

Paramus Woman Lauds Castro-Led Cuba

By JEREMIAH FLYNN
(Staff Writer)

Paramus—A local girl said last night that the Cuban revolution has enabled all Cubans to cast off economic conditions bordering on feudalism. Under the leadership of Fidel Castro, says Miss Jane Wittman, Cubans now share in the benefits of their land and are progressing in education, agriculture, and social development.

Miss Wittman, 22, returned Friday after a 3-week visit to Cuba in defiance of a State Department ban. She is one of 84 American young people who were told to turn in their passports on their return. Each was handed a notice from the State Department that passport privileges were tentatively withdrawn.

SAYS PRESS ERRS

Miss Wittman, who lives at East 42 Century Road, said she has no intention of surrendering her passport. Any attempt by the State Department to gain physical possession of the passport will be met by court action, she said.

The visit to Cuba was her second since 1961. She said it confirmed her impression that the Cubans had nothing to lose but everything to gain by the revolution.

Conditions under the Castro administration contrast sharply with the image created by American newspapers, accord-

ing to Miss Wittman, who enthusiastically cited economic and social advances since the revolution.

Miss Wittman, who will begin teaching next month at Webster College in St. Louis as part of an experimental program in elementary-school education, said the cost of the trip was underwritten by the Federation of University Students in Cuba. She went via Paris and Prague with three other students and said the island was opened to the students without restrictions.

They visited farms, a factory imported from Czechoslovakia, the island's three universities, elementary schools, and many villages and historical sites.

Miss Wittman said her primary purpose was to note the progress of the Cuban people. She termed the State Department ban a violation of a constitutional right and her visit an exercise of that right. She said she did not use the passport in traveling to the island because she acquired a visa in Prague.

SAYS PRIEST WAS VISITOR

She cited a Cuban government rationing program as a means of enabling all Cubans to share equally in distribution of commodities. No one on the island is starving, she said, and the only ones complaining are the former rich whose property has been expropriated.

A current shortage of work-

ers compares, Miss Wittman said, with the usual 25 per cent unemployment figure which was standard before the revolution. People now have available whatever medical attention is needed, she said.

Among the visitors from other nations, according to Miss Wittman, was a Communist Catholic priest from Brazil. She termed Catholicism and Communism wholly compatible.

There is complete freedom of religion and speech in Cuba, Miss Wittman said. Cubans are free to criticize the Castro government, but action against the government is subject to penalty. Priests who were removed from Cuba were involved, she said, in acts against the Government.

SWIFT RETALIATION

Miss Wittman noted that armed militiamen patrol the streets of Cuba's cities. She said the militia serves as protection against those she termed terrorists. The Government waits until the numbers in a terrorist band increases sufficiently to warrant sending militiamen against them, she said. Then, she said, action is swift.

Cubans have a high regard for the North American people, Miss Wittman said, but they have little regard for North American governments.

She said support for Fidel Castro is shown by his being able to travel in an open car.

Security increases recently have been made because of other reasons pertaining to the Cuban leader, she said.

Nationalization of foreign industry was a necessary part of the revolutionary effort, she said.

The biggest complaint of the Cuban people concerns what were termed acts of aggression by the United States, Miss Wittman said. She showed a poster charging 1,181 provocative acts from October, 1962 to April, 1964. About 470 acts of provocation were alleged to have occurred in the 7 weeks preceding June 13.

Most of the provocations said to have occurred were laid to American marines. Photos purporting to picture the wounded were shown. One picture allegedly showed a marine lobbing a grenade over a fence at the Guantanamo naval base, purportedly in the direction of Cubans.

Miss Wittman said two American ships patrol constantly outside the 3-mile limit of Havana harbor. One of the ships, Miss Wittman said, is a spy ship equipped with radar.

The local girl, who is daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Wittman, said that racial discrimination is absent from the island. She compared the absence of discrimination to conditions in the United States and said it was startling.

Dad Defends Girl Cites Convictions in Cuban Trip

A Paramus man yesterday had this to say about his daughter's decision to defy the U. S. State Department ban on travel to Cuba.

"She's 22 years old, a college graduate and an education major. As such, she makes her own decisions."

Walter T. Wittman, E. 42 Century rd., Paramus, declined to speak for his daughter, Jane, who together with three other young Americans left Kennedy Airport for Paris late Monday. From Paris the group will journey to Prague where a Cubana Airliner will carry them to Havana.

But Wittman was emphatic in defending the girl's acting on what

he termed her "strong conviction on constitutional rights."

"She was brought up with the principle that she should do what she believes is the right thing to do," said Wittman.

Her father said Miss Wittman's interest in integration—and the means by which it has been effected in the schools of Cuba—in part prompted the trip. She has always been interested in the "civil liberties" movement, he said.

Right and Wrong

Does the trip imply approval of the Cuban system?

"Jane is going to Cuba to study and evaluate," said Wittman.

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"when you do that you don't go with any preconceived ideas. Her purpose is to see what is right and what is wrong."

Miss Wittman, a recent graduate of Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio, has visited Cuba before, in 1960, her father reported. That was before the state department added the Caribbean island to its list of forbidden Communist regimes. It is against the law for Americans to visit Red China, North Korea and Albania as well.

In a prepared statement before their departure, Miss Wittman and her three companions said they planned "to see for ourselves the only socialist revolution in our hemisphere."

Wittman said she would probably return in early September, in time to embark on a teaching career at an unnamed St. Louis college. Did he think the trip would hinder her professional chances?

"I would hope not," said Wittman.

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States broke diplomatic relations with Cuba, Miss Wittman visited Cuba with her uncle. Ever since, she said, she had in the back of her mind to return to Cuba and compare conditions with newspaper reports published about Cuba in the United States.

"I fished around," said the 1964 Antioch College graduate, "until I found the name of the leader of last year's trip to Cuba and had an interview with him in New York. We were not sure of our plans and our route until the last minute."

In the passport she applied for to make the trip are printed the following words:

"This passport is not valid for travel to or in communist controlled portions of China, Korea, Vietnam, or to or in Albania, Cuba. A person who travels to or in the listed countries or areas may be liable for prosecution under section 1185, title 8, U. S. Code, and section 1544, title 18, U. S. Code."

"Actually, we did not use the passport to go to Cuba," said Miss Wittman. "We went to Cuba from Prague where only a visa was required." The trip to Cuba was paid for by the Federation of University Students in Cuba.

Upon their return to the United States, a customs official gave the young Americans a letter from the Department of State that said their passports were "temporarily withdrawn" and they could turn them in there or mail the passports back to the State Department. The letter stated they had the right to appeal.

"I paid \$11 for my passport, and I think it's my right to have it," declared Miss Wittman.

"We are claiming the right to travel and that to limit geographically the right to travel is an unconstitutional right the State Department has assumed, not an act of Congress. We plan to appeal as a group — soon," stated Miss Wittman.

Miss Wittman explained that she wanted to visit Cuba to see conditions for herself and make inquiries for the purpose of evaluation and

to elaborate, I went to Cuba this summer for three main reasons:

1) I believe that the right to travel freely is a Constitutional right of all Americans, and that the State Department's regulation (not a law passed by Congress) limiting travel to certain areas is unconstitutional, as well as unjust, and in the end, inimical to our foreign policy. Travel to Cuba does not necessarily mean I support the government there; I do not support the actions of the state government of Mississippi, yet I travel there.

2) I wished to see for myself the general changes in Cuba since a visit to that Island in 1960-61, prior to the ban on travel. Both times, I was allowed complete freedom of movement in Cuba.

3) I wished to discuss developments in my profession, teaching, with my Cuban counterparts. I believe that the right to speak and inquire freely, as guaranteed in the First Amendment, cannot be limited geographically. I also believe that a free, democratic society need not fear the truth, whatever it is.

Miss Wittman is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Wittman of E. 42 Century Road. Her father is attorney for the Paramus Board of Education and Hillsdale Borough Attorney. At the time of her departure, they said they raised their children to live by their convictions and principles and "we are proud that she has the courage to stand

by what she believes is right." Jane said the attitude of her parents has not changed and that she is "free, white, and 22" and able to do what she wants.

As part of her Antioch cooperative job training program, Jane Wittman participated four months in the experimental program in elementary school education at Webster College in St. Louis. She knows the faculty there and will be teaching first grade and, in addition, the new math to fourth grade students.

She has travelled all over the eastern part of the United States and to Mexico as well as to Cuba twice. On this recent trip to Cuba, she took several rolls of color film. She was enthusiastic about the venture and conditions in Cuba.