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Cuba building nuclear complex

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Reactors called accident safe

By LIONEL MARTIN

Reuters

Dallas Times Herald

CIENFUEGOS, Cuba — Cuba, only a hundred miles from populous southern Florida, is building Soviet-designed nuclear reactors which, it insists, will be safe even in the event of earthquakes, tidal waves or technological accidents.

The Communist-ruled island, which has limited oil reserves, no coal and no sizable rivers, is constructing its first nuclear-powered, electricity-generating complex on its southern Caribbean Sea coast near the mouth of Cienfuegos Bay, renowned for its rich shrimp spawning grounds.

In all, four reactors will be built on the site, each producing about 417 megawatts of electricity — more than the electrical output of the nation when Fidel Castro took over in 1959. The first two reactors are scheduled to be completed in 1990 with the others coming on line by the end of the century.

A senior engineer working on the two-year-old project said Cuba modified the original Soviet designs for the power plant to add safeguards against radioactive leaks in the case of disasters ranging from natural catastrophies to airplane crashes.

The engineer, Pedro Gonzales, said the \$2.4-billion project had been approved by the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna.

Gonzales said the cylindrical buildings housing the reactors will be topped by containment domes designed to prevent the escape of radioactivity into the air or sea in case of an accident — even the impact of an airplane crash.

He added that the safety modifications, which were made by Soviet designers in consultation with Cuban engineers, were completed

well before the Chernobyl accident last April, when a reactor explosion spewed radioactive material over wide areas of Europe and forced the evacuation of thousands of people from the immediate area.

Soviet authorities placed the major blame for that accident on human error, although Western experts said the design of the Soviet reactor, especially its lack of a containment vessel, also contributed to the severity of the accident, the worst in history.

Gonzalez said triple safety back-up features have been incorporated into the design of the Cuban reactors "so that if one element fails, others will take its place."

He also said the surrounding flora, fauna, earth and water within a radius of several miles will be monitored regularly to detect increases in radioactivity.

Work is under way at a nearby laboratory to study the natural environment of the area so there will be abundant data available for comparative studies in the future.

Water from the reactor will be treated at a special filtering plant to remove any traces of radioactivity before it is allowed to drain into the sea.

Cienfuegos Bay is an important commercial fishing area. After a recent oil spill from a Cuban ship alarmed local fishermen and government officials, Havana announced that Castro had reaffirmed earlier directives aimed at preventing contamination of the bay.

Gonzalez said engineers and other Cuban nuclear energy specialists had started to undergo training more than six years ago, preparing to operate the Cuban nuclear power plant when it starts up.

Cuba cuts back in austerity drive

Havana (Reuter) — Fewer hours of television, higher bus fares and less milk are among austerity measures for the new year spelt out yesterday by the official Cuban newspaper, *Granma*.

President Castro had announced the 28 austerity measures in a Christmas Eve speech to the National Assembly, but had not given details. He said Cuba faced economic problems in 1987 and that imports paid for with hard currency would fall from \$1.2 billion (£800 million) last year to half that amount.

Granma said that three of the measures would go into effect immediately, including a cut in television broadcasts that is expected to produce a saving of 20,000 tons of oil by cutting power use.

On January 5 bus fares will double, to become 12 cents, and a 20 per cent cut in the petrol assigned to government agencies and the elimination

of snack bars in government offices will also go into effect.

Children under seven will continue to receive a litre of milk each day at low cost, but milk consumption by the rest of the population will decrease because of the need to cut down imports of powdered milk from hard currency nations, the newspaper said. Starting on March 1, more than 100,000 students who receive free room and board will have their daily milk quota cut from half a litre to a third.

Granma said there would be a sharp cut in the number of cars used by government agencies and many of the cars would be sold to officials.

The canning industry would receive less sugar but would be expected to produce as much as before and the sugar saved would be sold to the public.

Government agencies would receive fewer mattresses,

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Cuba Indignantly Denies Drop In Cigars' Quality

By LIONEL MARTIN
Reuters

HAVANA — A sure-fire way to anger a Cuban patriot is to question the quality of the country's baseball players, boxers, rum or cigars.

So Cubans are indignant about recent charges by European tobacco distributor Zino Davidoff that the world-famous Havana cigar has deteriorated.

"No such thing," Roberto Yaech, commercial director of the Cuban Tobacco Enterprise, Cubatobacco, told Reuters recently. "We zealously guarantee the quality of our Havana cigars and of the Davidoff brand because we cannot afford to play lightly with our prestige."

The Davidoff trademark written in gold on the Havana cigar band is known throughout Europe. But the long-standing business relations between Davidoff and the Cubans came to an end last year in an emotional dispute.

Davidoff, a Swiss businessman, has initiated legal actions in Switzerland and the Netherlands, accusing the Cubans of sending him Davidoff cigars of inferior quality, and of invading his markets with their own Davidoff cigars.

"We have never sold those cigars in his territory," Yaech said.

Yaech acknowledges, however, the possibility that some visiting European businessmen might have taken cigars out of Cuba and sold them illegally in Davidoff's territory, without Cuba's knowledge.

"It is a case of contraband," he said.

The territorial division of Western European markets was fixed in a 1983 contract. Cubatobacco sells the Davidoff brand in Britain, France and Spain. Davidoff got the rest of continental Western Europe.

Spain is Cuba's biggest Havana cigar customer. This year Cuba expects to sell Spanish distributors about one-third of the roughly 90 million cigars it exports worldwide. Foreign sales bring Cuba about \$100 million a year, more than its present hard currency reserves.

The United States was once the biggest market but the cigars were banned when Washington imposed a trade embargo in the early 1960s.

Yaech said that under the 1983 contract, Cubatobacco is the owner of the Davidoff trademark. "It was the Havana cigar that made Davidoff famous," he said.

Cubatobacco insists that the dispute with Davidoff be settled in British courts under the 1983 contract, saying "British courts were chosen to be arbitor because of their impartiality."

What really irks the Cubans, however, is clearly the charge that its tobacco is not what it used to be.

Cubans are proud of their fine cigars. One advertisement shows a Havana cigar with the inscription "Since 1492," the year Columbus set foot on the Caribbean island and saw the natives smoking bundles of rolled, greenish-brown leaves.

The Cubans admit that the color of the

wrapper leaf, which comes in 56 shades, might be darker than before but says "it does not determine the quality of the cigar."

Yaech said that during one periodic inspection in Europe, Cuban experts found some Davidoff cigars to be too dry because they were not being kept in rooms with sufficient humidity.

"We insisted on replacing the cigars but only if Davidoff sent us certified proof that the old cigars had been incinerated," he said.

Cuba did replace some of the cigars but refused to replace the rest when certification of incineration was not forthcoming.

The Cuban tobacco official said that rather than sell inferior cigars, Cuba cuts back production of premium ones when farms were hit with a blue mold blight some time ago.

"Our cigars are still the best in the world," he declared, adding, "if Winston Churchill and John Kennedy were alive, they would still be enjoying the same quality Havana cigars that they were accustomed to."

Yaech said that the Romeo and Juliet tobacco company made special cigars that Churchill smoked throughout World War II.

According to Yaech, Kennedy got his cigars from a French distributor, and smoked them during his presidency, including the Cuban missile crisis.

Cuban cow leads in milk production

WR-67
econom

By Lionel Martin.

CUBA's champion dairy cow, *Ubre Blanca* (white udder), has produced 109.5 kg. of milk in 24 hours, a figure Cuban cattle experts describe as a new world record.

The Cuban daily *Juventud rebelde* reported that the cow, which lives on an island reputed to be the setting for Robert Louis Stevenson's "Treasure Island", set the new mark in three milkings on January 16, this year.

Ubre Blanca is three parts Canadian Holstein and one part Cuban zebu, a breed that can tolerate hot climates and dry spells.

She has a fortified diet which gives her between 113,000 and 128,000 calories a day.

The Guinness Book of Records says that the British and probably world record milk yield in a day 89.92 kg by a British Friesian, Garadon Minnie, in 1948.

Dr. Arabel Elias, Director of the Cuban Institute of Animal Science, who earned

his doctorate in Scotland, describes *Ubre Blanca* as a "wonderfully efficient milk factory."

Cuba's National director of Cattle Genetics, Ndugu Merejo Curbelo says "cows like *Ubre Blanca* are what we dreamed about when we set out almost two decades ago to produce a tropicalised Holstein."

Last July, President Castro visited the cow on *Juventud Isle* (Isle of Youth), a lush citrus growing island. At the time, the Cuban daily *Granma* reported that the president recommended a more enriched diet for the cow, which was already producing more than 70 kg. a day.

During the visit, President Castro said "the underdeveloped world of the tropics has never had the

privilege of having breeds of dairy cows capable of supplying this indispensable and valuable food (milk) in sufficient quantities."

Cuban cattle experts describe *Ubre Blanca* as a prize example of years of scientific cattle breeding.

Niurka Prada, Vice-Director of Cattle Genetics in Cuba says the aim of the Cuban cattle industry was to produce large numbers of "tropicalised Holsteins" that give an average of 6000 kilograms of milk in 305 days of lactation."

It was announced recently that *Ubre Blanca* had produced over 20,000 kg. of milk in 265 days.

Ubre Blanca, a black and white cow, is the descendant of some of Canada's finest Holsteins mixed with Cuba's best zebu.

Her sire was Naranjo Selling Jupiter, a bull born in Cuba from imported semen from a prize Canadian bull, *Selling Rockman*.

Ubre Blanca's mother was the offspring of a Cuban zebu crossed with the semen of *Rosafe Signet*, a Canadian bull bought by the Cuban government in the early 1960's.

In the early sixties, the Cuban government bought some 10,000 Holstein bulls from Canada. Later, it bought around 35,000 Canadian Holstein heifers and semen from 25 of Canada's best bulls.

Today, Cuba no longer imports bulls or semen. It has about 400 selected Holstein bulls of its own whose semen is used for artificial insemination.

One requisite is that each bull's mother was capable of giving at least 7,625 kilos of milk during a 305 day lactation period.

Cuba today has ap-

proximately five million head of cattle. Three and a half million belong to the government and the rest to private farmers.

There are now 93,000 pure Holstein cows and heifers on Cuban farms and more than one million mixed Holstein-Zebu dairy cows.

Government farms in Cuba produce about 800 million kilos of milk a year compared with less than 200 million a decade ago but Cuba still has to import large quantities of milk products, especially from Canada.

Ndugu Curbelo said the main problem was a feed shortage during the dry season from November to April.

Cuba has built up production of silage and molasses, torula yeast and citrus pulp are also used in concentrates.

Alfalfa grass has not thrived in Cuba, but the search for a tropical leguminous cattle feed continues.

"Ubre Blanca" in el "Daily News" (12-III-82) Dar-Es Salaam
Tanzania

February 14/1973

By Lionel Martin
Prensa Latina

This January, as Cuba celebrates 14 years of revolutionary rule, the Cuban economy faces an arduous climb. The revolution has brought an adequate diet, full employment, social welfare and education to the Cuban people. These are established facts. Nor do objective observers deny the general feeling of the people's identity with their leaders and their revolution.

What cannot be denied either and Cuban leaders do not deny it, is that critical problems still face the economy, problems which put all the energies and reserves of the nation in tension.

There is a cautious optimism in the air regarding the economy. This is not due to any spectacular gains or great leaps forward. It emanates from the fact that Cuba in 1972 fulfilled its main, albeit moderate, economic goals. Among these goals as summed up by Cuban President Osvaldo Dorticos were:

- To increase industrial production (non-sugar).
- To increase the domestic marketing of farm products.
- To increase general agricultural production.
- More dynamic increases in construction.
- To restore tobacco to its pre-drought level.

The actual economic plan covered a much wider area than these five points. These goals, however, were an absolute minimum projection for the economy to continue on its way out of the doldrums of 1969 and 1970.

Although final statistics for 1972 are not yet available, evidence indicates that all five goals have been met successfully. On the basis of incomplete statistics it is certain that substantial increases over 1971 will be marked up. This will signify the continuation of a general upward trend begun in 1971 after several years in which economic achievement aside from the sugar, fishing and nickel industries reached a critically low level.

What were the reasons for the dramatic downswing in 1969 and 1970? The best one-word explanation is "sugar."

Back in 1963 the Cuban government projected the audacious goal of producing 10 million metric tons of crude sugar in 1970, almost three million tons more than ever before and a good five million tons over the average yearly production.

As the end of the decade came into sight, all the resources of the nation were thrown into "the fight for the 10 million tons." Hundreds of millions of dollars were invested in renovating and expanding the sugar mills, in buying agricultural machines, trucks, chemical fertilizers and insecticides. Workers were diverted from non-sugar agricultural production and from industry.

As the harvest entered 1970 it became clear that it would be impossible to meet the 10 million goal. The problems were overwhelming—transportation, "bugs" in the newly installed machinery, the weather. In the end, eight and a half million tons of sugar were produced, the biggest harvest in Cuban history. However, the rest of the economy lay in a state of disarray.

In July 1970, Prime Minister Fidel Castro made a self-critical analysis of the situation. He lauded the persevering work of the people but "put forth, above all, our own responsibility."

Although the 1970 harvest fell short of its ambitious goal, the investments made in the industry were necessary for its long-term development.

Substantial investments in money and manpower have also been made in other spheres of the economy: electric power stations, hydraulic projects, textile mills, fishing, shoe manufacture, metal working, merchant marine, nickel, citrus and cattle. All these spheres are considered part of the correct strategy for Cuban development.

The years 1969 and 1970 were indicative of the failure of a short-term strategy. The sugar effort brought about a descending production curve in most other spheres of the economy (nickel and fishing were an exception).

In 1972, statistics that begin to tell the story were made available for the first time. Up until 1968, the gross social product (all material production in industry and agriculture in terms of value) rose steadily, from 6 billion pesos in 1962 to over 7.3 billion pesos in 1968. Within this total, industrial production rose from over 2.7 billion pesos in 1962 to over 3 billion in 1968.

Then came 1969 and 1970. Sugar production rose to new heights



but the rest of the economy plummeted downward. Industrial and non-sugar agricultural production fell far below the 1967-68 levels in both value and quantity. Cattle raising, a priority industry during most of the sixties, suffered a stunning blow; the number of cattle dropped from seven to five million. Milk production, 300 million liters in 1967, took such a dramatic downturn that it has taken until now to approximate the 1967 level.

The elimination of economic accounting and controls frequently led to exaggerations and misinterpretations of the economic reality. Problems were solved, catch as catch can, often without taking into account the overall repercussions. Cost accounting and productivity controls virtually disappeared. Goods and services passed from one governmental body to another with great statistical informality.

All this must be seen against the backdrop of a great popular upsurge of enthusiasm for meeting the 10 million ton goal. The exceptional identity between the Cuban leadership and the people never faltered. It was a leadership that showed itself willing to draw almost traumatizing conclusions, make self-criticisms and change policies when the time of reckoning came.

One of the first steps, in the words of President Dorticos, was to "reestablish the statistical controls and overcome the deterioration of statistical flow and discipline."

Since 1970, the reality of the labor force has hit Cuba with its full force. The fact is that the country's highly ambitious developmental plans surpassed the available supply of skilled and unskilled workers.

In mid-1970 there were almost 4.4 million able-bodied men and women of working age. In the active workforce, however, there were about 1.9 million men and a little over a half million women. An anti-vagrancy law for men was passed, which brought about 100,000 more men into the workforce.

The reserve of men for the workforce is considered exhausted. However, almost a million and a half women are not working outside their homes. There is a concerted drive on to bring these women into the workforce, but it will be a gradual process as traditional subjective restraints are eliminated and as more and more home chores are assimilated by social enterprises and institutions.

The man-woman power reality has obliged the Cubans to reduce expectations in the sugar industry in order to bolster up other sectors. Instead of allocating a half million workers for the sugar harvest, as it had done in 1970, it was necessary to conduct the sugar harvest with several thousand less workers.

But the more balanced approach given to other sectors of the economy meant a rise of 2 percent in gross production of material goods, including sugar in relation to 1970. If sugar is left out of the accounting, the rise in most industries amounted to 25 percent and even more. Nevertheless the drop in sugar production affected Cuban exports, which fell by some 200 million pesos (1 peso equals 1 dollar) between 1970 and 1971.

In 1972 there was a continuation of the previous year's trends, sugar down and production in the rest of the economy up. But the more balanced approach to the general economy also permitted the government to renew work on or terminate projects begun before the 10 million ton harvest, to make rational use of a vast number of imported machines and materials that had remained packed in crates or stored in warehouses during the 1970 harvest.

The growth of production in the non-sugar sphere was easily discernible. Food in public establishments improved noticeably throughout 1971 and 1972.

Light-industry production increases are reflected in the growing availability of certain products which had virtually disappeared from the stores, often simple but necessary products. Moreover, textiles, clothing, shoes, cosmetics and household conveniences are found in stock when the client arrives with his ration card. The rise in popular consumption of material goods will probably equal or surpass the 6 percent increase achieved between 1970 and 1971.

"Microbrigades," made up of workers released from their usual jobs to erect apartment buildings while their fellow workers fill in for them, were responsible for a sharp rise in housing construction. Approximately 30,000 microbrigade members were working on 1780 buildings with 27,181 apartments in November 1972.

In the year beginning September 1971, 44 "schools in the countryside," with a capacity for 500 students each, were completed. The curriculum at these free boarding schools includes three hours daily of productive work in the fields surrounding each school.

Cuban economy faces new tasks

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January, 1973



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notes from the underground

LETTER FROM HAVANA

Just back from a twenty-day sojourn to the province of Oriente, the main culprit for the fact that Cuba didn't reach the 10-million goal. And it wasn't the people's fault—they worked like demons. Fidel, in his speech announcing the news, complimented the workers for their "heroism" in the Zafra. Then he did what one would be hard put to find in other countries: he took the blame for the failure on his own broad shoulders—broader perhaps from his own four-hour-a-day stint in the cane fields with machete in hand during many months of the long harvest.

Back in March, I, along with everybody else, said that the Cubans would make the 10 million. Well, the fact was that the entire Cuban people were sure they were going to make it because Fidel had even said that it was a matter of honor for the Cuban Revolution. Over the year, I've seen the Cuban people do epic things on the basis of consciousness and will. Moreover, this time it seemed the planning was better than ever. A daily record was being kept of sugar-making activities in every zone of the country, and forces were rushed to the weak points to bolster them up.

In Oriente I was able to talk to many people who were on the front lines of the sugar harvest. What went wrong? Why did the giant sugar mills of Oriente fail to produce as much as was expected of them? The answer was clear. Fidel and the leadership had spent their main efforts in assuring that enough cane would be planted and cut and transported to the mills. That has always been the main problem—getting cane to the mills.

What they didn't foresee was that the problem would occur at the sugar mills themselves. Tens of millions of dollars were put into an expansion and renewal project in many of the mills. Technicians from socialist and capitalist countries accompanied the new machinery, and helped the Cubans to install it. What the leadership didn't know was that the process of expansion for the 1970 harvest should have begun not two, but at least five years before. There was an underestimation of the problems involved in superimposing new machinery on top of the old. And little thought was given to the problem of "bugs" that have to be ironed out—a process that sometimes takes years. All this led to unforeseen breakdowns in equipment and lack of

productive efficiency. This is reason number one for the short harvest.

Reason number two is that the expansion required qualified people to run the machinery. Again, there was an underestimation of the difficulties that would ensue due to a shortage of skilled men. Like the installation of machinery, training these people should have begun at least four or five years ago.

These two factors led to breakdowns and, what is more important perhaps, a lower productivity for each ton of sugar cane ground at the mill. In effect, statistics prove that enough sugar was ground to produce the 10 million, but that the low productivity reduced the final output substantially.

It all adds up to an eight-and-a-half million-ton crude sugar production—more than a million tons over the former record of 1962. Not bad, but at the same time, a great disappointment for the Cuban people.

In spite of the failure to achieve the goal, the Cubans are quite proud of their effort, and even prouder of their leadership which admitted its own errors. Instead of weakening the Revolution, it seems that the failure strengthened it. There is more consciousness of the need for training people, a more careful approach to goals, and a recognition that, as important as organization and techniques. Moreover, the harvest itself has been a tremendous teacher—lots of people gained lots of experience. The new areas of sugar cane and the new machinery are all there for future use, so, in that sense, there has been a gain that will reflect itself in the future. The Cubans are working hard to overcome their shortcomings under a new slogan: Turn Defeat into Victory. All in all, one becomes even more impressed with the difficulties involved in lifting a Third World country out of underdevelopment. But at least the Cubans are facing problems of development rather than the problem of stagnation like so many other countries of the Third World.

—Lionel Martin

CATALOGUE OF SMALL DEFEATS

Roselyn Drexler's new novel, *One Or Another*, is an extraordinary achievement. It is an uncommonly beautiful book, devoid of pretense and self-indulgence, and wholly true. By saying it is true, what I mean is: it is like us. About us. At times it is funny, at times embarrassing, at

Havana Is Talking About

The Profit Motive

By Lionel Martin
Reuters

Havana

IN ITS DRIVE to improve agricultural output, the Cuban government is appealing to the profit motive among farm workers.

President Fidel Castro is encouraging the expansion of farm cooperatives by emphasizing the high earnings their workers command.

When Castro asked a group of cooperative members near Havana the other day how much more they earn now compared with their days as private farmers, they shouted in unison: "Double!"

In 1975, there were only 43 farm cooperatives in Cuba. After especially rapid growth in the last two years there are now more than 1250.

Farm cooperatives and private farms together account for about one-fifth of cultivated land.



TO ENCOURAGE farmers to join together in cooperatives and to seek the amalgamation of small cooperatives, the government is offering incentives such as low-interest loans, the availability of scarce building materials for housing and expert technical advice.

Castro was enthusiastic about Cuba's 1981 farm output.

The tobacco crop, 82 percent of which comes from private farms and cooperatives, was a record, he said, and was free from the blue mold that destroyed 90 percent of the leaf in the previous harvest.

He also spoke about the flood of vegetables that appeared in Havana's markets this spring after almost two decades of short supply. Almost 70 percent of Cuba's vegetables are grown on private or cooperative farms.

The important sugar industry, although still recovering from last year's cane-rust blight, expects a reasonably good crop.

Although better organization has been an important factor in increased farm productivity, few here would deny that monetary incentives have been the essential ingredient.

Since January, farmers have received higher prices for their produce and farm laborers extra wages for improved productivity.

Last year, free farmers' markets, where private farmers and cooperatives sell directly to the public, were legalized.

The sellers can sell produce only after they have met their contractual commitments to the state. This stipulation has been an added incentive for increased production.

The law of supply and demand reigns at the free farmers' markets, which have ensured additional food for the population and growing profits for the farmers.

★ ★ ★

CUBA had 180,000 small private farmers in the early 1960s after post-revolutionary agrarian law reforms divided huge landholdings among thousands of former sharecroppers, tenant farmers and agricultural laborers.

Since then the number of small private farmers has fallen to 110,000 and is still declining.