

Notes On An Agricultural Strategy For

Cuba - *Raúl Fernández*

The unavoidable termination of Castro's tyranny will give the Cuban people a unique opportunity to redraw the structure of their nation. The future of Cuba will greatly depend on the way Cubans take advantage of that opportunity. For this reason, efforts like those of the ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF THE CUBAN ECONOMY are necessary to advance the required research and discussion that will make possible, when the time comes, the emergence of a better country.

We assume that Castro's downfall will occur with a minimum of destruction and that a Provisional Government (P.G.) composed of non- communist leaders will take over. The P.G. will denounce Marxism but will maintain constructive relations with all nations, and will actively seek relations with the US and other Western countries and international organizations. Internally the P.G. will pursue the maintenance of peace and order and the reactivation of the economy. The provisional period (which I assume at 3 years), will end with elections for a constitutional assembly and general elections.

The agricultural sector must play a strategic role of support to the P.G. by increasing the production of food and thus addressing one of the most widely shared complaints of the population. Providing more food certainly will spare the P.G. and the people countless inconveniences and will free energies to tackle other problems.

The Dominican Republic faced a similar situation in 1962 when the remains of the Trujillo tyranny fell apart. The Agricultural Bank, through a massive rural credit program aimed at small and medium size farmers, achieved an important increase in the supply of food. The practical measure of that increase was given by the stabilization of previously run-away prices. Democratic elections followed, the first in three decades.

Cuba will face a somewhat different situation but an adjusted approach is suggested to compensate. First, let's consider that the agricultural sector is formed by three sub-sectors: provision of inputs; production in farms; and commercialization. Provision of inputs (fertilizers, pesticides, spare parts, etc.), as well as commercialization (marketing of crops and livestock) should be privatized as soon as possible, tapping the dynamism of private enterprise.

Production in farms includes crops and livestock produced by small farmers, big state and cooperative farms. Small farmers should receive technical assistance and, as all other producers should enjoy access to inputs, credit and a free and open market. State Farms should be supervised, and reorganized if necessary, pending what democratically elected bodies finally decide in due time. Cooperatives should be dealt with in accordance with the characteristics of each one. Respect for the environment should be of paramount importance. This plan requires the fast organization or adaptation of an agricultural credit system and an steady supply of inputs. This approach allows for the tapping of private initiatives, capital and know-how, while avoiding a massive restructuring of properties which not only may unsettle the country, but also should be reserved to democratically elected officials to decide.