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Eaton: Castro Wants Better U.S. Ties

By Edward A. O'Neill
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BALTIMORE, Feb. 11—Cyrus S. Eaton, the 90-year-old multimillionaire industrialist, came here Sunday from six days in Cuba to say that Fidel Castro wants accommodation with the United States.

Eaton was in Cuba at Castro's invitation on the heels of a visit by Soviet Communist Party leader Leonid Brezhnev, who, according to press reports, had talked to the Cuban prime minister about improving relations with the United States.

Eaton met twice with Castro for lengthy talks, as well as with Deputy Prime Minister Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, Fidel Oswaldo Dorticos, Fidel's brother, Ramon Castro, minister of agriculture, and other Cuban leaders.

He said that he came away with an overwhelmingly positive feeling that Cuba wants to regularize its relations with this country, with which it has been at odds since 1960.



CYRUS EATON
... six days in Cuba

Eaton said in an interview, "Fidel said an indication of his real attitude toward the United States and its people is the fact that he moved swiftly to put an end to [airplane] hijacking."

From his conversations, Eaton concluded that the Cubans

want only high-level talks. "It really requires Kissinger or Nixon or someone with express authority to solve this matter. There is no use to put this to men down the line who do not have the authority to act. That's what happened when we first were trying to talk to Hanoi about the Vietnam war." (Eaton himself went to Hanoi in 1969 to talk about negotiations with the North Vietnamese.)

Eaton, who used to have substantial business interests in Cuba, has kept up his connections since the Castro revolution in 1959 by other visits there and, through the Cuban delegation at the United Nations, his basic interest is economic. He thinks an end to the separation would be advantageous to American industry.

"Twenty years ago they were going to put me in jail because I advocated trade with the Soviet Union," he said. "Now all kinds of American businessmen are rushing to get into the Soviet market."

U.S. policy toward Cuba, Eaton said, seems still to be based on "fanatical anti-communism."

"It's hard to believe that our businessmen and our State Department could be so shortsighted as to have assumed that Castro would have only a brief regime and all would be over shortly," he said. "He has successfully endured for 15 years. Right now he looks confident and is cheerful about the future."

Eaton said the Soviet Union recently sold Cuba 70 diesel locomotives for \$28 million—"that we could have sold them"—and Argentina is making freight cars for Cuban use. While he was in Cuba, 20 Canadian businessmen were there talking about increasing trade.

"A lot of the rest of the world is doing business with

Castro," he said. "They didn't have to adopt his religion or lack of religion, or his system of government to do it."

Eaton said a small group of Cuban exiles in the United States, mostly centered in Miami, has been influential in the continuation of official U.S. policy. He predicted a change in their thinking.

"They were all joined," he said, "in a policy to kill off Castro. As the years have gone by and that policy has failed, many of them now think, 'Why go on?'"

What they now want is to see "an end to it," he said. "I think we are going to have an expression from that group that will have a powerful effect on American opinion."

Use of a U.S. passport for travel to Cuba is forbidden. Eaton flew there from Nassau and returned the same way.

