he and the *raulistas* were taking over the regime. Located in the Sierra Cristal Mountains to the east of the Sierra Maestra, where his brother was in command, Raul Castro's guerrilla force developed into the largest and in many respects most effective of the rebel forces, including the First Front commanded by his brother. Raul Castro was the only rebel commander actually to gain control over a large territory and population; moreover, though still in his mid-twenties at the time, he proved to be an imaginative and respected administrator of that area. Even so, he reminded the interviewer, "During the war many worthy cadres were from the First Front. They were designated by Comrade Fidel to extend the armed struggle to other parts of the country and they logically helped with internal organization." [redacted]



Figure 3. Raul Castro in 1958 in the Sierra Cristal. [redacted]

34. Although it seems that one purpose of the interview was to bolster Fidel Castro's eroding credibility, it is significant that Raul Castro was neither as self-effacing nor deferential toward his brother as he had almost invariably been in the past. At times he actually boasted, commenting, for example, that "on the Second Front we reached a higher level and improved the organic structure to such a degree that in September 1958... Fidel called it a 'model' of organization, administration, and order." Furthermore, by broaching the subject of "a state within a state" himself, the younger Castro was actually enhancing the credibility of the idea, especially considering that he never explicitly denied that such a sharing of power existed either in the late 1950s or today. Thus, he has reinforced speculation that his power continues to increase at the expense of his brother's. [redacted]

35. Another historical metaphor that seems to have considerable significance for the Castro brothers concerns their reunion early in the insurgency at a place in the sierra called Cinco Palmas. They met in December 1956 after a grave setback and after having been separated for a few weeks, each with a few colleagues. In the interview last December Raul Castro described Fidel Castro's reaction when they were reunited: "When the five of us arrived to join him, he made the unforgettable comment... 'Now we'll win the war.'" For his part, Fidel Castro had not previously focused on that aspect of the incident, and it is no doubt of considerable significance, therefore, that he chose to emphasize it in a major speech last 26 December. "If our people in the past were capable of overcoming very big obstacles and winning very big battles," he said, "now that we just had the 30th anniversary of that meeting of Raul and me in Cinco Palmas, I can repeat today: We are truly going to build socialism." The audience of regime officials—although long accustomed to confining their adulation to Fidel Castro alone—responded with shouts of "Viva Fidel. Viva Raul." [redacted]

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Is Raul His Brother's Keeper?

36. While such developments seem to indicate that the power of Raul Castro and the *raulistas* has expanded considerably over the last year or so, it is unclear exactly how Fidel Castro's traditional hegemony has been affected. With the exception of his remarks about Cinco Palmas and an extensive endorsement at the party congress of his brother's legitimacy as his successor, the elder Castro has not acknowledged any changes in his role. He continues to speak out on a wide range of subjects and to receive considerable attention in the official media. He personally orchestrated the campaign against materialism and neocapitalism. He meets with a large number of foreign visitors and evidently continues to dominate foreign policymaking. There has been no reporting of plotting against him, of any organized opposition groups anywhere on the island, or of efforts to restrict his authority. Thus, there is little doubt that he continues to function as the single most powerful individual in Cuba. []



Figure 4A. Fidel Castro in July 1983. []

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Figure 4B. Fidel Castro in September 1986. []

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37. But there is also ample reason to speculate that the virtually unquestioned hegemony that Castro previously exercised has eroded. Discontinuities in his leadership and rhetoric have been striking and inexplicable by his past standards. His failure, for instance, to launch a campaign or even any initiatives to suppress counterrevolutionary activities is unprecedented. Similarly, his failure to participate in a series of rallies and protests in front of the US Interests Section in Havana last December following an SR71 reconnaissance flight is difficult to explain, especially because other Cuban leaders delivered anti-US harangues. Indeed, his absence from mass rallies and his lack of direct contact with the populace is incompatible not only with his well-known style, but with his narcissistic personality requirements. Such changes in his behavior, and in his brother's ostensible role, may be explained by one or more of the following hypotheses. []

1983. Castro publicly ridiculed such rumors early in 1986—though it may be significant that he did so without incontrovertibly denying them. "Some say that I have I don't know how many tumors. The truth is that the machines haven't discovered them yet... I will have to have an X-ray taken just in case these people are correct." The rumors have been more effectively belied by Castro's record of public appearances and foreign travel since early 1986. The dozens of speeches and other appearances he has made, and his trips to the USSR, North Korea, Zimbabwe, and Angola would have exhausted many younger, healthy men. []

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38. **Fidel Castro Is Seriously Ill.** Since late 1984 intermittent reporting from various sources has suggested that Fidel Castro has suffered from various serious ailments. That reporting has been reinforced by numerous indications in his public appearances that he is preoccupied with matters of health and mortality, by his widely publicized decision in 1986 to give up the cigars that for years had been a trademark, by his frequent coughing during public appearances, and by reports from people who have met with him over the last two years that he looks pale and sickly. A doctor who has published a popular biography of Fidel Castro says he may have suffered a heart attack in

39. **Castro Is Willingly Yielding Power.** Under mounting pressure from Moscow and elite groups in Cuba to decentralize and depersonalize the regime, Castro may have decided to delegate more power to his brother and the *raulistas*. Since consolidating his personal hegemony in the early 1960s, he has been vulnerable to charges that he has ruled by perpetuating a cult of personality. Numerous allusions in his speeches suggest that he has tried for that reason to reduce his visibility. Before the party congress it was rumored, for instance, that he would step down from one or more of his top positions in favor of his brother



in order to concentrate on Cuban foreign policy and military training. But he did not do it. Indeed, probably everything that is known about Castro indicates that he would be unable for long to observe passively and yield any significant degree of power to others. [redacted]

40. *Raul Castro's New Prominence Is Meant To Deceive Fidel Castro's Critics.* It is possible that Fidel Castro has skillfully orchestrated his brother's and the *raulistas'* rise to greater prominence in order to persuade Soviet leaders, as well as his domestic critics and others, that he is willing to share power through the party's collective leadership. Such a rise would be entirely consistent with his byzantine instincts and with his extraordinary ability to manipulate and deceive. He might reason that by appearing to accept a reduced leadership role, he could persuade Moscow to augment its economic subsidies to his regime and even increase the chances of winning concessions from the United States that would help relieve domestic pressures. However, to be successful in assuaging Soviet concerns, Castro would almost certainly have to curtail or abandon his present campaign against neocapitalism and materialism in Cuba, and cease criticizing the USSR. [redacted]

41. *A Genuine Power Struggle Is Under Way.* The key proposition distinguishing this hypothesis from the three above is that Fidel Castro is *involuntarily* yielding power. It could be argued in this context that in his "state within a state" interview Raul Castro actually intended to announce indirectly that his brother was no longer the revolution's unquestioned "maximum leader." By this reasoning, the younger Castro may have already begun gradually to restrict his brother's hegemony in the belief that the latter is no longer physically or mentally competent or that the revolution is endangered. Raul Castro would be most likely to cross that Rubicon if leading *raulistas*—including ranking generals and Politburo members—also were convinced that Fidel Castro's authority had to be constrained. So far, however, there is no clear evidence to support this hypothesis. [redacted]

42. Although it is not yet possible to predict how the relationship between the Castro brothers will evolve, it now seems to loom as one of the most critical variables that will shape the future direction and leadership of the Cuban revolution. The conventional wisdom about Raul Castro holds that since their childhood he has been in awe of his brother and content to remain in a subordinate role. [redacted]



Figure 5. Fidel and Raul Castro at the Third Communist Party Congress, 1986. [redacted]

[redacted] Since he joined Fidel Castro's revolutionary movement in the early 1950s, there have been only a few instances (all of them more than a quarter century ago) when the two appeared to be openly at odds. The younger Castro has otherwise appeared unwavering in his support through the entire steeplechase course his brother has pursued. It would seem to follow that Raul Castro would be extremely unlikely to challenge his brother's hegemony except in certain extreme situations. [redacted]

43. But just as Raul Castro's important military and administrative contributions during the insurgency against Batista have been largely unheralded, his important role during the first year or two of the regime has also been generally overlooked. He was a committed, pro-Soviet Marxist years before Fidel Castro became a convert, and he probably exerted a stronger ideological influence on him than any other individual except Che Guevara. Raul Castro was openly hostile to the United States long before his brother was, and frequently pressed for the adoption of radical policies certain to antagonize Washington. For a period during the insurgency he held a few dozen US citizens as hostages in an act of apparent

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Figure 6. Minister of the Revolutionary
Armed Forces Raul Castro. [] ©

insubordination that undermined support for Fidel Castro's cause in the United States. On other occasions Raul Castro is believed to have played an independent and decisive role, and at a few crucial junctures, to have pushed his own policy agenda. Considered from this perspective, he might be willing to move against his brother if he believed the need to do so was compelling. []

44. In addition, although all of the leading *raulistas* have also worked closely with Fidel Castro and have apparently enjoyed his full confidence, their outlooks and styles seem to differ substantially from his. Whether in top military, party, or government posts, the *raulistas* are believed to put a high priority on maintaining intimate ties to the USSR and on recreating in Cuba the "organization, administration, and order" that Raul Castro said in his "state within a state" interview prevailed in the Second Front. None of the *raulistas*, including Raul Castro, appear to possess charismatic qualities, and, none share Fidel Castro's passion for mass rallies and mobilizations. Instead, they probably favor technocratic, collective leadership, and are undoubtedly greatly concerned about Cuba's worsening domestic crisis and the rising tensions in relations with Moscow. []

45. From this perspective, then, it is conceivable that Raul Castro could lead or join in a cabal intended to gradually restrict his brother's hegemony. For the first time since 1959, moreover, Fidel Castro appears to be highly vulnerable to such a conspiracy because it is not certain he could depend on any of the three bulwarks that uphold his regime:

- The military and security services are under the command of Raul Castro and *raulista* generals who have been with him since the Second Front, and there have been a number of signs since late 1983 of armed forces dissatisfaction with Fidel Castro's leadership.

— Raul and his associates seem to constitute the largest single bloc in the Politburo and Secretariat of the Communist Party

— Most significant perhaps, is the fundamental change that has occurred over the last few years in Fidel Castro's credibility and contact with the Cuban masses. When he felt his primacy threatened in the past he typically staged mass rallies and mobilizations to demonstrate his substantial popular support, which always intimidated his opponents. Today, it is doubtful that he could mobilize a mass of supporters large and enthusiastic enough to cow a determined and well-organized opposition that included his brother []

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Implications for the United States

46. On balance then, it seems that, if the many negative trends undermining Fidel Castro's leadership persist, it will be increasingly unlikely that he will be able to preserve his hegemony. He is apparently already under intense Soviet and domestic pressure to decentralize, depersonalize, and otherwise rationalize the regime, and the longer he presses his crusade against individual enterprise and initiative, the stronger the opposition to him is likely to become. The concessions he already seems to have made to critics of his autocratic and personalistic style may have been largely involuntary; if so, further restrictions will probably be placed on his direct contact with the masses and on his assumed right to unilaterally announce new initiatives. Thus, it is conceivable that Castro's current rectification campaign may be the final test of his leadership. Unless he can restore some measure of social and economic stability, revive popular confidence in the revolution, and assuage the concerns of Cuban officials and Soviet leaders, his authority will probably continue to erode. []

47. The other key variable of course is Raul Castro. If, in fact, he has not already crossed his personal Rubicon and put his relationship with his brother on a new plateau, the pressures on him to do so are likely to intensify steadily. It is unlikely, however, that Fidel Castro will be deposed or disgraced if others gain the upper hand. His brother and leading *raulistas* would probably want to install the elder Castro in some emeritus or ceremonial position from which he could provide residual legitimacy while being prevented from interfering in decisionmaking. []

48. In any situation in which Fidel Castro's hegemony is threatened, the greatest danger for US inter-

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ests is that he will react, as he typically did in the past, by striking out boldly and dangerously and by taking major risks to bolster his position. He would like to export tens or hundreds of thousands of the disaffected to the United States, either as a result of negotiations, by unleashing another massive boatlift, or possibly through some risky initiative involving the Guantanamo Naval Base. Although so far he has been wary of confronting the Reagan administration, he might conclude that US resolve has been diminished by recent developments. He may believe that the danger posed by domestic threats exceeds the risk of confronting the United States. When under intense domestic pressure in the past, he was more likely to seek some international outlet for his frustrations by increasing support for revolutionary groups or relatively high risk covert operations. However, the longer Castro refrains from such aggressive actions, the more likely it will seem that his hegemony has already been circumscribed.



Figure 7. Raul Castro: A more human and sensitive side.

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49. Estimates of how a collective leadership dominated by Raul Castro would perform are highly speculative at best. Although he has consistently expressed strong nationalistic and anti-US attitudes, and was possibly even more extreme in these regards in the late 1950s than his brother, he may have become more pragmatic as his responsibilities have multiplied. As an effective and respected administrator, he is experienced in balancing competing interests and factions, and most importantly, he has functioned for years as one of the principal intermediaries between his brother and others in the leadership. Persuasive evidence suggests, furthermore, that the younger Castro is emotionally more stable and predictable than his brother, and considerably less likely to base international initiatives on personal grudges, grievances, or resentments. Thus, from the US perspective, the most salubrious result of a dynastic succession in Cuba could be the end of a more than 28-year era characterized by Fidel Castro's visceral and intractable animosity toward the United States blocking every effort at reconciliation.

Raul Castro remains in touch with sisters who live in exile, is known to have had a close relationship with his parents, and is still respected by male and female friends and intimates from the 1950s. He is known for the loyalty and generosity extended to associates who have fallen out of favor with his brother and for a genuine sense of humor (totally lacking in Fidel Castro). A number of sources have reported, furthermore, that, unlike his brother, Raul Castro has maintained the respect and admiration of subordinates over extended periods of time.

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50. Though the evidence since the late 1950s clearly established that Raul Castro can be as tough as his brother, equally compelling information in recent years reveals a more human and sensitive side. In sharp contrast to Fidel Castro, he is known to be intimate and altruistic with relatives and friends. He has been married to Vilma Espin since 1959, and, although they were divorced for a period and then remarried, over the last few years they have traveled together on the island and abroad, and appear frequently at the same public events. Unlike his brother,

51. Although it is, of course, difficult to project such personal and professional traits into generalizations about how Raul Castro might conduct Cuban foreign policy, it seems likely at a minimum that, under his leadership, Cuba would be a more predictable neighbor. The *raulistas* would no doubt move swiftly to correct relations with the Soviet Union and would probably at least curtail Fidel Castro's campaign against individual enterprise and initiative. They would probably place a high priority on winning back popular support for the regime through the use of material incentives. They might be inclined to reduce military spending and the size of the armed forces, especially if they abandoned Fidel Castro's paranoid view of a beleaguered Cuba in mortal danger of a US military attack.

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52. They would probably also be more sensitive to popular opposition to Cuba's large military presence in Angola and to the danger that AIDS and other serious infectious diseases imported from Africa will cause. The *raulistas* would be unlikely to abandon interest in Latin American revolutionary groups or the Sandinista regime, but they would probably be more parsimonious and cautious in supporting them, while placing a higher priority on improving state-to-state relations in the hemisphere.

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53. A *raulista* regime would probably also move, at least temporarily, into closer alignment with Moscow. The Soviet civilian presence on the island would almost certainly grow. Cuba would probably receive additional economic support, and would cooperate more to integrate its economic planning and development with the USSR and the remaining CEMA countries. A *raulista* regime would be more likely, therefore, to alleviate some of the island's most serious economic problems and to begin bringing some order out of the administrative chaos caused by Fidel Castro's incessant interventions and extreme prescriptions. It might then win greater backing and respectability in Latin America and the West generally.

54. It is not at all clear, however, how long a *raulista* regime could survive. Although he was first

designated his brother's successor in January 1959 and presumably has prepared for his turn in power ever since, Raul Castro arouses little popular enthusiasm. Despite his recent efforts to ameliorate his image, moreover, he is still perceived by many Cubans as a ruthless hardliner. Thus, his personal authority and legitimacy would probably be relatively weak, forcing him to depend on *raulista* generals and party officials to form a collective leadership. Under such circumstances, rival leaders, factions, and elites would probably begin jockeying for power, and it is doubtful that he could balance and manipulate them as Fidel Castro has. The odds would then probably be good that some presently unidentified pragmatists would want to begin improving relations with the United States even at the expense of Cuba's military and economic ties to the Soviet Union.

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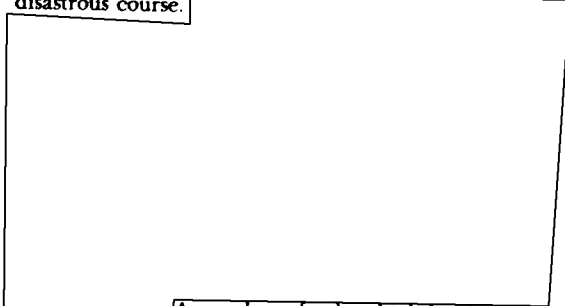
ANNEX

On a Collision Course With Moscow

1. Castro and Gorbachev have increasingly diverged over the last year or so on such key issues as decentralization, democratization, the use of market mechanisms, the role of intellectuals and dissidents, and cult of personality. The Soviet leader and his reforms have received scant attention in the Cuban media, and, as of May 1987, Castro had still managed to almost completely avoid public mention of *glasnost* and of Gorbachev personally. The official Cuban position on the Soviet reforms was typified by a cool, two sentence Radio Havana announcement in late February noting that "an extensive description of the restructuring process practised in the Soviet Union was given in Havana" by the Soviet ambassador. There was no mention of which Cuban officials attended nor was there comment on the nature of the reforms.



2. While he appears to respect Gorbachev for his audacity, vitality, and decisiveness, Castro is also convinced that the Soviet leader has embarked on a disastrous course.



A number of other high-level Soviet officials have also visited Havana since late 1986, and all have no doubt brought the same message of rising impatience with and concern over the radical and dogmatic course that Castro has taken.

3. Castro's ambivalence toward the Soviet leader—respecting him personally while despising and fearing his policies—has been evident in his public appearances. When asked by foreign journalists on at least two occasions in recent months to characterize Gorbachev, Castro was fairly effusive in his praise, and seemed intent on emphasizing his respect for Gorbachev's skills as a leader. In speeches, however, he has voluntarily uttered Gorbachev's name on only a

few times since returning from Moscow after attending the Soviet party congress in February, 1986. Whatever their relationship, it clearly got off to a troubled start when Castro failed to attend the funeral of Konstantin Chernenko, which marked the beginning of Gorbachev's rule. Castro claimed that important domestic matters required his presence in Cuba, but then permitted even that poor excuse to be undermined by making time for a lengthy interview by a US network anchorman.

4. Even during his visit to Moscow in late February and early March 1986 for the party congress, Castro refused to endorse the Soviet reform program then emerging. In his speech at the congress he addressed Gorbachev warmly and praised his "brilliant and valiant main report." He immediately added, however, that "it is not for us guests to pass judgments . . . or to make suggestions as to what can or should be done . . . (The Soviet) people and party will know how to conquer these obstacles." To distance himself even further from the reforms, Castro went on to assert his view that "the greatest of these" threats is to world peace, and then devoted the remainder of his address to international issues. He took essentially the same line in an impromptu press conference in Moscow a few days later. After visiting the Swedish Embassy to pay his respects following the assassination of Prime Minister Olaf Palme, he was asked by Swedish journalists if the Soviet reforms "will have repercussions in Cuba?" Castro skillfully avoided answering the question, reiterating that the most important issue was that of preserving world peace.

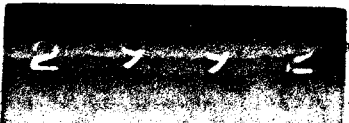
5. During his stay in the Soviet capital, Castro also may have intentionally offended his hosts by being absent from important sessions of the party congress. In particular, it appears that he did not attend on 3 March when Politburo member Nikolai Ryzhkov read the document that, among other things, described many of Gorbachev's domestic reforms. Instead, Castro visited the Institute of Organic Chemistry in Moscow, where he delivered an awkward and at times tense speech in which at one point he even had to defend his decision to be absent from the congress proceedings. Following the Moscow sojourn, he traveled to North Korea where, according to the Cuban

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media, he was welcomed by at least one million people. The extensive and dramatic Cuban press treatment of the visit to Pyongyang contrasted sharply with that afforded Castro while he was in the USSR.

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6. Within a few months of returning to Cuba, Castro began publicly to criticize the USSR. On at least a half dozen occasions he has used various veiled and indirect formulations to identify major areas of disagreement. Tensions are probably higher now in fact than at any time since the late 1960s, when relations reached their lowest point ever. As at that time, problems result in large part from Castro's stubborn resistance to Soviet pressure on him to adopt new procedures and frameworks to bring order out of the chaos of the Cuban economy. He knows that decentralizing reforms would undermine his personal hegemony and could give impetus to another cycle of neocapitalism. He also strongly resents the interference of Soviet officials in the internal dynamics of the Cuban revolution and has concluded that earlier administrative and managerial reforms imposed by Moscow were disastrous.

7. In four major speeches since June 1986 he has drawn attention to this grievance. On 26 June 1986, he complained of externally imposed solutions and invoked the memory of Che Guevara—the most anti-Soviet leader of his revolutionary inner circle in the 1960s—who he said "mistrusted those mechanisms." "We made mistakes when we copied the experience of others," he asserted, "and we made mistakes when we copied the experience of others under different historical circumstances . . . a different state of mind and psychology. That is why we are deeply concerned about current events." It is clear from this and similar references that Castro compares the present state of Cuban-Soviet relations to the all-time nadir that occurred in the late 1960s. It was then that Havana was compelled, under unrelenting pressure, grudgingly to accept Moscow's prescriptions.

8. On 2 December 1986, speaking to top party leaders, Castro raised the subject again, complaining that acceptance of the Soviet "mechanisms" had been "one of the worst things that happened to us . . . the blind belief that the building of socialism is essentially a problem of mechanisms." He then went on to press his belief that socialism and Communism can only be built through "political and revolutionary" work. On 7 January 1987, in another speech before party officials he returned to the theme. He said that "mistakes were made and anarchic tendencies developed" after Soviet-imposed approaches were adopted in the early

1970s. Those abuses were "much worse than the idealist mistakes" that he and Guevara had made in the 1960s when they were in sharp conflict with the USSR over a range of domestic and foreign policy differences. "At least those (idealist) mistakes did not jeopardize the people's consciousness," Castro added. At the heart of the argument in each of these important speeches about Soviet "mechanisms" was Castro's conviction that they ignored the "moral principles, values, and conscience" that "make men achieve great things."

9. Castro has pressed the issue, moreover, by denouncing those—presumably both in Cuba and the Soviet Union—who are experts in Marxist-Leninist ideology. On 7 January 1987, he said that "Here, there used to be many 'priests' who were considered well-versed because they were bookworms and experts in Marxist concepts . . . and quotations. They read all the volumes. It seems that while some worked, others dedicated themselves solely to reading. They were converted into a type of Marxist-Leninist priest." A week later he warned "Let no one think that by taking a course in Marxism-Leninism we know all about the problems we are discussing . . . Such problems are not listed in any book or manual . . . (and are) not mentioned in classrooms." In these sharp criticisms, he seemed to put the Kremlin on notice that he will not be persuaded by ideological arguments, that he understands Cuba's needs better than anyone in Moscow, and that in his country judgments about policy and ideology are made by him alone.

10. His public criticism of the Soviet Union has also extended to other important subjects. He has long been irritated that Cuba has been assigned to a role as a producer of sugar and citrus in CEMA, and that Moscow is opposed to his desire to diversify economically. Thus, when on 14 January 1987 he complained publicly that "Cuba has to produce billions of tons of food for other countries—sugar, citrus, and others . . ." he was certainly referring to what he considers a humiliating problem. On two occasions since fall 1986 he has also sought to distance himself from Moscow when speaking to Third World audiences. In a speech in September 1986 at the Nonaligned Summit in Harare, he described "military pacts that divide the most powerful nations in antagonistic blocs" as "anachronisms that must be eliminated." And, in an interview with a Brazilian weekly in March 1987, he said that the "developed countries including the socialist ones . . . must contribute money" for economic development in the Third World. "With just 20 percent of what is being spent on the arms race," he said, "we could resolve the foreign debt and the problems of underdevelopment."

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11. On balance then, it appears that Castro's problems with the USSR are remarkably similar to those he had in the late 1960s, even though today there are no significant differences between the two countries' policies in Latin America. He is concerned that his hegemony is threatened by a worsening domestic crisis and by intensifying Soviet efforts to dictate Cuban responses. He knows, moreover, that although he was able to maintain his primacy during the 1970s while acquiescing in the Soviet-sponsored decentralization and institutionalization of his regime, he is not likely to

fare as well under similar Soviet pressure in the late 1980s. Castro will be 61 in August 1987 and his energy and popularity have eroded substantially. His position is further weakened, moreover, by the likelihood that no sustainable economic recovery is possible in the foreseeable future, and the clear evidence that he can no longer readily inspire and mobilize the populace to join him in difficult crusades against heavy odds. His deepening confrontation with Gorbachev may, therefore, prove to be the most reckless gamble that he has taken in nearly 20 years.

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