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Center
Fidel on The Foreign Debt

On Fidel's Press Conference
in July 1985

The Foreign Debt

WP 305

for: time (miami) attn: bernard

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fidel castro's blast against president reagan and his central policy came during a press conference (3 hours) to a conference of latin american journalists. it came in response to maverick question because castro was more interested in talking about the foreign debt of the third world and latin america more than he was about president reagan.

in fact, the three day conference of journalists turned into a seminar on the foreign debt with castro speaking for at least six hours in his call for a +strike+ of debtor nations. in an unaccustomed role, it was castro who was warning that if the debt is not cancelled or if latin american nations dont refuse to pay, a revolutionary fire will sweep all of latin america. he insists, as many non-communist latin american economists and statesmen are also beginning to insist, that the latin american debt is unpayable and that even interest payments on the debt leave those nations in an untenable economic situation which depresses even further the already miserable state of affairs.

castro seemed almost obsessive in his insistence that the foreign debt issue be given priority. he answered the question about reagans policy in central america relatively briefly and then went back to the debt problem.

capitalist creditor and that the latin american nations they would not pay their debt. +the first thing i'd do would be to take an aspirin+, he answered.

he likened the creditor nations (the big capitalist creditors) with an elephant that has fallen into a pit-trap of pigmies. the latin american nations are the pigmies. they have to united to do something about the elephant in the trap because no single one can handle the situation. during the press conference he continued to use the term calling cuba and nicaragua +courageous pigmies+

the conference took place in one of the smaller halls of cu of the smaller halls of cuba's palace of conventions. fidel appeared energized, almost on a high, and occasionally left his sit before the microphone to pace back and forth.

the wonder of it is that castro had not slept in more than thirty hours. in fact. over the past few months it appears he has only gotten a few hours of sleep a night since almost every day he has given speech and interviews, the latter lasting into the wee hours of the morning. the press conference ended at 2 am and castro apologised that he must leave (the delegates were expected at the famed tropicana nightclub). but he said he didnt want anybody to go away without their question being answered. he gave orders to make a list of questions and their askers and promised to meet with each and every one of them.

over the past month castro has almost single handedly carried on a propaganda offensive around the foreign debt trying to encourage unified resistance by latin american and third world nation nations to paying it. castro the lawyer explained that +moratorium is a very legitimate legal device and that even the united states under roosevelt declared a bank moratorium at one time. he argues that the big western nations should absorb the debt by paying it off with money now used for the arms race. he said that if this is not done, latin american anations would no longer be able to buy u.s. and western industrialised nation products and that the fans of revolution would be flamed.

after castro used the allegory of the elephant and the pigmies, cartoons began to appear around the confenrece hall. one showed an elephant with his four hoofs retracted over his genital region.

a fidel castro with a big cigar is walking away in the distance and two observers watch. one observer asks: what happened? the other observer answers: +that guy just kicked the elephant you know

if castro didnt sleep for so long it was because, simultaneous with the journalists conference, a session of cubas national assembly was being held. he spoke for hours also at the national assembly about such themes as contamination of cuba's bays and river, and its effect on commercial fishing and especially shrimp and oyster production.

since january, castro has given numerous marathon interviews on the foreign debt. from the washington post and playboy to various women's conferences (congress of cuban womens federation and congress of latin american women).

as a matter of fact , he spoke at great length to the playboy interviewers about the foreign debt. playboy only used a tiny portion on that theme but the cuban newspapers printed that part in full.

castro sees the foreign debt issue as one that can united third world nations despite their social system. he even suggested that if pinochet of chile joined in jenuouncing payments on the debt he would be welcome into the circle of opponents notwithstanding the fact that cuba would continue to oppose his regime. the creditor nations are backed into a corner because it is impossible to force the nations of the third world to pay the debt, they just dont have it and each new loan adds to the burden.

castro sent out cuban delegations to the international women congress in maroibi nairobi and to the world youth festival in moscow with phamp pamphlets of his speeches on the debt to spread the word.

castro seemed extremely confident and one could surmise that he believed he had an issue that would help break cuba out of its isolation (political) and one that could become a rallying cry for sectors of latin american society, from businessmen to trade unionists.

castro is a man with a cause and at this time he is centering on the foreign debt to united the pigmies against the elephant (one journalist had to point out the elephant symbol fits since reagan is a republican)

thats it, bernard. hope some of the material is useful.
i couldnt get it through on the telex earlier (r problems at the
havana libre). bybybby

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