

Cuba

Sent: Thursday, April 04, 2002 11:48 AM

Subject: "send lawyers, guns and money"



"went out with a waitress, like I always do, but how was I to know she was with the russians too. was gambling inhavanaand took a little risk. send lawyers, guns and money, man get me out of this." that's what warren zevon had to say about this place, I say its the best place I've been so far. and I mean so far. beats shanghai, cairn,Istanbul,paris,madrid,bombayetc. just walking the streets ofhavanais like doing a time warp. you know... "lets do the time warp again. take a step to the left and a jump to the right. put your hands on your hips and do the pelvic thrust. it'll drive you insaaaaane. let's do the time warp again." got myself a funky little room in the center of town. its on the roof of a building with a catwalk up to it. ironically there's a dog who somehow made a deal with the cat, so hangs out on the roof with me. incubauntil the 19th, then flying totoronto. probably a good thing I booked a ticket out, because I probably wouldn't leave otherwise.

however, almost didn't get in the country. at the airport got a shakedown by the border police. declared I had some knives, but when buddy found the first one (a paratrooper special that is rather pointy) he kind of freaked out. the knife made the rounds and the various officials agreed they better keep it. I kept doing a croc dundee, saying that's not a knife; we usually carry much bigger knives incanada. that didn't help, point is that buddy got so worked up about the first knife that he didn't search any further. had he found the police special club and the other knives I would be incanadanow.

instead I am coming to you live from the capital building in downtownhavana. cubs reminds me of the aesop fable where the wind challenges the sun to see who can remove the jacket from a man walking on a road. the wind goes first and blows and blows. all that does is make the man grip his jacket tighter. then the sun has a chance and just beams down. eventually the man

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removes his jacket. the u.s.a. with its embargo against cuba has created a wonderful country with music in the streets, a beautiful underabundance of cars (no gratuitous homage), and a style that is unique. cuba just gripped its coat tighter and made its own country. the rest of central america with its nasty commercialism is, in short, a mess. I've said for a long time that the most powerful shock troops that the u.s.a. has are coca cola and rock and roll. first you soften their teeth, then their souls. finally slap on a pair of levis and they're done for. that hasn't happened to the cubans and because of that this place is refreshingly different.

I'm going to have to pry myself from havana to see some of the rest of the country, they say there's a magical land in the southwest where the mountains are like those big green gumdrops in the south of china. and near there a scuba paradise. even so, havana has the hook in me, with its mystical streets and my roof top pad and my roof top pup. anyw1ys, thnt': the report coming to you live from the capital building in downtown havana,

catfishincuba

Sent: Tuesday, April 16, 2002 9:55 AM

Subject: hasta la victoria siempre

such was the goodbye che guevara said to his troops as they went off to fight: "see you at the final victory." indeed the revolution continues on here in the streets of cuba with beat up old cars; double humped buses pulled by semi-trailer trucks; "coco" taxis that look like a large orange with the front cut out to allow the driver and two passengers to sit inside; horse carts and even the odd wagon with two stately oxen in front. the revolution of "el che" and his pal fidel is only creeping on at donkey cart pace. that is why I've decided to bring the revolution home to canada in a new and sinister way. that's right, its time to take the battle against imperialism to a new frontier, and to do that I've become equipped with a new weapon that's so diabolical and secret that I'm asking you not to tell more than three people. chances are that I'll be arrested at the canadian border, but like el che I am prepared to sacrifice myself for the fight against imperialism. (as spook said "the good of the many is greater than the good of the one.") so with that in mind I will return to canada with a weapon that's so stupid in its design that it is completely unpredictable. already in test runs in costa rica and panama I've managed to upset several domestic situations with this cunning device. the scientist who designed this watch was an idiot. indeed, what I have is a watch that has the ability to change channels, lower or increase the volume and even fast forward someone else's video. not until I reached cuba did I see why I came to possess this channel-changing watch. you see, the television sets of cuba are immune because they are too old. thus, the people of cuba must watch what the government wants them to watch and I can't change a thing. but when I return to canada will begin dispossessing people from their television sets and that is how the revolution will begin. the way I figure it is that once people can't watch the show of their choice they will take to the streets. and then once there they will wonder why they are there. once they start thinking about it they will realize that while they are on the street they might as well fight for something. hence begins the revolution. as el che said: no revolution is perfect or scientific in its design. this will be no exception. needless to say, the spirit of che guevara lives on in the streets of cuba and his spirit is contagious. "hasta la

victoria siempre."

Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2002 12:34 PM

Subject: my first cuban cigar

seems to me that to get into the culture of a country you have to get into the culture of the country. this has been done. for those of you who know me but a bit know that I do not smoke. it's not for want of trying, but instead an inherent inability to look cool while smoking. I'm like those guys in the movies who wear fake glasses that reflect the light such that you know they are fake glasses. if I take a cigarette in hand, people say "you don't smoke do you?" I was once lured many years ago into buying gauloises cigarettes after witnessing the romantic blue clouds that hang over the sidewalk cafes

in parisville. and this time the art of cigar making has caught my interest.

but there is a context.

I was up in pinardel rio and decided to hire a car with driver for the day along with a french couple. for next to nothing we cruised through the unique mountains looking like russian spys in our muskovite (similar to a lads only more russian). and like russians, the others smoked like the stacks in havanarefineries. you see, there is a solid political correctness incuba, but it does not include smoking: people smoke everywhere all of the time. the driver figured I looked cubano, while others think I look more like spalding gray. lets say I look like a cubane spalding gray, he did the film swimming to cambodia. I'm thinking of doing something similar, but calling it swimming from cuba. there are many stories about the people who fled cubs by what ever means in the hope of making it the 90 miles to florida. a friend of mine here has a sister in law who paddled from havana on an air mattress (no kidding). she now lives in texas.

part of our plan while cruising in the muskovite was to visit a cave system that turned out to be the most amazing I've seen. after two hours with a guide (wearing miner helmets) we covered perhaps one kilometre of what is 46 kilometres in that one cave system. the place had cavernous caverns and many varieties of those stalagwhatevers. the best part about caves is turning out the lights. you can feel the darkness. it reminded me of that old joke. three people are riding in one of those train coaches with two seats facing each other. there's an englishman, a frenchman and a beautiful woman. they're not talking much and after awhile the train goes through a tunnel and things go black. they hear a kissing sound and then a loud smack. when they get out of the tunnel they're all looking at each other and the frenchman is holding his face after just being slapped. the woman is thinking "I bet that frenchman tried to kiss me, but got the englishman instead, so he got slapped." the frenchman is thinking "I bet the englishman kissed the woman, and she thinks it was me," the englishman is thinking "I hope we go through another tunnel so I can make that kissing sound again and slap the french bastard."

so anyway, back to where we left off: somewhere north of pinardel rio in the mountains. the french folks wanted to see the area by horseback, so I figured why not. always saw myself as

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the clint eastwood type, but without the ability to ride a horse, or smoke a cigar in that mean grimacing style. after an hour of slow plodding (I figured I could walk faster, but didn't say so) we stopped at a farmhouse and were welcomed to strong cuban coffee while the farmer rolled us each a cigar--about 5 big leaves each (he had a whole barn full of the things -dry-rig-) . -Si- ce impol4-t-e- t!?-~ 1?se. -.such hospitality, I took the cigar, explaining that I'd smoke it later.

I met the french folks at a great little hotel in pinardel rioand we returned there that night. the night before included the worst attack of mosquitoes I'd yet experienced and I'd left my repellent inhavana. fortunately, for the second night I was equipped for better sleep with a coating of some stuff the frenchies had that was designed to keep the bugs ofafricaaway. I figure it was some leftover stuff from the french foreign legion. (by the way, the legion is still enlisting recruits, for those of you considering a life of adventure) after dinner I figured I'd better honour my promise to the farmer and smoked the cigar. seemed to be no problem, although clint eastwood I was not. a little later I decided it was time to sleep and indeed the mosquitoes were keeping well away, after lying in bed for a few minutes, I realized my eyes were wide open and I was staring at the ceiling, then I thought "you idiot, you just smoked the equivalent of a pack of cigarettes." I didn't get to sleep for 6 hours. I had lots of time to contemplate such things as this story.

after 2 hours of sleep, it was time to head back tohavana. the buses incubaare amongst the toughest to figure out. (perhaps I'll tell you some other time about my last bus ride incuba) thus, the frenchies and me decided to hire a car to get back tohavana. funny thing is the car was only \$1 more than the bus and we cruised at 140k. the driver was a cool character wearing blue bono-type shades. one of the ironies in tuba is that there is one of the only four-lane highways I've seen on this whole trip, but there's hardly any traffic. there are, however, many people "making a bottle" on the roadside. that's the cuban term for hitchhiking. they too have figured out that the bus system is bogus. strange thing is that the horse the day before cost twice as much as the car tohavana. seems it costs more to go slow. logic and reason are items I've tossed out long ago. I had my second cuban cigar in the lounge of a fancy hotel while watching a downpour. I had just bought a pack there and had a couple of beer. for reasons still unknown to me, I then walked out without paying. two blocks later I was stopped by a cop (there are oodles of them in tuba) who was listening on his radio to a bulletin to be on the lookout for me. we returned to the hotel and cleared up the bill. I can't wait to see what happens when I have my third cuban cigar.

I thought I'd write a tad more this time, since this just about puts a wrap on 6 months on the road. thanks for tuning in and perhaps we'll do this again real soon. I'll leave you with a final thought that popped into my head the other night:

the strange hum of eloquence
is the sound I want to hear.
the buzz of understanding
right inside my ear.
logarithms of understanding
right inside my brain.

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while I grope at understanding
others see me as insane.
judgment is not the answer
and never was it seems.
can't keep a person captive
between his ideas and his dreams.
no one said it's simple
and no one said it's soon.
if someplace is the purpose,
then I'll get there 'round about noon.

Sent: 5:29

Subject: rumours of my ending travels are greatly exaggerated

so yer all thinkin that guy who used to write to me has given up tha ghost, he's cashed in tha chips, he's just damn well stop-ped written to me. an a course yer also a thinkin that some guy from saskatchewan can't really know that much anyway, so why in tha heck bother writin back to that feller, cause he ain't a wirtten to me yet. not at least fer a long time an it ian't been that great anyways. so's i'a has been a thinkin that its a maybe a good idear to write to ya all to say that I been busy. and its a been incanadathat I've been fer awhile. like I helped buid a log cabin fer this city guy who was a might awful in his a tellin us what to do an all a that: he was a tellin us that he was an architect and that he a knew waht tado in buildin tha house. I iwas a telin him that I was a lawyer and that it didn't matter jack shit to me what he cared about all a that , cause we was tha guys who was a buildin tha log house. so anyways, we done finished that so I is go'in down tha road to do somethin different. different is somethin I seem to have been able to do fer a long time. no reason to change , I figger. and so I continue. some folks have been a writin to me an sayin that I must be a workin at tha old job, since I ain't been writin these notes ona what I been a doin. but iffing ya want to here what's been a happinin, then just write back to me and I will be much abliged to tell all that I been a thinkin, some about what I been a doin, and a few bits about waht has really happened. iffing my plans happen to turn out like i's a plannin they should, then I expekt I'll be in tha orient somewhere by tha time autumn rolls around. a'course I always remember what our friend john lennon said: "life is what happens while you're making other plans." this letter has been interrupted to bring you an update from thesaskatchewanfarm front: it turns out that the early pioneers have been superpassed by a new breed of hightech sophisticats in farming. it once was that 1,000acres took a strong farm family along with 35 big horses and a bunch of hired folk to scratch a living out of the tough soil and even tougher winters that this place delivers year after year. now, given computers and big, big machines, two people can farm 12 miles square of land. that's a whole bunch of land for two people to manage, but they do. the tractors even have satellite guidance systems that coagulate rain patterns and crop needs, so as to tell the farmer what fertilizers and maintenance the crops need. this is a high-tech world. but there's still room for "cyber". he's a well-adjusted pup, who's part border collie and part sheltie. you see, he saved one of these sophisticated farmers by being a natural. my friend was walking cyber one day and a farmer approached the two of them to say had a problem with about 90 deer who were devastating his hay bales. cyber has no training with such problems (few of us do), but the farmer and pal of cyber figured that the little guy might be worth a try. worth it he was. little cyber (with no training and no computer backup)

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--being the shepherd that he is--pushed a herd of deer 4 miles from the problem and away from being shot. it took a couple of hours of hard work from the little guy. to me he stands as a beacon to those of us who are little guys outside the hightechnology world. we are the little hyper-collies who see a great technoworid unfold around us, and all we can do is be earnest in our inherent skills , and in our cheer in the little jobs life tosses to us. but most of all, that little fella is a reminder that when you have the right task and the right attitude, you can be the happiest little dog in the whole universe. and, of course, the job gets done.

Sent: Monday, August 19, 2002 3:32 PM

Subject: logoman goes west (to the east)

well, the bag is unpacked, the flight booked, and logoman (yes, logoman) is set for another trip elseplace. 31 hours of transit time should take me to bangkok. from there the rest of the trip is unplanned. I guess I should start dealing with another (better organized) travel agent. my current travel advisor gets me to dumpy hotels, on shabby buses and over bumpy terrain. I expect this next trip will be as poorly organized as the last. I only travel via laid-back tours inc.

the reason I feel like logoman is that most of my clothes, my shoes, and even my hat are spattered with various corporate logos. my usual travel motto is "don't look like that which you are." keep the locals guessing, I say, for example, I never wear a flag of any type, at least not since getting in a spat of trouble in jerusalem because I was (unwittingly) wearing a Palestinian terrorist flag. but in spite of not wearing a flag, I am as obvious a mark as anyone out there. the would-be travellers almost inevitably wear baggy gear that has got them dubbed "the pyjama people." then, of course, there's the spot-them-a-mile-away tilley tourists, with their pot pourri of hidden pockets and secret stash pouches. I figure the bad guys just access, the tilley web site and find out where all those "secret" pockets are.

and out there amongst all these identifiable groups of vagabonds you may see logoman. I'll be the guy sending out mixed messages about which corporation is the one to support. the hat is oakley, the shirt nike, the shoes teva and the jacket sierra.

travelling light in the tropics means using these new high-tech fabrics that dry almost before they get wet. but attached to these space age fabrics are the corporate identity tags that just won't come off. however, because I am now an obrero (labourer), I've had to get these (usually expensive) products on sale. thus, I have an odd assortment of colors and sizes (some too big while others are too small). as a result, the logoman subgroup of vagabonds is as identifiable a group as any other out there: part jester and part billboard.

if anything foolish or reportable happens out there I'll let you know. so tomorrow it'sthailand. and with that in mind I'll leave you with the words of john mellencamp: it all comes true yes, it all comes true like a wheel inside a wheel, it turns on you. and you think what have I done what can I do? what you believe about yourself it all comes true.

life is a contradiction of sorrow and desire. I dragged my heart across the ash and threw it in the

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fire. maybe there's a reason or could there be a plan or all we all just fools to think we understand.