

Mikhail and Raisa's Cuban vacation

Mikhail and Raisa Gorbachev arrive today for three fun-filled days in sunny Havana, Cuba. If all goes well, that is.

The Gorbachevs had to postpone their trip to Cuba last year when Armenia was devastated by an earthquake. Last week's Soviet elections were also an earthquake, but a good one for Gorbachev. They gave the old guard Communist party a nasty jolt and even got rid of some of Gorbachev's foes who have been bitterly opposing his reforms.

Ironically, on hand at Havana airport to welcome the Gorbachevs will be the man who is now clearly the communist world's leading opponent of Gorbachevism: Cuba's Maximum Eternal Leader, Fidel Castro.

There will, of course, be lots of those big, huggy-kissy abrazos that Latins love to give (Misha and Raisa, watch out for beard burn). Cuba and Russia will reaffirm their undying fraternal socialist solidarity and say all sorts of syrupy things.

"We love Comrade Miguel Gorbachevo," Cubans will chant. That done, poor Raisa will be sent off shopping in Havana's threadbare stores while Gorbachev and Fidel sit down for some hard talking. Fidel thinks Gorbachev's reforms are for wimps. Cuba remains Stalinism with palm trees.

"Fidel, old Mother Russia is el broko," Gorbachev will say. "We're already in hock up to our babushkas."

"But dear Miguel," Castro will reply, waving his cigar, the longest in the land, "we are on the verge of socialist triumph. Just a few more rubles and the Yankees will be kicked out of Central America! And, my amigo, if you had given us more dollars, our armies could have conquered all of southern Africa!"



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Yes, great, even peachy, Gorbachev will reflect. But Cuba is costing us US\$7.5 billion a year in aid. That's big potatoes for Russians who have to stand in lines to buy potatoes. What's more, there was George Bush's call the night before leaving Moscow.

"Mikhail," said Bush in a reedy voice, "you've got to convince your pal Fidel to stop the war in El Salvador and to get those Sandinistas in Nicaragua to start acting like peace-loving folk. Unless you rein in your red pals down there, we're not going to let you have any of our Apple computers or cornflakes."

He's right, thought Gorbachev. Castro, that Peter Pan of revolutionaries, is really stirring the pot in Central America. This guy loves the Cold War and he loves sticking it to the gringos. In fact, just the night before, Raisa said, "Misha, why do you let that Castro fellow get away with calling you a revisionist and deviationist and a nambypamby. Next he'll be calling you a Russian Jimmy Carter."

"Raisa, my little dove, Fidel thinks he's the leader of a new generation of macho Marxists and that we Russians are old, tired and impotent. All those punk street Marxists in Nicaragua and El Salvador believe Castro is

a big, hairy god. He has all the fun while we're stuck with the bills. I hate his Marxier than thou attitude."

"So show him who's boss, Misha. Grab him by the beard and say, 'why you little Cuban runt, how dare you blow cigar smoke in the face of the leader of all the Russias!'"

"Da, da, Raisa, my tigress, da!"

"Yes, Misha, but don't shake him too hard. As Marshall Yakimov said last night, losing Cuba to us was the biggest mistake America ever made. Cuba is a dagger pointed at the soft beer-belly of the U.S."

"Of course, my snow fox, and any time we want to give a zinger to the Yanks, all we have to do is hand Fidel more money. Anyway, Fidel's troublemaking in Central America keeps the Americans too busy to make trouble for us in Poland and Hungary. Thank Lenin they don't have a Polish Castro!"

"And who knows, Raisa my little wildflower, if we can ever figure out how to clear up the economic mess here and pay our bills, why one day we might even be able to unleash Castro and his armies in Central America. Or even Mexico! Wouldn't that give the Americans heartburn? Ha, ha, ha."

"Misha, my lion, there will be no invasions of Central America or Mexico until we can buy a decent pair of stockings in Moscow."

"But Raisa, my nightingale, we do have an historical mission to liberate the oppressed peoples of the Americas and..."

"Forget it, Michka. Let them eat tacos for all I care. When I can buy Maude Frizon shoes on Gorky Street then you can go liberate all the Latinos you like."