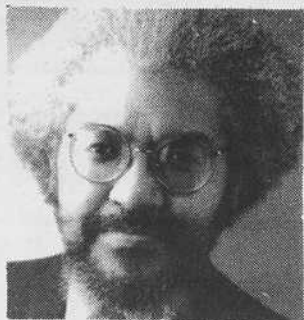


INTERNATIONAL

Along the
Color Line

By Dr. Manning Marable

Black Americans in Cuba

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The high point of the African-American delegation's June 1997 visit to Cuba, was our journey to Santiago, the country's second largest city. Santiago is located Oriente province, which has a very high concentration of Afro-Cubans. After our arrival early on a Sunday morning, our bus approached the city's center. In the heart of a huge public plaza was a massive statue of a powerful black man on horseback, surrounded by huge machetes. The statue honored the black revolutionary Antonio Maceo, the most influential general in Cuba's 19th century struggle for independence from Spain.

Standing before this magnificent statue, I could only reflect that nowhere in the United States was there a comparable public monument for an African-American militant or radical. Nowhere in this country, does the government truly honor revolutionary sisters and brothers like Nat Turner, Harriet Tubman, Paul Robeson, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Fannie Lou Hamer. We tend to recognize only those African-Americans whose histories or images can be distorted to support the power of the system.

In Santiago, the members of the delegation were invited to a public housing project one evening by the neighborhood office of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR). The CDRs are a mass organization of millions of average Cubans, which are organized like community block associations. This local CDR in Santiago consisted of four very large apartment buildings located in a working class community.

Upon our arrival, hundreds of people had already gathered in the local square. A lavish meal had been prepared for us. Children in their most festive apparel came forward to give cultural performances. Salsa was played from boom boxes and everyone one began to boogie. Our delegation gave thanks to our hosts by singing "We Shall Overcome." This anthem from the black freedom movement in Spanish is translated as "Venceremos."

It is impossible to describe how emotional this moment was. Under the brilliant night sky in the shadow of the Sierra Maestra mountains, where revolutionaries like Maceo and Castro had waged a revolution, we stood before proud, generous people who were seeking to build a decent life for themselves and their children. Nearly all of these Cubans who hugged and cheerfully surrounded us would be considered "black" in the United States.

The United States has done everything it can for nearly half a century to control the people of Cuba. Today, the Helms-Burton Law prohibits nearly all Americans from visiting the country. The U.S. Department of the Treasury does permit some journalists and scholars to have licenses for brief visits to Cuba, but when our delegation applied for a license the federal government refused to respond to our repeated inquiries. We were only granted our official license after we had already arrived at Havana airport.

Our experiences in Cuba point to the need for black Americans to recommit ourselves to an internationalist perspective. Paul Robeson, Dr. Du Bois and Malcolm X all understood that there was a fundamental unity of all people of African descent. The Helms-Burton Law and the Clinton administration's anti-Castro policies are a slap in the face to every black American interested in learning more about the Afro-Cuban people.

The Cubans are currently undergoing a major socioeconomic transition. It is my feeling that introducing "a little bit of capitalism" into a socialist society is like becoming "a little bit pregnant." The prostitution, drugs and greater disparities of income are only the beginning of the problems the Cubans must inevitably confront inside a growing capitalistic system. The Cubans have clearly made real gains on the racial front, but have much further to go on the issues of women's equality and gender discrimination.

Nevertheless, black Americans must take the lead in calling for an end to this country's illegal and immoral 37 year embargo against Cuba. We must always insist upon the right to engage in a critical dialogue with other people of color anywhere on earth.

Southern Africa's
transport system
is inadequate

Special to Sentinel-Voice

HARARE, Zimbabwe — Southern Africa's inter-state transport and communications infrastructure is still grossly inadequate to support the envisaged level of intra-regional trade and market integration. Zimbabwe's National Chamber of Commerce Trade Development and Information Manager, Bernard Maphosa, speaking recently at the regional conference on transport and communications, said: "Experiences have shown that without adequate, efficient and harmonized transport and communications infrastructure, full market integration cannot take place in the sub-region."

The conference, held in the northern Zimbabwean resort town of Victoria Falls, came up with recommendations for the region's governments to remove all non-tariff barriers to enhance the free movement of products and services. Adoption of the Trade and Development Protocol in August 1996 has propelled the 12-member Southern African Development Community, toward becoming a full-fledged Free Trade Area in 2004.

The conference reviewed harmonization of telecommunications systems and private sector participation in the development of transport and communications.

"The private sector, for certain, and even governments in the sub-region are very strong believers that development of transport and communications systems remain mutually inclusive, so much that we cannot talk of integration before harmonization," Maphosa said.

Washington-dictated policies questioned

By Wesley Gibbings
Special to Sentinel-Voice

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad — Washington-dictated macro-economic policy prescriptions received mixed reviews at the high-level Port of Spain conference held this summer to examine the prospects for new policy directions in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister Basdeo Panday set the stage at the start of the two-day meeting, concluding that the reforms prescribed in the 1980s by multilateral financial institutions "have not proved a panacea."

"Where benefits have accrued, they have not been obtained without a cost," Panday said.

He cited the example of Latin America where, "political uncertainty and high inflationary rates" persist.

He also pointed out that "several Caricom (Caribbean Community) states have been forced into successive devaluation of the currency to maintain internal stability, albeit at reduced wage and salary levels in the public sector, as well as certain areas of the private sector.

"This has worsened income distribution and contributed to rising poverty, high crime levels and increased social tensions," he said. "These conditions, in turn, have provoked angry protests by workers and precipitated a rapid turnover of political administrations.

"Such actions on the part of

the regions' citizens reflect their disillusionment with the gains from the reform process," Panday said.

He argued that despite years of structural adjustment, many Caribbean states remained dependent on preferential agreements such as Lome with the European Union, the Caribbean/Canada Trade Agreement (CARIBCAN), the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI), the Caricom-Colombia Agreement, and the Caricom-Venezuela Agreement.

The region's two major external trading partners are the European Union (EU) and the United States. Caribbean members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) grouping currently export more than \$1.85 billion per year to the EU, much of it related to rum, sugar, banana and rice protocols under Lome. Meanwhile, Caricom exports to the United States have fallen to \$1.62 billion in 1995 from \$2.8 billion in 1980.

Panday estimates that further declines will come as preferential conditions are eroded "as a result of the changed global environment."

Resident Coordinator of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Jan Jacques Van Eyndhoven said reforms are necessary but he wondered whether politics will rise to the demands of economics.

He said it was important that developing countries work out appropriate models of development. "Development for the sake of development is meaningless," he said.

Africa risks
losing world
market share

Special to Sentinel-Voice

HARARE, Zimbabwe — On May 15, 1997, Zimbabwe's Vice-President Simon Muzenda said Africa risked losing its share of the world market unless it intensified efforts to create a vibrant economic grouping which could withstand pressure from industrialized countries.

He said there was danger the continent would be further marginalized if it continued to ignore current trends towards regional economic integration which were brought by the coming into existence of the World Trade Organization in 1994.

Opening the 13th annual congress of the Eastern and Southern African Trade and Development bank (PTA bank), Muzenda said the emergence of these groupings resulted in generalized concessions which have so far proved hard for the world's poor countries to attain in the short term.

"In this setting, it is clear that the effective size of the international market for Africa will shrink significantly and it will be economies such as ours which will be adversely affected by this trend," he said.

He, however, expressed satisfaction at efforts by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to grapple with the changes brought by the new world economic order.

Through the Lagos Plan of Action, adopted in April 1980, the OAU resolved to make regional and sub-regional economic integration the center-piece of Africa's development strategy.

The United Nations favors an approach that is pro-jobs, pro-growth and pro-women. "A development that enhances people's choices," Panday said.

Sociology professor at the University of California, Berkeley, Peter Evans agreed that there ought to be a strong link between the state and local communities, a process he described as a "state-society synergy."

He said such a relationship required degrees of complementarity and "embeddedness."

This complementarity will be achieved through "a division of labor which allows both communities and agencies to make best use of their comparative advantage and relieve each of the burden of jobs that they can't do well."

As for "embeddedness," Evans argued that "continual interaction between state agency officials, individual clients and community organizations is the key to sustaining an effective division of labor."

But these processes, he said, must be based on notions of

social capital in which communities share common goals, and agency capacities which enable state institutions to deliver collective goods "and incorporate a complex division of labor with local communities into their organization repertoires."

Such a synergy of state and societal capabilities, Evans said, would serve to incorporate community goals and interests into public plans and goals and link communities to "larger systems for the delivery of collective goods."

As for the state agencies, Evans argued that they would be provided with better information about the services they provide, benefit from reduced costs and become more responsive to community demands.

Evans' thesis formed the recurring basis for much of the discussion which followed and which focused on the state of structural reform in the Caribbean, the social process for Caribbean development, information and governance and policy change and strategic thinking.

SELLING YOUR HOME?
SAVE THOUSANDSCommissions as low as
\$990
REGARDLESS OF SALES PRICE

Isabell Daniels

WHY USA
NORTHWEST REALTY
Independently owned and operated

471-9056