

FOCAL Chronicle on Cuba

October 2001

Domestic Affairs

October 24: At the opening of the School of Social Workers of Santiago de Cuba, President Fidel Castro pointed out some critical problems facing the island, namely that of the weight loss in infants and adolescents under 16 years of age. It has been noted that out of more than 2 million people in that group 96 315 require some kind of food aid. Currently 66 337 are receiving the aid and it is expected that by November all would have received it. Castro also referred to the high unemployment rates in eastern Cuba as well as to the food shortages in that region of the country. He also mentioned the special efforts the government is undertaking in order to mitigate and bring this situation to an end. (Granma, 25/10/01)

October 31: The Inter American Press Association (IAPA) condemns the surveillance and harassment campaign unleashed by the Government of Cuba against the Manuel Márquez Sterling Association of Journalists, an organization of independent journalists whose members have been prevented from holding professional development activities. (El Nuevo Herald, 31/10/01)

Economy

October 26: Press agencies are warning of a second "special period" in Cuba. The Peso is trading for 27 to the US dollar, twenty hotels have closed, one third of all hotel rooms are vacant and the dollar stores are showing shrinking sales. (The Miami Herald, 26/10/01)

October 28: The XIX Havana International Fair was inaugurated with the attendance of 1 650 firms from 60 countries. Martha Lomas, Cuban minister of Foreign Investments stated that Cuban priorities are centered on the areas of tourism, the energy sector and the sugar industry. Cuban Vice-President, Carlos Lage, said that the drop in tourism and the decline in family remittances from the USA have had an impact on the island's economy. (Radio and TV Martí, 30/10/01)

Exile Community

October 4: Cuban exiles file a lawsuit under Belgian war crime laws accusing President Fidel Castro of human rights abuses committed during his 42 years of power. The group of nine Cuban exiles launched the court case for crimes against humanity. (CNN, 4/10/01)

Terrorism

October 3: In a letter to Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, President Fidel Castro informs that Cuba has decided to adhere to the existing twelve international instruments related to terrorism, "three of which Cuba has already approved and ratified" He reiterates that Cuba "shall continue its efforts towards the conclusion of a general and comprehensive agreement against terrorism that would truly define such an obnoxious practice and allow the international community to face up to it in an efficient, urgent and lasting way, with the full support of the world public opinion and without unnecessary, useless and dangerous wars that multiply violence and hatred among the peoples." [See Chronicle on Cuba, September 2001] (Granma, 4/10/01)

October 10: José de la Fuente, the former director of research and development at the Centro de Ingeniería Genética y Biotecnología (CIGB) in Havana says, in the US, that between 1995 and

1998, Cuba sold Iran the production technology for a recombinant hepatitis B vaccine; an interferon used for the treatment of some viral diseases and various types of cancer, and streptokinase, used to treat heart attacks and other thrombolytic disorders. A deteriorating economy has forced Cuba to place its once prestigious biotechnology into the hands of nations that could be using science intended to save lives as a means to destroy it. The biotechnology used to manufacture three lifesaving medical products -- and which could be used to produce biochemical weapons -- has been sold to Iran. (The Miami Herald, 10/10/01)

October 13: On a visit to Havana, the British Energy Minister, Brian Wilson, said that Great Britain disagrees with the United States as to Cuba being a sponsor of terrorism. (El Nuevo Herald, 15/10/01)

October 24: At the Foreign Relations Committee of the US House of Representatives, Cuban-American Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen advocated for a closer attention to the threat that the Fidel Castro's regime poses on the security of United States [see Chronicle on Cuba, September 2001]. (El Nuevo Herald, 25/10/01)

US-Cuba Relations

October 16: The government of the United States informed the acting Head of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, Dagoberto Rodríguez, that the movement of Cuban diplomats on US soil has been restricted and that visas will not be granted to Cuban officials wishing to travel outside New York or Washington D.C. without special permission which will require 72 hours of advanced notification. These restrictions already existed during the Clinton administration but they were never enforced. (El Nuevo Herald, 18/10/01)

October 30: US business Executive Marvin Lehrer displays his products at the Havana International Fair (the main yearly industrial exhibition in the island). Boxes and bags of grains produced by Riceland and Uncle Ben's could be seen at the booth of the USA Rice Federation. (El Nuevo Herald, 30/10/01)