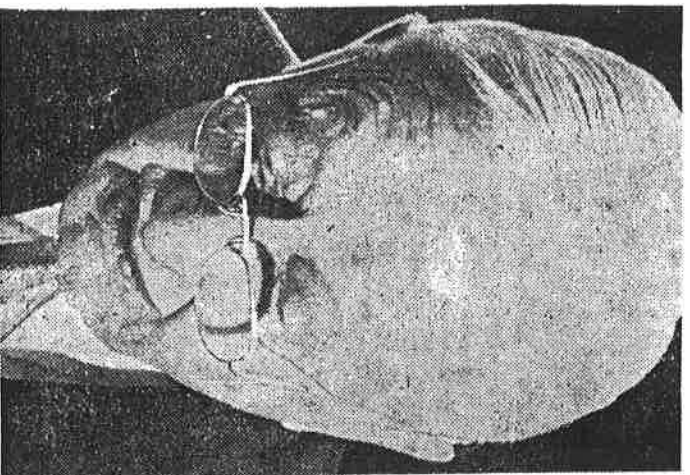


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CYRUS EATON SUGGESTS IT

Rapport With Cuba?



The boycott "is a hardship" for Cuba, but it hasn't been effective."



"It's fairly staggering to realize that half of the world is now Communist."

Cyrus S. Eaton, 85-year-old financier and one-man private diplomatic corps, spent some 10 days in Cuba over the recent holidays and came back with some hard judgments about American policies toward Fidel Castro.

"We have miscalculated," he told *The Sun-Times* in an interview in his suite in the Drake Hotel. "We felt that our embargo would be an end of the Castro regime. Things they need urgently that are of American origin they can get from our allies—Canada, Great Britain, France—and, of course, all the Communist countries."

Eaton is a multimillionaire who over the years has frequently alarmed his fellow capitalists by attempts to bridge the gap between the United States and Communist Countries. He conceded that Cuban life was not all that it might be for the ordinary citizen, largely because of the ban on American exports to what the editorial writers like to call "the outpost of communism in the Caribbean."

"It's a hardship for them, but it hasn't been effective," he said. "Nothing that we do is going to be effective as long as the Soviet Union stands by them in the massive way that it is now. Of course, they not only get the help from the Soviet Union, but they get it from all the Communist world."

Speaker Of Hard Truths . . . Or Meddler?

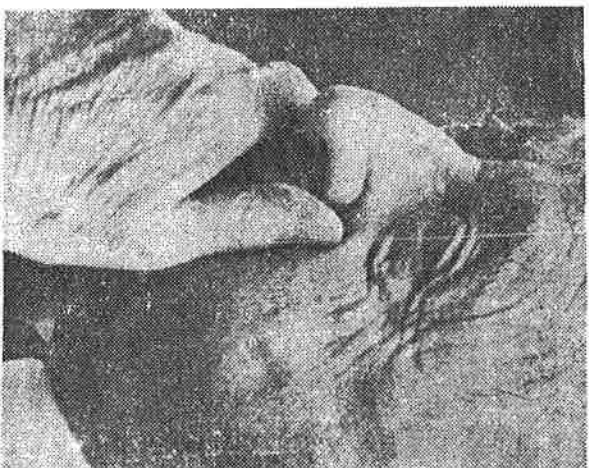
Then this remarkable gentleman, who reminds one of nothing quite so much as a snow-topped pine tree in his native Nova Scotia, stopped for a moment and smiled.

"It's fairly staggering," he said, looking out from under his eyebrows, "to realize that half the world is now Communist." It is the sort of remark Eaton makes which has brought him the various reputations—depending on which side you are on—of being a speaker of hard home truths or of being an incorrigible elderly meddler in affairs that properly belong to governments.

He visited Cuba twice, he said, in 1968, once in May and the last time on the trip from which he had just returned. On the second go-round, he not only talked with Castro and members of the Cuban government, but with ambassadors and other envoys from countries which maintain missions there—countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

"I was especially anxious to see whether I could discover, maybe, some formula or suggestion whereby this giant nation of ours might get along with that tiny one near us."

He said that "the No. 1 step is friendly relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. That's the key. There are points of great irritation, not only in Cuba, but in the Jewish-Arab world, Vietnam, Germany, Formosa. They all can be



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solved with friendship and understanding between the United States and the Soviet Union."

'We Have Been Wrong'

Then, quite simply, he suggested the toughest course of all for a powerful nation-state to take.

The U.S., he said, must "realize that we have been wrong." Then, implicitly, he called for an end to some of the oratory that has emanated from the U.S. over Castro.

"We'd have to agree that they're going to remain Communist," he said. "We can't say that we're not going to permit a Communist nation to exist (in the Western Hemisphere)." Castro, he said, "is popular with the people of the island.

Dealing with any country, it's pretty important to be sure of how the people feel themselves. Very often, we'd like to have them like us and adopt our way, and we like to persuade ourselves that they ought to and will."

Life in Cuba is drab these days, with long queues for nearly everything, and short rations of clothing and food, including sugar.

All this, Eaton said, makes little difference. In the period between his two visits, Eaton said, there had even been, despite the difficulties of everyday life, "a greater determination on the part of the people to abide by the restrictions." The "big contribution" which Castro himself has made to Cuba, Eaton said, "is to advocate hard work and thrift—and those are two virtues that if practiced under the capitalist system or in a socialist country will make for success. Without them, no system will work."

An Example Of Terrific Work

Castro himself "gives an example of terrific work—he's good for 15 hours a day, seven days a week, and he spends very little time in his office."

Despite the shortages, Eaton said, Cuba has made "phenomenal progress" in agriculture—dairy and beef cattle, poultry, adapting particular fertilizers to particular crops, trying to improve the output of sugar, citrus fruits.

He's quite an old party, sitting there on a pale-blue settee, his eyes wrinkling with fun. He amassed a considerable portion of this world's goods, and then, at an age when most men are beginning to think about playing shuffleboard at St. Petersburg, Eaton decided it might not be a bad idea if he tried to find out what he could do, himself, to bring some understanding—not between nations so much as between the men who run the nations.

Instead of golf carts, he thinks of jet aircraft at the age of 85.

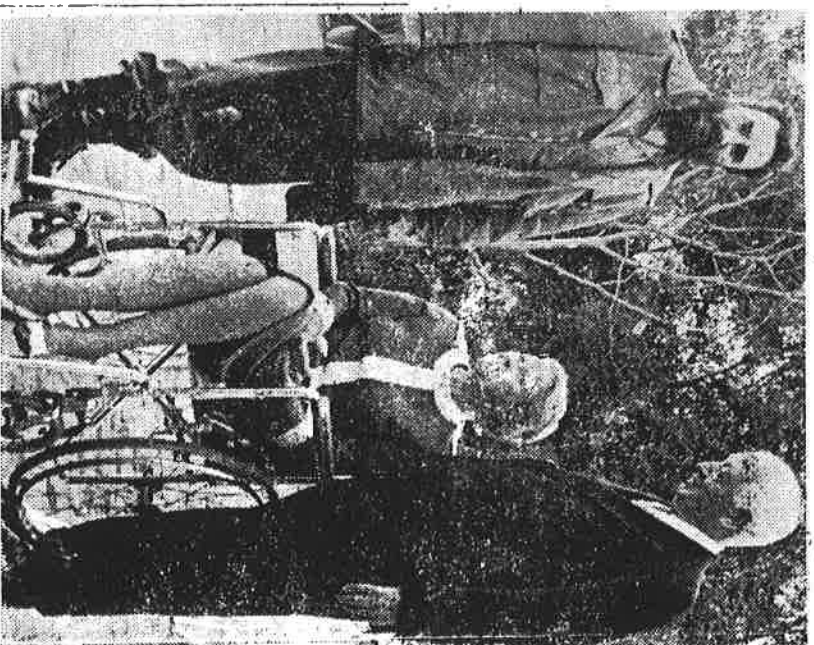
His thoughts range all over the world and all over man's accomplishments, from blood lines in horses to nuclear weapons. At one point in an hour of conversation, he ticked off the names of just about all the foreign scientists who had worked here at the University of Chicago on the atomic bomb.

"I have found in my traveling around the world in the last 15 years that we are a little bit likely to misjudge our adversaries," he said. "We Americans are awfully busy, we're really prosperous and we're preoccupied, and sometimes we don't get into these questions of other countries as deeply as perhaps we should."

And again, from the vantage point of 85 years:

"The only way this whole world problem is going to be solved is by patience, tact, more modesty on our part, less feeling that we know all the answers and are entitled to tell the rest of the world whether it should be capitalist or Communist. The world resents that and in Vietnam, the people there have certainly fought with amazing courage for years, and one of the reasons they're doing it is we come in and tell them we don't think they ought to be Communist, they ought to be capitalist, and my God, if they don't we're going to kill them."

"If the only way you have of helping a nation is to destroy it, that isn't the answer. Let them make their own mistakes." Naive? Perhaps. But, like coaching a football team, it's a smart idea sometimes to restate the fundamentals.



During recent visit to Cuba, Cyrus S. Eaton and his wife talked with Fidel Castro. Castro's big contribution, Eaton says, is to advocate hard work and thrift."