



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT CANF (II)

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On the Future of Cuba

Why should the exiled community prepare for a post-Castro Cuba?

JMC: In Eastern Europe, freedom came by surprise. Not even the West Germans were prepared. Therefore, many mistakes were made. This should not happen in Cuba. We know that Cuba will be free. Weakened by the end of subsidies from his former Soviet benefactors, Fidel Castro faces a growing democratic opposition movement and a moribund centralized economy that will decline by about 20 percent in 1992 alone. Cuban exiles, the West and the international business community would demonstrate an enormous lack of judgment if they ignored the prospects for change and stopped considering the challenges and opportunities that a post-Castro Cuba would present.

Cubans on the Island do not enjoy the freedoms of expression or assembly necessary to thoroughly discuss options for a transition to democracy and a market economy. Given this reality, an interim government would face the challenge of a transition without the basic tools of deep prior research and experience in the market economy that would facilitate economic progress.

Those of us who live in freedom have a responsibility to fill that vacuum, to learn from the experiences of reformists in the former Soviet bloc, and to seek the necessary data and prepare workable recommendations that would help a new Cuban government rebuild Cuba's shattered economy.

To that end, we have established the Special Commission for the Economic Reconstruction of Cuba, which draws on the participation of a multinational panel of economists, diplomats and statesmen, and members of the board and administration of CANF. The purpose of the Commission is not to dictate policies to be followed by a post-Castro government, but to offer the results of a deep and thorough analysis of the priorities and socioeconomic changes that are required to carry out a successful transformation of the Cuban system.

What role can Cuban exiles play in helping in this transition from Marxism to democracy?

JMC: Cuban exiles can play an indispensable role in making real that dream of transforming Cuba into a free and democratic nation. To this end we must:

- Send a message of hope, reconciliation and unity to the people of Cuba. The worst crime committed by Castro against the Cuban people was not to steal their freedom, their property or their assets, but to destroy their hope for a better future. The most crucial message of CANF to the people of Cuba is one of hope for a future of freedom and prosperity in which all Cubans can participate and benefit. We need to make sure we discard the destructive and baseless myth that Cuban exiles only wish to return to the past or avenge the tragic events of the past 33 years.
- Warn foreign companies about the commercial and legal risks they assume in dealing with Fidel Castro. CANF members have taken this message to leaders in the political and business communities from Mexico City to Moscow that those who deal with Fidel Castro are not only extending the suffering of the Cuban people — they are also betting on the loser. We have stated that: Investments made in Cuba under the current circumstances should not receive the approval of private property laws passed by a future Cuban government. We believe that these investments should be considered as State property and treated according to this

definition. We will make every effort to ensure that no foreign investment made in Castro's Cuba enjoys the protection of the law and that the validity of every agreement is questioned.

- Prepare for Cuba's reconstruction and help revive Cuba's shattered economy. Cuban-Americans recognize their unique responsibility to assist in the democratic transition as soon as Castro leaves power. Cuba has a distinct advantage over the nascent democracies of Eastern Europe, and will be able to reap the tremendous socio-economic benefits of its intimate relationship with prosperous exiles, experienced in the ways of the free market, eager to help rebuild what the dictatorship has destroyed. Exiles should foster the process of peaceful change and national reconciliation in Cuba, not that of revenge or civil war. To facilitate this reconciliation process, we have established Mission Marti, a kind of Peace Corps that is training thousands of Cuban-American volunteers with experience in the fields of engineering, commerce, law, and medicine, among others, to cooperate in rebuilding Cuba after Castro.

Can Cuba recover from more than three decades of waste and decay under Castro?

JMC: Under a new leadership elected by the Cuban people themselves, one that respects individual and property rights, fosters economic stability, and allows entrepreneurs and workers to enjoy the fruits of their own labor, Cuba will surely serve as a beacon of prosperity for the Western Hemisphere. We who make up the Cuban people have what no post-communist regime in transition currently has. Cuban exiles can provide a tremendous base of entrepreneurial and professional talent that will contribute with their support and economic participation. Investments by the Cuban-American community during the first post-Castro year may exceed \$3 billion in capital infusions to help rebuild the Island. It only takes the vision and the will to seize this opportunity and eliminate, once and for all, the last vestiges of the cruelest political experiment of the twentieth century.

What guiding economic principles would the Cuban American National Foundation recommend to Castro's successors?

JMC: Since our inception in 1981, we have maintained our values and views with clarity and consistency:

- There can be no political freedom if economic freedom is denied. Governments that sever the link between effort and reward found in a free enterprise system undermine the economic prosperity and political freedom of citizens.
- Equality of opportunity and equality before the law are essential components of socio-economic progress. An effective democratic system must balance its judicial, legislative and executive authorities and protect the fundamental political and economic rights of citizens without regard to race, sex, religion, social class or economic status.
- A representative democracy in Cuba should emphasize provincial and municipal governments rather than the central government as the most trustworthy mechanism for preserving economic and political freedoms.
- Economic development requires that private property be respected and that contracts be protected by law. Without these guarantees of individual freedom, there is no nation that can sustain political stability and economic growth.
- The transition from socialism to democracy and free enterprise must be absolute and fast. The fragmented implementation of some selective reforms, such as price liberalization and free trade without accompanying legal and privatizing reforms, would obstruct economic growth and discredit the very concept of political and economic reform.

Castro's successors should not rely on bilateral foreign aid from governments or multilateral agencies to rebuild Cuba. The current international list of beggars is long and alms very scarce. Private investment, national and international, together with the recognized entrepreneurial talents of the Cuban people are the necessary driving force for economic reconstruction after Castro.

- No socio-economic transformation of the magnitude reflected in the Cuban situation can be successful without taking into account and being seriously

concerned about the suffering of the population exposed to high inflation, unemployment, shortages of food and other basic consumer products, and the uncertainty of a sudden change. A socio-economic system of "social shelter" must be installed quickly so that the transformation occurs with a minimum of suffering for those who have already suffered enough.

Should post-Castro Cuba retain the death penalty for crimes against the State? What should be done with those who are responsible for the repression and brutality against the population during the Castro era?

JMC: The death penalty did not exist in Cuba before Castro. It is our view that a post-Castro Penal Code should abolish the death penalty established by Castro through which more than 12,000 Cubans have been executed for "political crimes." A just nation cannot be built on the burning ashes of hatred and revenge left behind by a cruel dictator. If Cuba is ever to live in peace, its citizens must learn to forgive, though not forget. Those few who must be brought to justice for their extreme acts of criminal violence against the population during the Castro regime must be granted full protection under the law.

Should post-Castro Cuba abandon the free public health system established since 1959?

JMC: Before 1959, Cuba had one of the most advanced public health systems in the Americas. It was not "free" and worked better in cities than in the countryside. However, according to United Nations statistics, this system kept Cuba among the top three nations in the hemisphere, including the United States, in matters of public health. There is no such "free" public health system in Cuba today — or in any corner of the world. Someone always pays.

Today, it is the Cuban people who pay for a system whose best doctors, nurses, hospitals and equipment are reserved for the "*mayimbes*" — those privileged members of the Castro hierarchy — and for foreigners who can pay with dollars. The rest of the people have to turn to "home" care and rely on their exiled relatives to receive almost everything from antibiotics to aspirin from abroad. Post-Castro Cuba must concentrate its efforts on a significant improvement of the current

public health system, guaranteeing access to quality medical treatment for the entire population, regardless of the patient's ability to pay.

To have a high-quality public health system, it is critical that the nation increase the resources it devotes to its development. Currently, the Castro regime devotes more than ten percent of the gross national product to maintaining its military and repressive forces, while spending only three percent of the gross national product on public health. The eventual dismantling of Castro's monstrous military-repressive structure must free up enough resources to improve not only the public health system, but also the housing and education systems, making them all available to the Cuban people regardless of their political thinking or their social or economic class.

Just like in the health field, Castro boasts of significant improvements in education. Is this true?

JMC: As in the case of public health, Castro applies the Goebbels principle: a lie repeated enough becomes the truth. The education system in Cuba has not been able to improve on the basis of the significant achievements of the pre-Castro era. In the same way as in the field of health, pre-Castro Cuba was among the most advanced nations in Latin America in terms of education, taking into account basic indicators such as literacy level, number of high school graduates, number of teachers per capita, etc.

Even more indicative of the attention that democratically elected governments—such as those of Grau San Martín and Prío Socarrás in the forties and early fifties—devoted to education, is the fact that a larger portion of their national budget went to education than to the armed forces. In Castro's Cuba, education receives only one peso for every fifteen pesos spent on the military machine.

How can the new Cuba resolve the grievances of those who lost industries, farms, enterprises and other productive resources during Fidel Castro's rule without undermining a quick and effective transition to a prosperous democracy under the aegis of free enterprise?

JMC: Any transition from communism to free enterprise democracy is doomed to failure if it is not transferred to private hands and State enterprises and property become productive. But reform efforts in the former Soviet bloc clearly demonstrate that a blunt policy of restitution—that is, simply returning property to its former owners—can become a recipe for stagnation, uncertainty, and years of futile disputes. Even more importantly, this policy cripples investment and economic growth because contract and property rights cannot be guaranteed until all potential claim disputes are resolved. This policy also penalizes citizens who have suffered greatly under the old regime, while undermining their faith in the new opportunities presented to participate in and benefit from growth under the free enterprise system and the democratic process. It is our view that the restitution policy should be reserved for those cases where a title is not disputed and the owners of the confiscated property can make the investments and offer financial guarantees that grant jobs to cooperative members and others with a direct claim of work or residence on that property.

In other cases, an alternative to restitution may include compensation for those with properly certified claims, and/or restricted auctions in which claimants may opt for the right of "first rejection" based on the final price offered, which can be paid with compensation program bonds.

What is recommended for families living in apartments and houses confiscated by Castro?

JMC: No one should be forced to leave their current residence because of a property claim. The same protection should be granted to farmers with small plots of land and to operators of service and repair shops. In all possible cases, property should be sold to current residents and home operators, and to operators of small commercial and agricultural plots of land who are willing to work the land or create their own modest enterprise.

How do you propose to overcome the differences between Cubans on the Island and exiles who have experienced freedom and the economy of free enterprise?

JMC: Current residents in Cuba must join the transformation process through a system that provides significant incentives and opportunities for a tenant to become an owner and for an employee to become an entrepreneur. If this is not achieved, we Cubans will have conquered our freedom, but much of the deprivation and injustice suffered today will continue. In order to correct current grievances and prevent them from happening in the future, Cubans residing on the Island must receive a significant portion of shares and an active stake in those companies and properties sold to others by the State.