

The San Juan Star

THE ONLY PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING PUBLICATION IN PUERTO RICO

Wednesday, February 8, 2006

The San Juan Star Viewpoint

Both sides of the story?

The New York Times does it yet again. In the late 1950s, Herbert Mathews befriended Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra mountains of Eastern Cuba. His biased articles printed in the Times converted a proven terrorist into an image of Robin Hood that contributed to catapulting Castro into power. Once in charge, Castro quickly drove the top economy in Latin America into the region's poorest.

Once again, the New York Times allows its true colors to show through the Fantasy Island-ish words of Luisita López, who, carefully manipulated by members of the Cuban tourism industry, emits a totally unrealistic scene of today's and tomorrow's Cuba.

She fails to mention that

apartheid, more rigorous than it ever was in South Africa, extends throughout the island. No Cuban can step foot in a tourist hotel, unless he is an employee. When in Havana in 1996, the first and only time I have returned since my exile in late 1960, I had to personally escort an older gentleman friend into the Hotel National.

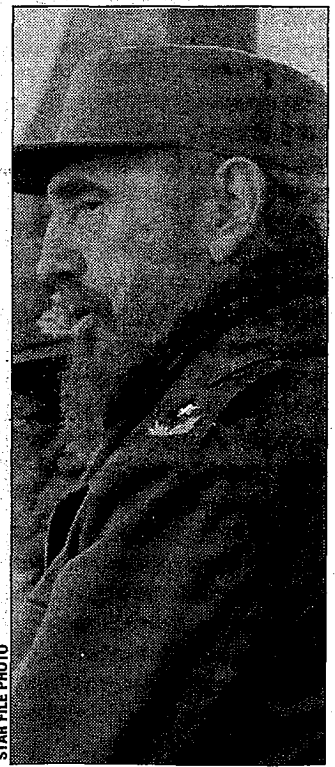
López complains about the food she ate. She paid in dollars and got the best there was. She gave examples of Cuban wages. Just imagine the food that is available to the average Cuban.

López talks about imminent transition. Hogwash! Castro's revolution, on the ebb 10 years ago, is now on an upswing. Alliances with Venezuela, Brazil, Bolivia and others, promise a lot more of

the same out of Cuba for the foreseeable future. Castro remains the symbol, but his team runs the country.

It hurts me deeply when a so-called "respected member" of the press corps fails to perform his or her duty, which, as I see it, is to provide the public with both sides of every story. Sadly, they fail to report that in Cuba, on a daily basis, men and women who, in the most peaceful of ways, work towards a slightly more democratic Cuba, are brutally harassed and beaten, and very often jailed, where they are subject to incredible acts of torture.

When will the New York Times print a story about the real Cuba? Or, better said: Will it ever?



STAR FILE PHOTO

William Butler Salazar
San Juan

Cuban leader Fidel Castro