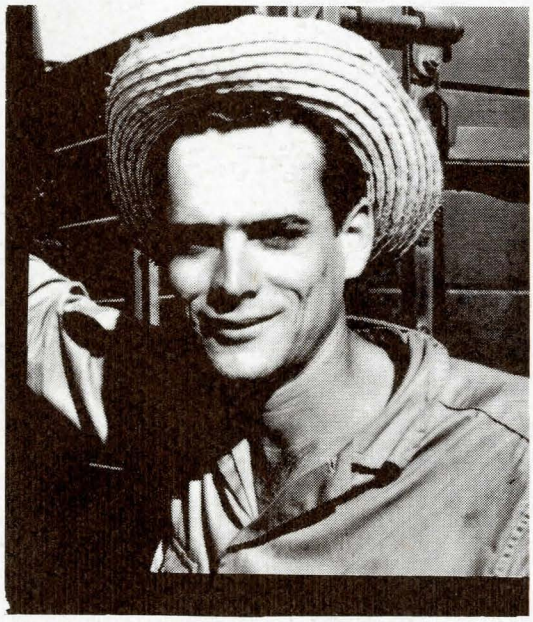
Cuba's Workers, Workers' Cuba



1969

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The revolution in Cuba is an artifact of the Cuban imagination. In this revolutionary island off our shores, Cuba's leaders aim to create the "twenty-first-century man," and have reasserted the classical egalitarian and liberating vision of socialism. They are engaged in no simple doctrinal quarrel or metaphysical debate with Communist parties in power elsewhere. At issue is the image of socialist man and the conception of socialism. It is an issue which has direct implications for any movement whose ideal is the creation of a society free of exploitation and oppression.

Not only have the Cuban revolutionaries done much in one decade to eliminate some of the worst material consequences of colonial misdevelopment, but they are also trying simultaneously to infuse in the Cuban people an ennobling vision of man, a dream of things to come that compels them to reach beyond themselves and "to make the extraordinary" as Fidel Castro says, "an ordinary part of their lives." Rejecting, in Che Guevara's words, the "scholasticism that has held back the development of Marxist philosophy," the revolutionaries have been pragmatic, innovating, and humanistic. "The ultimate and most important revolutionary aspiration," Che wrote in his essay "Socialism and Man in Cuba," is "to see man freed from alienation." Against the accusation that "the period of building socialism is characterized by the abolition of individuality for the sake of the state," Che replied with "the facts of the Cuban experience" in which "man—individualized, specific, named" is basic. It is this emphasis on the role of the individual—"the actor in this strange and moving drama of the building of socialism, in his twofold existence as a unique human being and a member of the community," as a self-conscious maker of history together with others "who struggle for the same cause"—that distinguishes the Cuban revolution so radically from other socialist revolutions in our time.

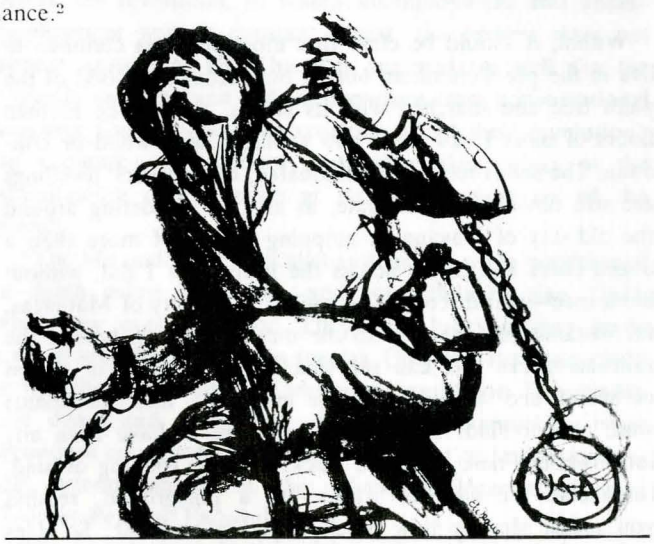
The Cuban revolutionaries are the first independent radicals in the world to put through a socialist revolution. (Despite their identification, in the course of the revolution, with the international Communist movement and their fusion with the old Communists, the Fidelistas still hold the initiative within the revolutionary leadership; revolutionary optimism and the rejection of received Communist doctrine are the quintessence of Cuban Communism.) It is the dream of the revolutionaries, in Che's words, to make possible men's "conscious, individual, and collective participation in all the mechanisms of direction and production" and the realization of their fullest human potential. "This will be translated concretely," Che wrote, "into the reappropriation of man's nature through freed work and the expression of his own condition in culture and art."

This vision of socialism was held by all pre-Stalinist revolutionary socialists. It failed to survive in Russia where, with the vast destruction and chaos of the civil war, and the weariness and exhaustion of the masses after the struggle to defend the Soviet revolution, the Bolsheviks took measures which led them unawares to inter their own principles. Temporary expedients and episodic acts of self-defense were transformed into "socialist" principles and the substance of "Communist legality." One-party rule, in no way inherent in the original Bolshevik program, was termed the essence of "socialist" government; and democratic centralism, which Lenin fashioned as an organizational weapon in conspiratorial conditions to wage revolution, became the embodiment of "workers' democracy." Vast social inequality, the encouragement of competition between workers, and the breakdown of class solidarity became "socialist emulation." "Socialism" came to mean a peculiar amalgam of Russian temperament, Soviet experience, and vulgar Marxism; the revolution absorbed Russia's Byzantine heritage and imperial backwardness in the course of overcoming them.

Fortunately, the tasks of the Cubans are not comparable to those faced by the first who dared in Russia, or by the Chinese or Vietnamese Communists. Unlike them, the Cuban revolutionaries came to power in a society relatively free of chaos, and the spirit and energies of its people were not exhausted, but were, in fact, simply waiting to be tapped. The country has a small population compared to its available resources, a fertile and arable land, and the likelihood of continued economic aid from the Soviet Union. Cuba is small, and planning should be less cumbersome and the complexities less difficult to cope with. Her small population and territorial size allow extensive and intensive communication between the government and people, and mass participation in public affairs.

The Cuban revolutionaries—whatever their extraordinary abilities, especially Fidel's—came to power in a society whose prerevolutionary social structure endowed them with vast advantages compared to the leaders of other major social revolutions in this century.[1] Cuba has an opportunity unparalleled in the other Communist countries to develop institutions which allow government ownership and central planning to lead both to economic growth and to the development of diversity, intellectual freedom, and meaningful majority rule—the socialist vision which Che articulated so eloquently.

This is not to minimize in any way the immense problems the revolutionaries have had to face and the extraordinary way in which they have met and solved many of them; and they have done so in the teeth of United States hostility and despite the embargo. The precedent of the Bay of Pigs invasion, the missile crisis and "quarantine" of Cuba, the invasion of the Dominican Republic, and the ferocity of the United States war against the Vietnamese make it clear that the Cuban revolutionaries cannot afford to relax their vigilance.[2]



Overcoming the misdevelopment and underdevelopment of Cuban capitalism, especially in circumstances which require the Cubans to continue to expend national energies and scarce resources on military preparedness, will require sacrifice and austerity, and the same outstanding qualities of audacity and originality that the revolutionaries have shown so far in making the revolution. Appreciating and understanding the fact that they are involved in "uninterrupted activity" (Che) and daily struggle to accomplish a thousand small things are essential to any constructively critical assessment of the revolution. Fidel, speaking on the revolution's anniversary two years ago, said: "It requires a tremendous effort to speak on national anniversaries. This does not mean that I am tired, but fifteen years of struggle has put a heavy load on the shoulders of a very small group of men, and has created a new situation in which we should divide our functions more and more."

In my conversations with revolutionaries in the summer of 1969, they repeatedly referred to the immediate and concrete jobs that had to get done to maintain the revolution's momentum. When I discussed socialist planning with Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, for instance, a veteran Communist on the Secretariat of the new Party and one of Cuba's top planners (officially, his ministerial title is President of the National Commission of Technical, Scientific, and Economic Collaboration), he said:

"I am not one of those who believe in the 'messianic concept' of the Party—the Party is not the masses. . . . The problem is that while in principle it is certain that we must try to discover democratic means by which to decide, for instance, the variety and types of consumer goods to be produced (such decisions cannot be left to 'messianic mechanisms' or merely be the responsibility of the Ministry or of technicians), it is a luxury to try to establish such modes of planning at this moment in the revolution, when the priorities are so clear and our needs so pressing."

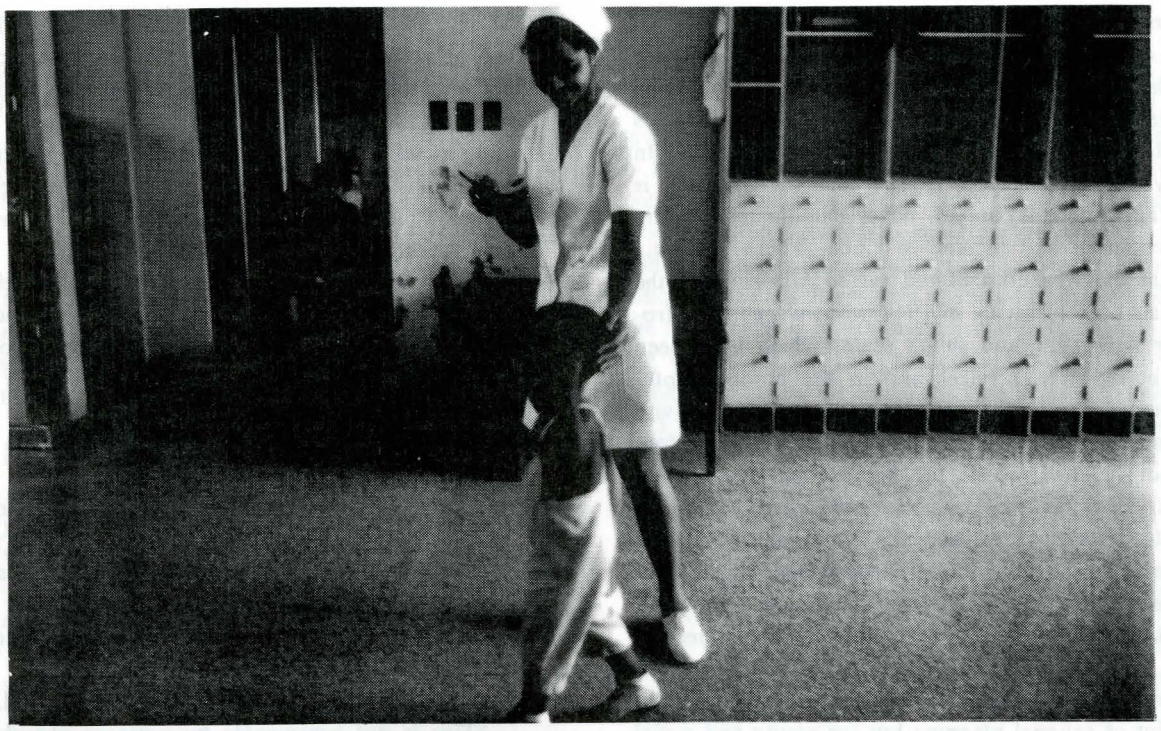
1969 is the "Year of the Decisive Effort" in Cuba. Everywhere posters exhort Cubans to work "with the same discipline, with the same spirit of sacrifice" as the young men who attacked Fort Moncada to begin the rebellion against Batista. The country is mobilized not for defense but for the achievement of economic objectives, the most important and immediate one being the ten-million-ton sugar harvest in 1970, which Fidel has called a "point of honor for this revolution, . . . a yardstick by which to judge the capability of the revolution."

The island is austere. Rationing is tight and consumption restricted. (Children receive one quart of milk a day, adults, unless a medical diet requires it, none; a loaf of bread and

a quarter to three-quarters of a pound of rice and beans weekly per adult. Meat, when available, is rationed to three-quarters of a pound a week, though seafood and pizza, both new in the Cuban diet since the revolution, are more easily obtained. Cucumbers and avocados, though not abundant, are available in sufficient quantities, apparently, to satisfy the Cuban diet. Other greens are rare, but Cubans who never ate them before do not notice their absence now. Clothing is also rationed, and department stores display few items.) Unlike the situation during my visit in 1962, however, when the revolution went through its worst period economically (as the effects of errors in planning, inadequate skills, poor transportation and distribution, the drought, and the economic embargo imposed by the United States had a cumulative impact on production and consumption), the present austerity, government leaders claim, is planned. It is the result of the extraordinary and unprecedented rate of investment of 31 percent of the Gross Material Product (GNP exclusive of services), and of the use of scarce foreign exchange to buy capital goods rather than consumer goods.

Plants apparently have no serious shortage of raw materials or spare parts, or of technically trained personnel. This was the view of the administrators and technicians and production workers I interviewed in seven plants (cement, textiles, agricultural equipment, paper, beer and malt, copper mining, and sugar) scattered over five of Cuba's six provinces. (These were drawn from the sample of 21 plants I visited and in which I interviewed workers in 1962.) All of them were working overtime and, their administrators claimed, at close to theoretical capacity. In the textile plant at Ariguanabo, Bauta, outside of Havana (which is one of Latin America's largest), installed capacity is 176,000 meters daily. It had never been reached before the revolution, according to its administrator; last year they produced 175,679 meters, and they have been averaging 172,300 meters in the past several years. The brewery at Manacas was in the process of expansion to 21,600 boxes of beer (24 bottles per box) a day from its present 13,800, and another 95 workers will be added to the present work force of 376 by May, 1970. In the Venezuela sugar central, British technicians were installing a new automated mill, bringing the number to four, and East Germans were putting in new thermoelectric turbines of 3,000-kilowatt capacity each, according to Agustín Hernández, its young administrator. "Once finished," he said, "this will become the largest sugar central in the world." Similar expansion was either going on or already planned in detail at all the plants I visited. Havana has been neglected and looks it, but there is construction in progress across the island. The roads are in good repair, and new highways are cutting up the landscape, tying together previously inaccessible areas, bringing peasants out of their isolation. The public transportation system functions efficiently, and the smell of Soviet gasoline in GM engines no longer hangs in the Havana air. Extensive new ricelands are being cultivated in Pinar del Río; the "cordon" around Havana, begun in April of 1967, reportedly will soon begin to supply all of Havana with its coffee and citrus-fruit needs. Artificial insemination and hybrid breeding are, it is claimed, preparing the way for vastly increased cattle herds. Artificial lakes, or reservoirs (the cordon alone has 19 completed, 20 almost finished, and another 10 under construction), with resort facilities and parks, are now visible in a countryside where drought has been one of the recurrent agricultural scourges. Mechanization is proceeding apace in agriculture, and the Cubans claim to have solved the technical problem of mechanized sugar-cane harvesting recently and to have several experimental models at work which cut, clean, and load the cane. New hospitals and schools, resorts and parks and recreation centers, apartment houses, private peasant dwellings, even whole new towns, as in Pinar del Río or Batabanó, are going up. "The main structure of an expanding economy," as James Reston reported two years ago, "is obviously being built here" (*New York Times,* July 31, 1967, p. 1:5).

Withal, it should be clear that most peasants continue to live in the pre-Columbian *bohios* built from the wood of the palm tree and thatched with its leaves, though the earthen floors of most I saw were now replaced with wood or concrete. The slums have been eliminated, but workers' dwellings are still obviously inadequate, as anyone wandering around the old city of Havana or stopping in any of more than a dozen cities and towns across the island—as I did, without hindrance—will discover. As you cross the city of Matanzas, for instance, on the way to the outskirts, down behind the railroad tracks you can see shacks put together of scraps of wood and any other loose materials their occupants were able to find. There does not seem to have been any improvement here, and the black children running around, for whom the railroad tracks are a playground, remind you rather sharply how much is yet to be done. So does talking to Miguel Mendoza, *carpenter,* 57 years old. With his wife and seven children, he lives in a former storefront room no larger than ten feet square, on Zapata Street No. 24 across from the Colón cemetery in Havana. It has no inside running water, though there is a faucet nearby. One



electric light hangs in the room's center. To him, these quarters, to which he moved a few weeks before I met him, were far better than those he had in the past. His wife, looking much older than her 43 years, agreed. The table, the bunk beds, a few chairs, some shelves with a few pots and dishes were, she told me, their first possessions. "We are all revolutionaries, ready to fight and die if necessary," she said. "Before the revolution, we had nothing. Miguel spent his time in the street; now our children are in school. He has secure work; for us there is no scarcity. . . ."

Sra. Mendoza's comment underlines the vast change in the lives of the poor and of the working class as a whole which even the most modest improvements in living conditions has meant; to most workers, who lived lives of great privation before the revolution, to whom unemployment and underemployment were a constant threat, the present does not appear austere at all. This was summed up well (in the typically eloquent and radical departure from conversational language Cubans use when speaking about their revolution) by a chunky, heavy-fisted, but soft-spoken miner at the Matahambre copper mine at the westernmost tip of the island:

"The life under the capitalist system was a life condemned to death below the earth—and your children also; that's what they were good for. They were lucky if they made sixth grade; that was really special. Only the strongest could work. Those without good physiques could not. The revolution came and now your children are completing basic secondary education, and you, if you want to improve yourself, attend classes at the *Facultad Obrera-Campesina* [Worker-Peasant Faculty].

"You went down in the mine in the morning before the dawn and saw no daylight; it was dark when you emerged from the pit. You took a piece of bread and maybe some meat with you into the mine, if you were among the more fortunate ones; and by the time you ate it, it was grimy and decomposed; but you had to eat it.

"So the revolution comes and it is concluded that the miners must not eat below any more, that they must come to the surface to eat. And you get milk, bread, an egg and meat, *gratis*. . . ."

"Look, I don't mean this in any way personally," another miner told me, "but listen, American. There used to be a *barrio* here they are called the *barrio americano,* where only Americans lived, the administrators, technicians, and so forth; and on the door of their social club was a sign, 'Only for members.' Now that's a social club for all of us. We are all members now. Everyone.

"A polyclinic has been constructed—there was no hospital here before, just one room. Now we have one with forty-four beds, built in 1964 or 1965—I'm not sure. There were no chances for you and your kids. Now there is work for everyone; there are eight six-hour shifts—the shifts used to be eight hours—and all the miners are studying, as are their children; and there are workers' sons from the shop who are now studying even to be engineers.

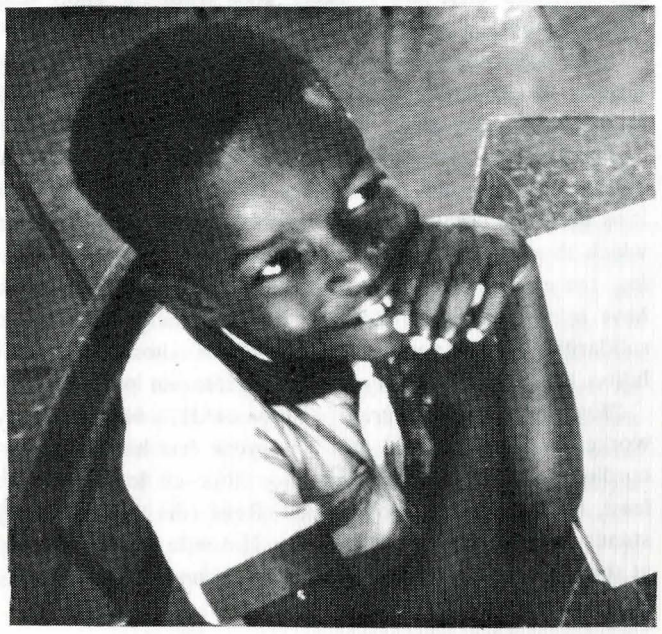
"The only thing the capitalist enterprise left us was the hole in the ground and in our stomachs. There were three hundred for every job."

The austerity program of the Cuban government has not noticeably dampened the workers' morale, because they see it as part of a common effort to develop their country, from which they have already benefited considerably; the rationing, the endless lines, the shortages seem, paradoxically, to have intensified the revolution's élan and heightened social solidarity. Most important, the egalitarian ethos of the revolution has been accentuated by its egalitarian practice

"Everyone is on the *libreta*" (ration card), a black brewery worker in Manacas told me. "Everyone has his quota, according to his family's needs, no more or less. This, at least, is what I can see for myself. René [the administrator] stands in line like the rest of us. His wife and mine buy at the same store. No one has privileges now. What there is is for everyone."

Wages and salaries reflect the same pattern of social equality. It continues to be the practice in Cuba, contrary to that in the Soviet Union until quite recently, to maintain a narrow gap between the income of production workers and clerical, administrative, and technical personnel. In fact, it may be more correct to say that there simply is no gap, because there is, as yet, no systematic relationship between occupation and income in Cuba. There is a mix between what the workers call the *sueldo histórico,* or the wage they had been receiving in 1961 when wages were frozen, and the new wage and salary scales which have been established in industry, services and in the predominantly publicly-owned agricultural sector. Plants where productivity was high and the workers had strong trade unions before the revolution, earned wages far higher than workers in similar jobs elsewhere that required equivalent skills and training; often unskilled workers in the organized plants earned more than skilled workers where unions were weak or nonexistent. This irrationality in the wage system hit skilled workers the hardest and intensified their sense of exploitation. The establishment of a standardized wage system was, therefore, an imperative necessity, not merely from the standpoint of rational planning but for equity and social justice, and one strongly supported by the workers, so far as I could tell, even in the "privileged" industries.

In my lengthy talks with workers, privately, informally, and in small groups, I probed for resentment, but found none. I expected the workers whose wages were frozen at their "historic" level to resent this; and I especially expected resentment from workers newly transferred into these plants who are earning far less on the newly established scales than veteran workers still on the "historic" ones. Instead, their responses to my questions were quite the opposite, and phrased in terms of justice and equity for the *other* workers. "It would not be proper to take what the privileged workers won from the capitalist enterprises away from them; they fought for themselves, as they had to," a black streetcar conductor now working at the paper mill in Cárdenas told me. Another man, at the cement plant in Mariel, said, "Every worker's goal was to get his son a job here. Fathers, sons, brothers, nephews helped each other get into the plant. We had a very strong union here. You went up the scale strictly by seniority. There was no such thing as self-improvement. You had no opportunity to study. Some guys in the extraction of ore earned seven hundred dollars a month with overtime. Most of them have renounced their overtime pay, though some haven't; it would have meant a great sacrifice. I myself have. New fellows coming into the plant know that they'll earn the same as workers elsewhere with the same skill and danger involved in their work. That's what counts. The fact is that the wage means very little now—"



"Because," I interrupted, "there's nothing to buy."

"Of course, to be truthful, because there is not much to buy. But mainly because so much is free, and my wife is working also. Everyone has work now, so that a family that had only one earner before now probably has a son, maybe even the wife, working. My wife leaves our kids at the *círculo infantil*—she knows they are well cared for, and it costs us nothing."

A worker at the cement plant in Mariel said:

"This is not conceivable by someone outside the revolutionary process [a favorite Cuban phrase now], I suppose. My consciousness has risen. The revolution was not Communist or even socialist, and neither was I. Something moved us all—what, was not clear—but we struggled. Some of us read and talked about things being different someday. Now we have free work clothes, work shoes, education for ourselves and our children, free health and medical attention, free x-rays, and drugs, vacations with pay; and if someone is not able to work because of illness or accident, he gets his full pay, because we are an outstanding plant with the Banner of the Heroes of Moncada. We don't have to worry about the future. Before, that was our biggest preoccupation —what would happen to your kids if you got sick or lost your job? That's over. By 1970, we won't pay any rent, and we hardly pay anything now, anyway—ten percent of our wage. We get free breakfasts in the plant; we'll be getting free lunches soon; and it only costs fifty cents anyway. Transportation is a nickel. If I want to make a phone call, I go to the corner and it costs me nothing. Little by little, we aren't even thinking in terms of individual earnings any more."

Under the newly established scales, the administrator of the plant earns no more than the most skilled worker, and may earn less. Especially skilled technicians may receive higher salaries than administrators, but these are also within a narrow range of variation. At the textile plant in Ariguanabo, for instance, which is Cuba's most important cotton textile mill, equipped with modern machinery and employing 2,700 workers, the administrator earns $250 monthly. A section technical chief earns $400 monthly. Skilled workers earn $1.75 an hour, which amounts to about $300 a month (figuring an eight-hour day, five days a week), while the lowest-paid *peón* or unskilled worker earns 55¢ an hour, or about $95 a month. At the Venezuela sugar central, which employs 1,700 workers and is the largest

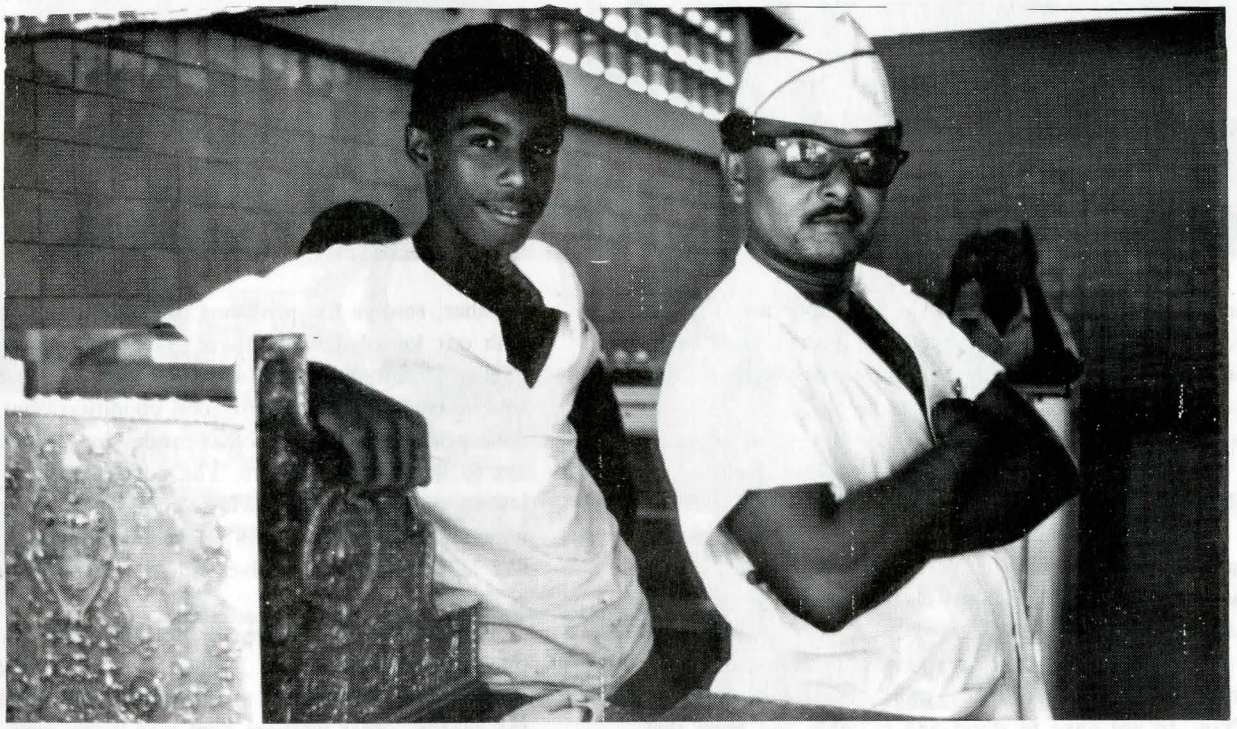
central in Cuba, the administrator earns $300 monthly, his assistant $250; the least skilled worker 50¢ hourly, or about $87 monthly; and a skilled worker $1 hourly, or about $173 monthly. These figures are typical of those in the other plants I visited and apparently is the pattern throughout industry.

Outside of industry, the new wage and salary scales have a similar pattern; the salaries of government officials range from $200 or $250 for typical functionaries to a high of $700 a month for Cabinet Ministers. There are certain limited perquisites of office. Many government functionaries have drivers and cars assigned to them for use on government business, mostly four-cylinder compact Volgas or Alfa Romeos, though an occasional Chevy or Ford still serves the Revolutionary Government. Functionaries, especially those dealing directly with foreign visitors, also have expense accounts which allow them to indulge more often than other Cubans in meals at the few remaining plush restaurants frequented still by the wealthy who have not chosen to leave. Public property and accessible to all, such restaurants are a luxury few Cubans can yet afford.

In general, however, from what I could observe, Cubans in the highest positions in government and industry live simply, and the gap between their life styles and those of ordinary workers is no greater, and perhaps less, than that indicated by differential income levels. Expropriated country homes and private yachting clubs, rather than becoming the opulent quarters of a new elite of government bureaucrats and party officials, as has occurred in other Communist countries as diverse as Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, are now restaurants, resorts, schools, and museums open to everyone. The mansions along Quinta Avenida (Fifth Avenue[!]) in Marianao house scholarship students from worker and peasant families, or are being used as government office buildings.

(The estate and country home of Irénée du Pont, for instance, is a monument to the past, preserved in all its grandeur. The lawns are closely trimmed; its landscaping is impeccable, and the four-square-mile or so estate looks, perhaps, as lovely as ever. The home, with its hand-polished wood, winding staircase, great carved doors, and sunken wine cellar, its fine paintings and elegant furnishings, is much as the du Ponts left it, including family photos over the fireplace and books in the library. The living and drawing rooms are a public restaurant, and the entire home a museum. [In the du Ponts' former library, I found a copy of Everett Dean Martin's *Farewell to Revolution* (1935), and noted a few passages which, in the present Cuban context, are particularly incongruous:

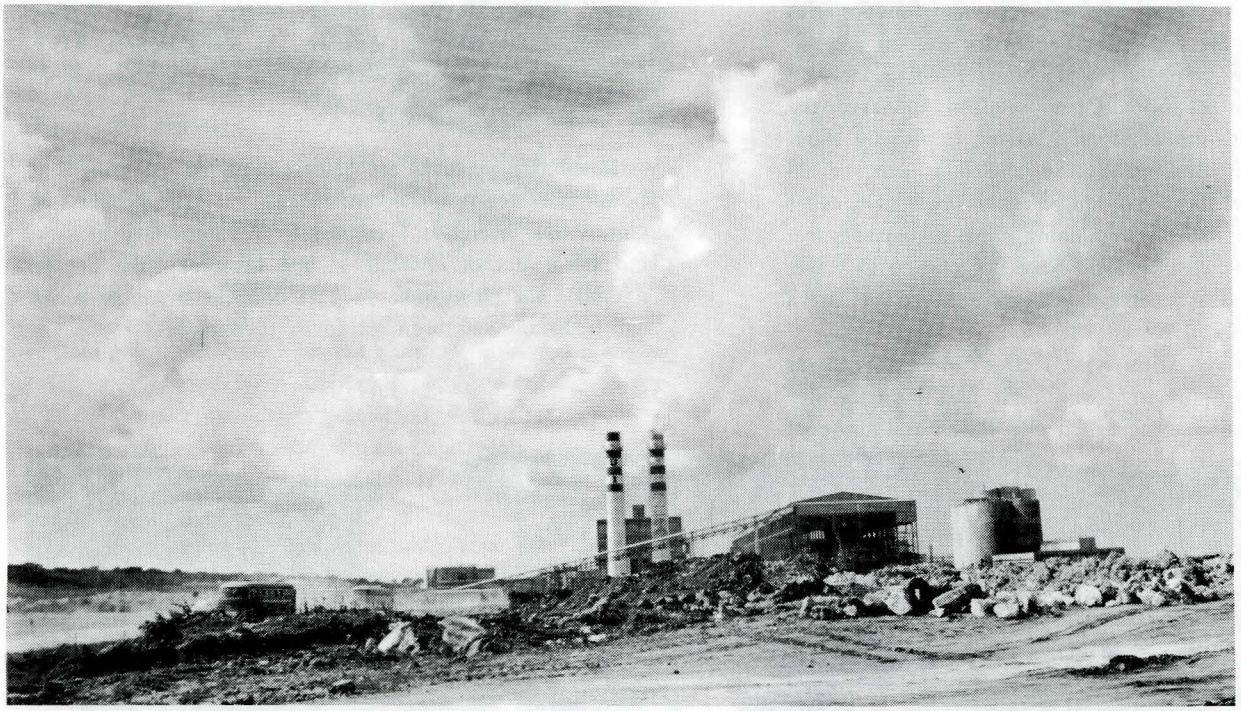
> Revolutionary ideas are justifications for the seizure of power and wealth by violent means. . . . The progress of culture has been achieved not by revolutionary masses, but by lovers of civilization, the inventors, the artists, scientists and philosophers. . . . I doubt if any great problem in history has been solved by revolution."])



The egalitarian social reality of Cuba is most evident precisely where one would expect to find it least evident, inside the factories, mines, and mills, in the social relations between production workers and administrative, technical, and clerical personnel. Informal social relations are direct, and there do not seem to be distinctions of status involving particular and subtle patterns of deference and obeisance to persons in authority. The social barriers (which functionalist

sociologists rationalize as inherent in industrialism) between manual and nonmanual workers have disappeared from such modern industrial plants as the cement factory, paper mill, and copper mine I visited. The absence of these barriers is manifested in surface things such as the disappearance of jackets and ties from office personnel and the universal use of *compañero* (we have no word precisely equivalent; a mixture of fellow, mate, companion, and comrade), rather than *señor*.

cal authority structure typical of industrial plants elsewhere. There is an attempt to encourage flexible cooperation between co-workers who have different but interdependent tasks, stressing that production is a common effort in the collective interest, and the responsibility of everyone. At the Venezuela sugar central, for instance, a black worker wearing a grease-stained beret, whom I had interviewed seven years earlier, said that "the system of work has changed completely, because we work for ourselves now. The workers.



The comments of a statistician at the paper mill in Cárdenas, in the midst of a spontaneous discussion between several workers and a visiting American sociologist outside the factory diner, point this up:

"Look, I am an office worker. Does that mean anything now? No, I am a worker like other workers. Before, we thought we were something special. We came in our starched shirts and ties, our fine clothes, sat in our air-conditioned offices, and looked down on the millworkers. They could not even pass through our doors without special permission. Now all that has changed.

"I am a worker like other workers. The administrator is a worker among workers. You want to see him, you see him. You do not have to stand and mumble and hope that you will sometime see someone who will take your complaint to the front office. You enter, like a worker who knows he is the owner here, and you ask to see the administrator. Naturally, he has meetings and a great deal of work. He cannot always just stop and speak to you anytime you wish. This is just. But you know that there is a correct reason why he can't see you, and you understand. Usually, this does not happen. You just ask to see him and do, or anyone else whom you might want to see. There are no privileges."

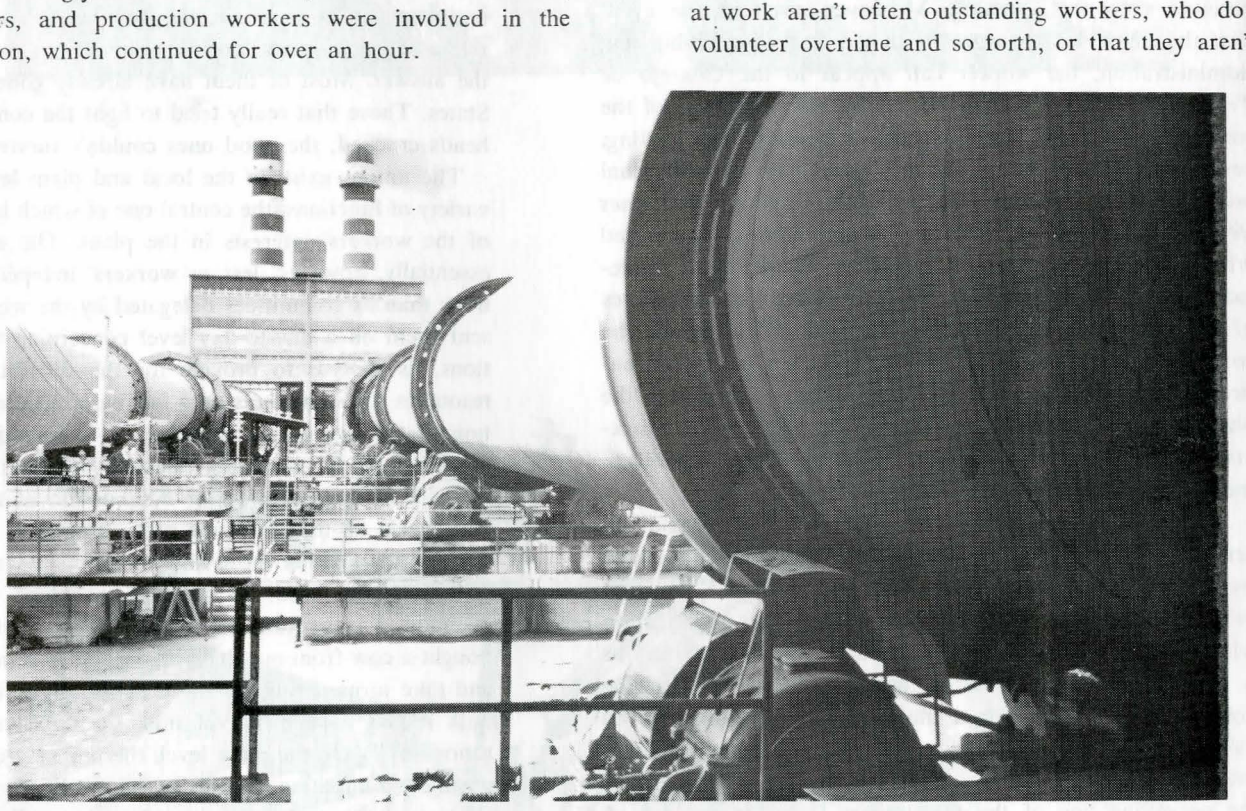
There has been a conscious de-emphasis on the hierarchi-

together, resolve the problems of production, in accordance with our knowledge. We have given up overtime pay. The quality of our work is much improved. We guarantee that equipment is maintained in good condition, that repairs are done when necessary, and that production continues. No one has to watch us any more. The administrator has good relations with the workers. He is concerned with the workers' interests and in easing our work. The fact is that we work like hell, throwing ourselves into it [*metiendo la manga y el cola*]."

The quality of relations at this workplace is indicated, I think, by the fact that as I sat in a corner of the mechanics shop talking privately to an old shoemaker now working at the central, other workers kept wandering over to listen or to make their own comments until I stopped asking them to leave simply because it was impolite to do so. After a few moments, the entire shop of 25 workers or more was involved in a spontaneous discussion of my questions, some joining the crowd, others leaving to return to their work. There was not the slightest indication, that I could sense, that the workers felt that it was anything but their right to rest and talk to their visitor.

Of course, the nature of the methods of production at this sugar central make such spontaneity possible. It could not

have occurred without destructive consequences at the highly mechanized textile factory, or the cement plant or the paper mill I visited. Yet even there, workers on their breaks would stop to talk easily and openly, without hesitation. At the paper mill, for instance, while I was waiting to see the administrator to arrange for my interviews, I wandered out with my camera and took a few pictures of some teen-agers playing volleyball in the courtyard (who turned out to be apprentices on scholarships from nearby Cárdenas). Within minutes after the kids and I started talking (one wanted to know how to say in English *"Vayase a la casa!"*—"Go Home!"—another what I thought of Cuba's defeat of the U.S. to win the Amateur World Series the day before, and whether my heart was with Cuba or the U.S., etc.), several workers who had come out of the diner joined us; and one of them, the cook himself, recognized me from my visit in 1962. And again, almost seven years to the day after a similar spontaneous gathering there, at the bus stop, a group of workers was formed that soon grew to more than 50, putting in their views about how things had changed in the intervening years. Office workers, several of them women, engineers, and production workers were involved in the discussion, which continued for over an hour.



The workers' sense of ease around administrative and supervisory personnel (typically referred to as *responables*), as well as clerical and technical employees, and the radical narrowing of the social distance between them, is undoubtedly a general consequence, on the one hand, of the recently of the destruction of the old class structure, in which the workers were considered social inferiors and manual work demeaning, and, on the other, of the Revolutionary Government's philosophical and practical emphasis on social equality. However, it is also the direct result of specific practices in the workplace which sustain the egalitarian and nonau thoritarian quality of these relationships.

The authority of those toward the top of the formal stru ture of the plant is limited and hedged in a number of way That "fundamental managerial prerogative" which even th most powerful industrial unions in America have not altere in any essential way—the authority to dismiss workers– does not reside in the hands of the plant officials. Worke cannot even be discharged for cause—negligence, frequer tardiness or absence from work; "back-talk" cannot b penalized by firing or even by fining the offending worke The typical sanction applied is to transfer the worker—a the same pay—to other, less desirable work in the plan or ultimately to transfer him out of the plant altogether "This is a blow," as a young engineer at the cement plar in Mariel put it, "because most workers—at least here– are friends and relatives of each other. They've known eac other and worked together a long time. The only thin you can do is talk to him [the worker involved], try t explain to him what he lacks in his work, talk and kee talking. And don't think that those who make mistake at work aren't often outstanding workers, who do a lot c volunteer overtime and so forth, or that they aren't revolu tionaries. They are ready to die for the revolution tomorro but can't do a day's work today. Like this fellow Jorge, wh is really a swell guy. He works watching the cement tan making sure it stays clean and keeps level, and so on, an he's let the thing overflow three times this year alread Either he's 'studying'—reading on the job—or talking to *compañero,* who is also not working when he should be. S I've talked to him, and Miguel [the administrator] has talke to him—and, well, he says he'll change, and we can onl hope so. . . ."

A brewery worker who had been sanctioned and transferred to another department explained to me:

"The administration understands the workers, and I can say this since I've had my own troubles with them. The administrator is respectful [*cariñoso*] of the workers. So is the Chief of Personnel. Everything is said without insult, if you have to be talked to. I had an argument with some guys here. So I got in a fight. The Personnel Chief broke it up and I was pretty mad and said some rough words; I lacked respect and was penalized. I was transferred to another department. I did wrong. They were right."

The decision to request the Ministry to transfer a worker for cause cannot be made by the administrator alone. It requires the combined agreement of the local union leaders, the Communist Party "nucleus" in the plant, and the administrative staff, and the request must then be approved by the Ministry; it is not granted without review. The Party nucleus is made up mostly of production workers, and all of them have been chosen (in a combination of elitist and democratic practice described below) by the workers themselves; the union leaders are elected by the workers and work in the plant also; it is therefore a rare offense which receives even this sanction. Moreover, even in the event that the union leaders agree with the Party leadership and administration, the worker can appeal to the *Consejo de Trabajo,* or Work Council, elected by and composed of the workers in the plant. It is charged with hearing, investigating, reviewing, and deciding on the grievances of individual workers. These Councils grew out of the original *Comisiones de Reclamaciones,* or Grievance Commissions, established when Che was Minister of Industries. Unlike those three-man Commissions, however, which included representatives of the factory administration, the Ministry of Labor, and the workers in the factory, the Work Council is composed entirely of five elected workers representing the workers in the plant. These *Consejos* are apparently regarded by the workers as genuinely representative councils which adjudicate individual grievances fairly and efficiently.

As to the trade unions, however, from what I could observe, and from the vague and infrequent references to them by the workers I interviewed, they seem to have "withered away." The workers do not have an *independent organization* which takes the initiative in the plant, industry, or country as a whole, to assure, let alone demand, improved working conditions or higher wages; no organization exists, as an autonomous force, to protect and advance the immediate interests of the workers, as they see them, independent of the prevailing line of the Communist Party or policies of the Revolutionary Government. The distinction in practice between the role played by the Ministry of Labor and that of the CTC-R, the Workers Federation—if it is clear in formal terms—is not clear to ordinary workers. Nor, indeed, does this distinction seem clear to some of the government officials and national leaders I spoke with.

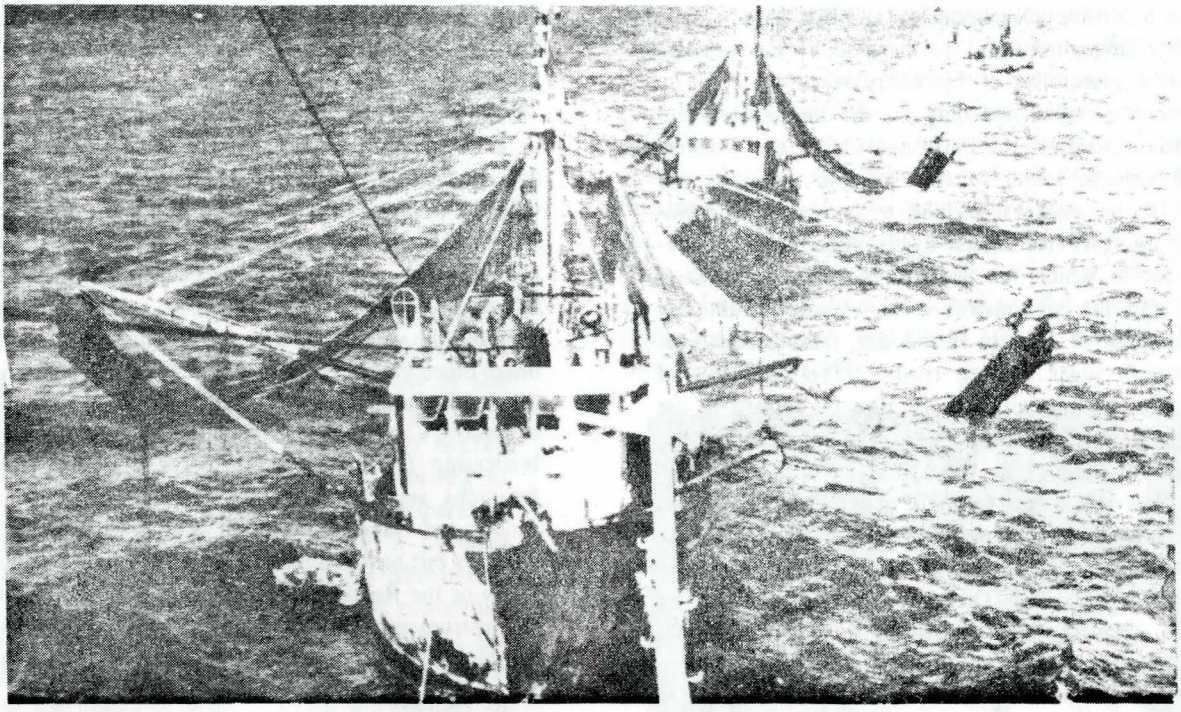
One reason for the unions' failure to play a sufficiently independent role as workers' advocate is that many union officials (such men, for instance, as Conrado Bequer, former head of the Sugar Workers Union, or Jesús Soto, former Organizational Secretary of the CTC-R), who were independent trade unionists before the revolution, have taken positions in the government which demand entirely different roles of them, as administrators, planners, and political leaders. The newer union officials had limited experience, if any, as trade union leaders before the revolution, and their conceptions have been shaped largely in terms of the developmental objectives of the revolution. This is true on the local as well as the national level. While I discovered several ex–trade union officials in the plants I visited, they were not now involved in the leadership of the union. Many, even on the plant level, had been part of the *Mujalista*-run labor bureaucracy and had been thrown out of their positions early in the revolution. They had never been genuine workers' representatives, in any case. Others had simply taken on new tasks as the revolution developed.

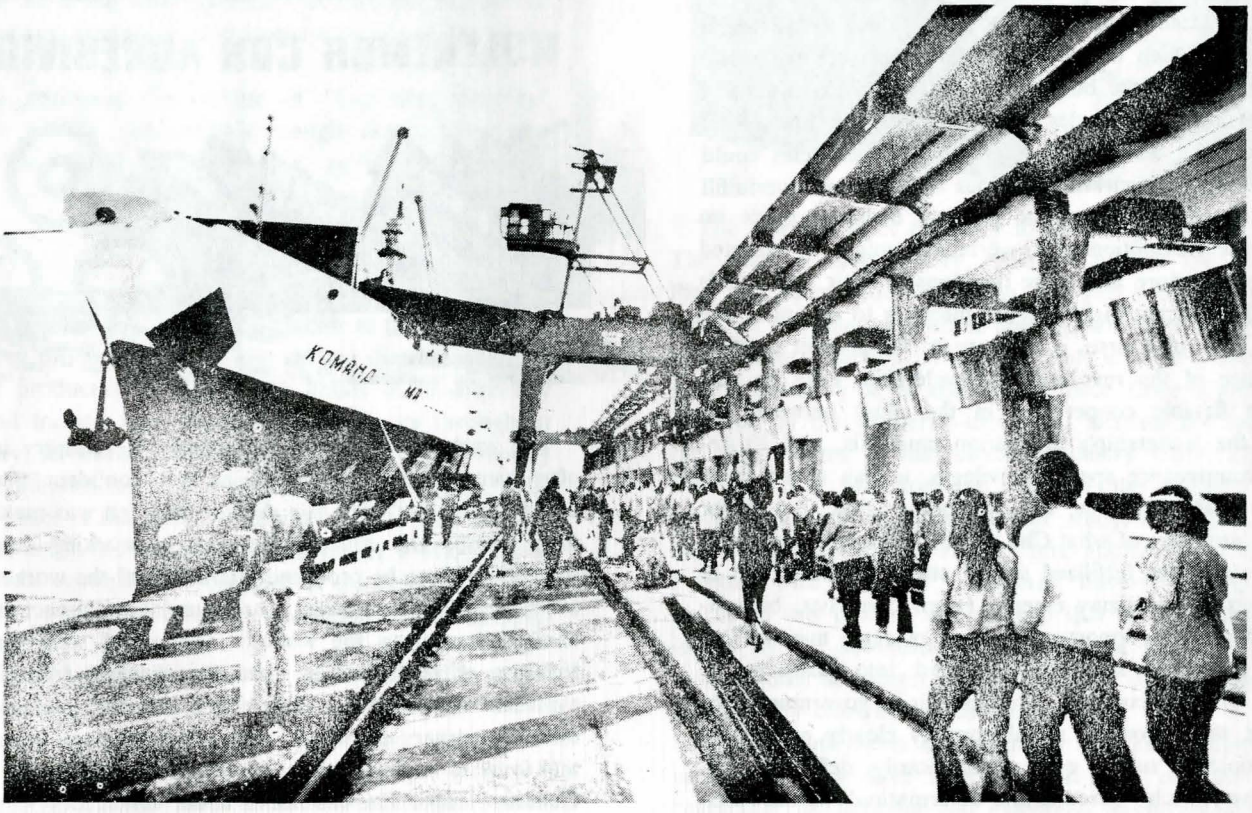
At the Matahambre copper mine, in a conversation I had with several workers, one of them recalled their past union leaders this way:

"My boy, look, what we had in the mine before, put simply, as we miners say in our vulgar way, was a bunch of *marrecones* and sons of whores. The union officials were worse than useless to us; they wore revolvers on their hips and kept *us* in line, not the company. You ask why we tolerated such [poor working] conditions here and this is the answer. Most of them have already gone to the United States. Those that really tried to fight the company got their heads cracked; the good ones couldn't survive."

The unions exist on the local and plant level and have a variety of functions, the central one of which is the protection of the workers' interests in the plant. The unions function essentially, however, less as workers' independent organizations than as committees delegated by the workers to represent them on a day-to-day level concerning working conditions, as well as to provide for the distribution of scarce resources to the workers on a fair basis. One important function of the unions, for instance, is to investigate the living conditions of its members, establish priorities in accordance with the relative comfort or dilapidation of their dwellings, and decide on the allocation of housing as it becomes available. (Other, rather more idiosyncratic services are rendered by the unions also. At the cement plant in Mariel, for instance, I was informed by one worker that "the union bought a cow from our dues, and we keep it in a field nearby and take turns caring for it—which really is little work. We milk it and have plenty of milk for ourselves [despite the rationing].") On the plant level, the unions are active in proposing and initiating changes in the conditions of work which alleviate stress and make work less demanding. At the Ariguanabo textile plant, for instance, the union was responsible for proposing and establishing an arrangement to allow the workers to smoke during working hours. Since smoking is so hazardous there, especially in the cotton mill, this change was an important one to the workers.

"Look," a 64-year-old worker who began work there in 1937 (six years after it opened) remarked, "we work more freely. The workers are trusted. In the old days if they caught you smoking, that was it. You got thrown out. Now we have a place to take a break, to rest, to light a cigarette

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and talk when we feel the need. Someone else tends your machine when you take a break, and you do the same for him. There is a certain companionship at work now."

Since such changes may also be initiated by the workers through general assemblies of the entire work force, or in given departments, called not only by the union itself but also by the administration, the Party nucleus, or the Workers Council, the specific social function of the union as *the* organization of the workers devoted to protecting and advancing their interests has tended to disappear. In a revolutionary context in which the identity of interests between the workers and the administration is stressed continually (a sign on the desk of Agustín Hernández, the administrator of the Venezuela sugar central, reads: "The prestige and authority of the administrator will be directly related to the real links he has with the mass of workers in his unit"), and the workers themselves believe in it, the distinction between the Party, Workers Council, general assembly, and the union as means of furthering their interests has become vague in their minds. Nor, they say, do they feel the need for an independent organization. They have (what to an observer from the U.S. seems to be) a naïve faith in the harmony of interests between themselves, the administration of the plant, and the Revolutionary Government. The differences that do arise can be resolved, the workers insist, by free discussion and without conflict.

This may be true at the moment, and I think from my own observations that it is, and probably will be as long as sufficiently rapid economic growth seems assured by present policies. However, the problems of development are difficult and intractable, especially in the perilous international conditions in which the revolutionaries must resolve them. Tendencies toward the bureaucratization of decision-making in industry are strong under ordinary conditions. Pressed by Cuba's need for accelerated growth, such tendencies could be increased; administrators, anxious to fulfill and overfulfill quotas, and to respond to the political demands made on them by the Revolutionary Government, might be tempted to concentrate more and more decisions in their own hands and to utilize increasingly tougher methods to discipline the workers. This, of course, is contrary to the present premise and practice of the revolutionary leadership. Like its emphasis on flexible cooperation in the plant between coworkers, the leadership's egalitarian emphasis, and its refusal to countenance special privileges, is also a conscious decision. Again, however, the possibility exists that under the social pressures of what Che called "the weeds that shoot up so easily in the fertilized soil of state subsidization," of vested interests that may emerge (risen careerists, bureaucrats, and political opportunists), and of some members of the old privileged strata incorporated into positions of authority in the economic administration, government, or Party, the thrust toward social equality clearly evident at present could be subtly, even unconsciously, deflected.

To prevent such "bureaucratic deformation" of the revolution, as Lenin termed it, whether in industry or government, Lenin argued (*against* Trotsky) that the workers had to have the freedom to organize to protect both their immediate interests on the job and their relative share of the national income, and that their spokesmen had to have the freedom to represent those interests, while at the same time defending the revolutionary regime. (In practice, Lenin and his comrades were to curtail rights that they upheld in principle.) The Cuban leaders recognize this principle, and assert, at least privately, that they are not satisfied with the present situation in the unions. I was told by Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, for instance, that he feels that the unions have been inadequately concerned with the defense of the day-to-day interests of the workers and overconcerned with spurring the workers to meet production targets. In his book-lined office in the headquarters of the Communist Party's Central Committee in Havana, he said that "what was originally Che's antibureaucratic thesis [to keep the political leadership functions of the Party and the specific union functions separate] became an antidemocratic thesis. The unions are transmission belts of the Party directives to the workers but have insufficiently represented the workers to the Party or the Revolutionary Government. They cannot merely be instruments of the Party without losing their purpose. Administrators, after all, can also be *hijos de putas* [sons of whores], and if they are, the workers have to be able to throw them out—and, for that matter, do the same with any bureaucrats. . . ."

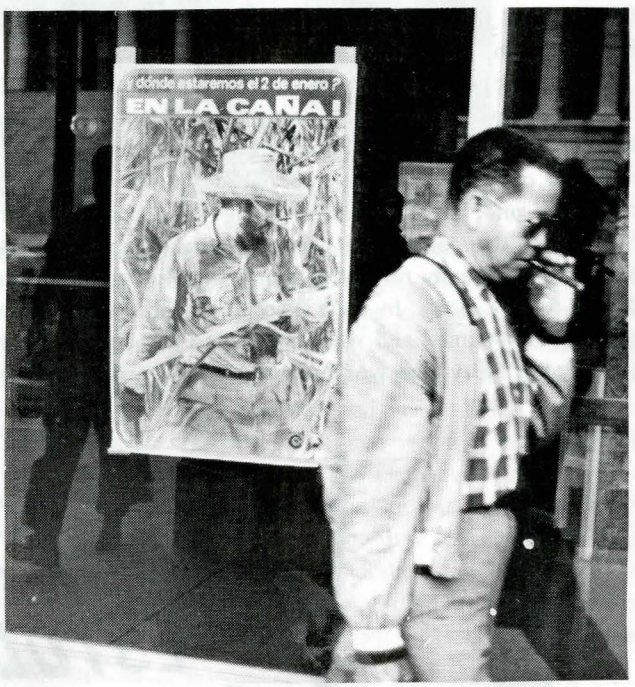
The workers I spoke to throughout the country in long, often very probing conversations felt confident that they could "throw out" any *hijo de puta* they felt was maltreating them. While the concrete changes in working conditions scarcely seem to be profound alterations of the workers' role in the productive process, the cumulative impact of such changes has given the workers a sense of well-being and freedom at work, rather than estrangement from it. The cynicism which is the characteristic informal philosophy of manual workers elsewhere, and expresses their resentment and sense of exploitation, apparently has disappeared among Cuban workers. The conditions under which they work *have* changed radically. Even where, as among formerly "privileged workers," their standard of living outside the plant

has not improved materially, or may even have lowered, the health and safety conditions in the plant have improved considerably, and the pace and intensity of the work have lessened, bringing them a better life on the job. Most workers, therefore, seem to identify strongly with the revolutionary leadership and to be really willing to work extra hours without overtime pay, and to do voluntary work in the plant or in agricultural production, planting coffee or citrus-fruit trees or cutting sugar cane. As one worker put it to me, "Everyone wants to be able to tell his grandchildren that he was in the harvest of the 'ten million.' "

However, one consequence of their present economic security (or the abolition of what Max Weber called "the whip of hunger") and of their sense of freedom in the plant is that while productivity measured by what each worker produces per day (because he works longer hours) and per unit wage cost has risen considerably, according to government figures, productivity per man-hour apparently has not. "Absenteeism" also continues to be a problem throughout industry. Captain Jorge Risquet, the Minister of Labor, claims that "a vanguard with Communist consciousness [*conciencia*] at work has been developing, but at the same time there is still a rear guard whose conduct reflects the ideology of the capitalist past. . . . As the number of centers winning the Heroes of Moncada Banners rises, and as volunteer work, the 'advanced workers' movement [of outstanding workers honored by their fellows], develops, and more and more workers renounce overtime pay, all of which are expressions of the growth of Communist consciousness, there has also been an accentuation and spread of absenteeism, negligence, and inadequate use of the workday. . . ."

Risquet attributes the residue of "capitalist ideology" among the workers, interestingly enough, not to those who were workers before the revolution, or are the sons of workers, but to those who were previously self-employed petit bourgeois, "lumpen," or vagrants, who must now work in industry. In part, it is probably true that such new workers have not yet adapted to the discipline of industrial work, and that this is a contributing factor to the absenteeism and lowered productivity. It is also certain that the administration of production is still in the hands of inadequately skilled and trained individuals in many places throughout the country, as workers have risen from the ranks rapidly to assume administrative and technical responsibilities. And while the effect of the embargo imposed by the U.S. and the changeover to Soviet technology is no longer a major problem, this still continues to pose serious obstacles to productive efficiency, requiring often crude and improvised methods to be used.

There is an unavoidable dialectic here between the growth of consciousness and the abolition of alienation—of which the revolutionary leaders are quite aware. The workers have lessened the pace and intensity of their work- -where possible—because that in itself is an important gain of the revolution. Consciously or unconsciously, they seem to have decided that the benefits of increased production should not come at the expense of their improved life on the job. Until now, the Revolutionary Government has responded to this dialectic by attempting to deepen consciousness. The emphasis has been on persuasion, exhortation, education, rather than on the imposition of punitive sanctions. "Even though they are *legally in force,*" as Risquet puts it, "fines, suspensions, etc., are typical capitalist sanctions . . . which are equally obsolete and harmful, and we have refrained from imposing them and will continue to do so. . . . If we think that sanctions are the only way or the best way to combat these antisocial manifestations, we are wrong. Sanctions must be the last resort. Education and re-education through collective criticism and the help of other workers are the basic weapons in this struggle. . . ."



The workers meet regularly to discuss production goals. The goals of their factory, mine, or mill in the National Plan are submitted to them at the year's beginning. The goals for the plant as a whole and for particular departments are discussed, section by section, and, in most plants, in a general assembly of the entire work force. Once approved or modified by the workers—usually to increase the targets—the plan returns to the relevant Ministry (there are now five industrial Ministries in place of the former unified Ministry of Industries) for further study, and then is sent back to the plant for the workers' final approval. The workers I spoke with evidently considered themselves deeply involved in this process and claimed that the assemblies, run jointly by the administration, union, and Party leadership, were genuine exchanges of ideas and that the plan was often substantially changed by their suggestions.

The revolutionaries have thus far rejected punitive sanctions; and they have rejected what they consider to be "capitalist" or material and individual incentives—which is the path the Soviet Union took and has accentuated further recently by introducing criteria of profitability at the level

of the enterprise to govern production. Fidel has spoken out strongly against what he considers to be capitalist tendencies in the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries, and his heretical call to "build communism simultaneously with building socialism" is the doctrinal principle guiding the revolutionary leadership. It is the quest to build what Che called "the new man," rejecting "Communist economics without Communist morality."

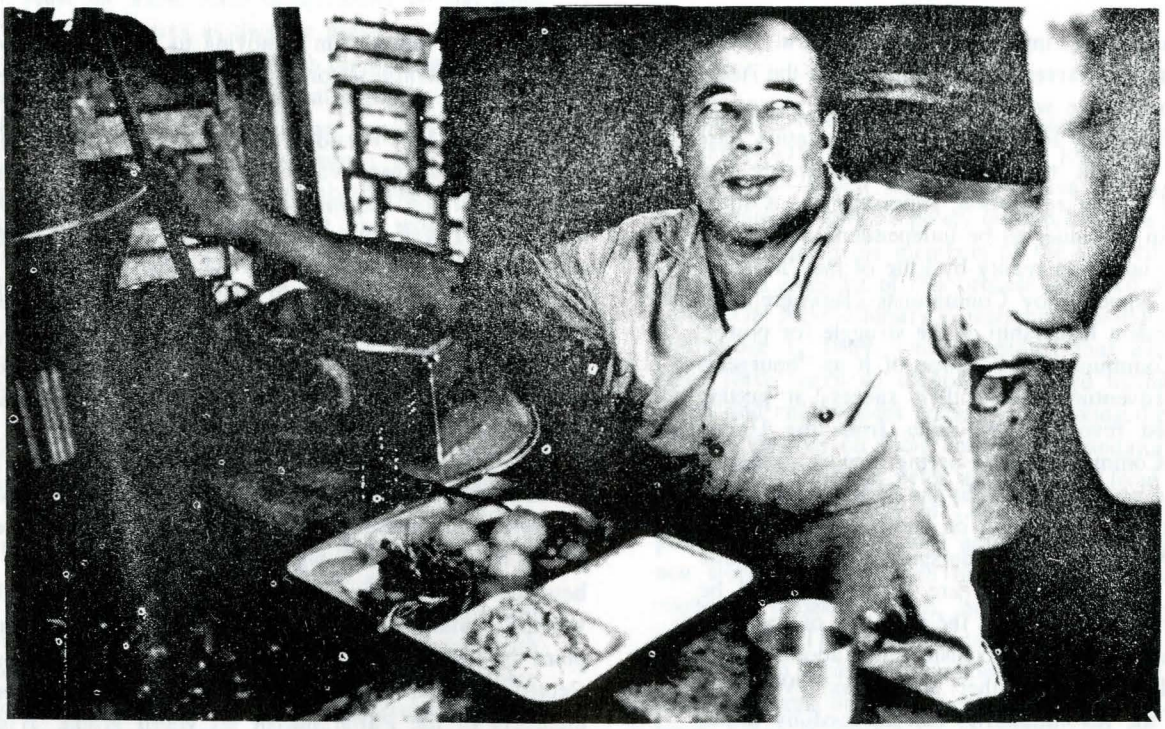
"The capitalist society," to quote Risquet again, "is based on the power of money; it is guided by the principle that a man is worth as much as he owns. A thief lucky enough to amass a fortune becomes an illustrious man and he might even get to be president of the republic. Our society is based on merit. And the most precious things a man can amass are his record and the awareness that he has fulfilled his duty and the tasks of his generation, his homeland, and his revolution."

This conception of socialist morality is at the heart of the Cuban revolution's uniqueness among Communist states, because it is combined with an egalitarian practice and a rejection of individual and material incentives in favor of collective and moral ones. Talking to Cuban workers throughout the country, it becomes quickly apparent that these are not merely revolutionary slogans, but commitments deeply felt by many. In their descriptions of what it means to be a Communist, and what is required to merit membership in the Party, the workers emphasized moral qualities.

Most important, while it is hard to know in even the lengthy interviews I had how much is cliché and how much consciousness, many of the workers themselves emphasize that they are engaged in the construction of a new society, shorn of the exploitation of man by man and based on the premise of producing for the common good rather than individual profit. It is evident that they have talked about these questions, and thought about them. This came out clearly in my discussion with several miners. The mine's administrator, Captain Jesús Parra, a young mulatto wearing a sleeveless undershirt, grimy and sweaty with Matahambre's red earth, had just stated that "the reason for our being is for the benefit of the workers" when a miner broke in to give an example in the new Law No. 270. It gives the workers in a plant that wins the Banner of the Heroes of Moncada retirement and disability benefits equal to 100 percent of their wages. Otherwise workers retire at 70 percent of their pay, up to $250 a month. I suggested that this sounded like a "material stimulus" rather than a moral one —which brought a startled look to the worker's face. Captain Parra grinned. "Do you *really* consider that a 'material incentive'?" he asked. "I do not think so. We understand that other socialist countries have fallen into capitalist habits and forms. But we have learned from this. We have applied collective, not individual, measures. Only a small minority of the workers do not merit the collective benefits which go through them to their families. Workers cannot have their

As the cook at the paper mill put it, "You cannot join the Party unless the workers who know you best and work with you think that you are deserving. You must be of good morality. You must be an advanced worker, you must have the respect of your fellows in everything and be an example of discipline and sacrifice."

wages reduced as a sanction. They cannot be fired. They know they have work. It is a moral principle of the revolution that we cannot *punish* the families of those who avoid their responsibilities. But shall we also *reward* those few equally?"



"Didn't Fidel say something about building Communism simultaneously with socialism?" I asked.

The previous miner, rather tough, responded:

"I don't understand. It seems to me to be simple justice. Those who do not sacrifice, who sit on their shit, do not merit such rewards. Only those who sacrifice do. And it is us, not some distant government or Jesús [the administrator], who decides who merits and who does not. We know, after all, who works. We decide, department by department, who has done his share and who hasn't. And it isn't as if they don't have a chance to change their situation. We talk to them. We try to explain to them that the old ways are no good any more. That the bosses are gone. That we work for ourselves now and that they are cheating on *us*. And they *do* change. How many of the twelve hundred miners here do you think did not benefit from Law No. 270? A handful, a few, not more than a dozen. Is there something wrong with this? How can this create privileges? It is the majority who gain."

At this point, professor that I am, I gave a brief lecture about developments in the Soviet Union and its use of Stakhanovism. "The principle of individual and material rewards," I said, "became the basis of their development, rationalized by the slogan 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his work'; texts from Lenin and Stalin were cited to justify and allow the growth of ever-wider gaps in status and material welfare between ordinary and privileged workers, the heroes of socialist labor, and especially between the workers and technicians, scientists, administrators, and even party bureaucrats. Was it not based on the same principle of individual merit and sacrifice that the ideals of socialism were distorted in such a way?"

Everyone was listening very carefully. Jesús Parra broke the silence. "This will not happen here. We, as I have already said, are conscious of errors elsewhere in the socialist world. Our emphasis, as the *compañero* says, is on collective benefits, not individual ones, benefits which cannot be bought and sold, which cannot enter the marketplace, and which cannot be hoarded and accumulated, but which can only better the lives of all the workers in their work, and in their lives as a whole. The changes in the conditions of work in this mine, and in every workplace in this country, directly benefit all workers. The free education, medical care, nominal rents, the work clothes and shoes and hot meals provided *gratis*—these are earned by all the workers and received by all the workers. Such is the way we choose to go."

Contrary to Captain Parra and the miners, however, the 100 percent retirement benefits are clearly material incentives rather than moral ones, and have—at least so far—benefited only a small fraction of the workers in the country, somewhere around 6 percent, according to government sources. While this is, from what I could tell, a rare departure from the central emphasis on moral suasion and collective benefits, this tension between contrasting paths of development under socialism is critical for the future course of the revolution. The revolutionaries have not chosen to adopt the existing models of Soviet development, or succumbed to the pressures of those who urge them to do so. I can guess from discussions with "highly placed" sources, though, that there continue to be serious differences within the leadership on this question; and that there are those who argue that absenteeism and inadequate productivity are reflections of the lack of individual incentives, on the one hand, and of insufficient "discipline," on the other; if they win, Cuba will be taking the road already trod by the Communists elsewhere.

There are signs that "labor brigades" organized along military lines, as well as the actual utilization of "conscript

labor," are already quite important in agricultural work, especially in sugar-cane harvesting. Of course, that the Army is engaged in "productive work" is not in itself reason to believe that "paramilitary forms of labor organization" are increasing. It is difficult to sort out the tendencies and countertendencies in any revolution, especially the Cuban, since its leadership continues to be independent, pragmatic, and experimental, bound in reality by little of the "Marxist-Leninist" dogma espoused by Communists elsewhere. The Fidelistas' independent leadership of the struggle for power, despite the old Communists' derogation of it as "bourgeois romantic" and "adventurist," and their success at putting through a socialist revolution 90 miles from the United States, when the Communists were urging a more moderate course and slower pace, have taught the Fidelistas to question the revolutionary judgment of the Communists, as well as to accentuate their own independent and pragmatic politics. Yet the counterpressures are great. It would be easier in the short run to abandon their dreams of an egalitarian and nonauthoritarian socialism and adopt Soviet political economic models. Neither Soviet nor "Western" economists think the revolutionaries can successfully utilize moral suasion and collective rewards to motivate and maintain the commitment of the Cuban people to development.

At the moment, the revolutionary leadership continues to experiment with competing forms of factory administration and labor organization, ranging from paramilitary labor brigades in agriculture in some parts of the country to politico-bureaucratic and quasi-syndicalist forms elsewhere. Typically, the administrators are essentially political cadre, appointed by the Ministry for their reliability and qualities of leadership rather than their technical capacity—though they may also be technically trained, and are expected to study the productive process in their plants with care. The administrator is the chief authority in the plant in formal terms. In practice, however, his authority is shared (to an extent a short visit cannot reveal) with the Communist Party nucleus, of which he is typically also a member, and the union. In places, the Committee of Advanced Workers, selected as outstanding workers by their peers, may also exercise considerable influence over the practical administration of work. The mixture of political and administrative roles is greatest where workers have emerged from the ranks since the revolution and moved into top administrative positions in the same plants they have worked in for many years. They may have been involved in the resistance against Batista, active in the 26th of July movement, and in the leadership of the union local once the revolutionaries took power. This was the pattern, for instance, for Miguel Pérez la Rosa, about 50, the administrator of the cement plant in Mariel, and René Riera, in his mid-thirties, the administrator of the brewery in Manacas.

The latter, employed in the brewery since 1957, where he worked on the bottle conveyor belt, had been General Secretary of the union local, then was appointed personnel head, and also became the organizational secretary of the Party nucleus before being appointed administrator.

Miguel, who has worked in the plant for 27 years, was a mechanic when it was nationalized (and he still was in 1962 when we interviewed him), moving to head of production, and then to administrator. "We tossed the old bosses out ourselves," he told me. "That is, we politely invited them to leave. The Vice-President of the company was here, and so was the manager, Walter Foster, and we said to them, 'Please, your job has finished. You may go now.' And so they went. I was never a Communist, had nothing to do with them, but I was active in the 26th of July cell here and involved in bringing this place to a standstill on the 9th of April [1958], in the general strike. Somehow, one of the major parts got broken. The fellows who led the strike, about six or seven of them, were taken prisoner, though I escaped."

The administrative practice of sharing authority with the workers' committees, and the effectiveness of worker-administrators in maintaining revolutionary élan, has led to experiments in some plants which formally recognize or reach beyond this situation. The administrator is elected by the workers, rather than appointed by the Ministry, and the plant is run by an Administrative Council composed of elected workers, who continue to work in production, and members of the Party and/or its youth group. While the workers on the Council are elected at large, the Party representatives are selected by the members of the Party nucleus. (The Party membership itself is selected as follows: The workers in the plant nominate those who they believe merit Party membership, because of their outstanding qualities as workers and because of their "advanced" consciousness, "Marxist-Leninist" ideology, study and self-education, and devotion to the revolution. When the Party nucleus has investigated them thoroughly, an explanation and justification of the reasons why some are accepted and others rejected for membership is given to the workers at large, and the decisions may be "ratified" or questioned by the workers, requiring the Party to investigate further those who the workers claim should not have been rejected. The Party may then admit them to membership or decide against it, again clarifying their reasons at a meeting of the workers in the plant—but the final decision remains the Party's.)

None of the plants I visited are administered directly by the workers' Administrative Council, and I do not know how widespread this practice is. Reportedly, the Guido Pérez brewery (formerly Hatuey), in El Cotorro outside Havana, has been run this way since December, 1968; and the productivity of the brewery's 380 workers is reported to have risen "significantly," and a heightened élan to be present, since the workers took control.[4]

The significant question is less how typical this form of workers' control is at present than what it means concerning the views and plans of the Revolutionary Government. Will they interpret the increased motivation and productivity of the workers at plants like Guido Pérez to mean that workers' control over production decisions in the plant, over the conditions and methods of work, ought to be broadened? Will they generalize this experience and attempt to deepen the democratic content of the revolution by encouraging such forms of workers' control throughout industry? Will they go on to involve the workers themselves, through elected representa-

tives, in at least the same sorts of decisions on the level of specific industrial sectors as they do make in the plants? Will there be an attempt to devise forms for the participation of workers' representatives in the actual formulation of the National Plan? At present, despite the apparently ample participation of the workers in discussions and decisions concerning the *implementation* of the objectives of the national economic plan set for their plant, the workers have no role whatsoever, to my knowledge, in determining the plan itself. They have nothing to say over investment priorities; the decision as to what and how much is to be produced is made by the central planning bodies of the Revolutionary Government responsible to the Council of Ministers.

Theoretically, of course, the Revolutionary Government's policies and the creation of the national economic plan are guided by the Communist Party, which is supposed to be the political organization of the masses and responsible to them. Yet despite the fact that the Party seems to be respected by the workers, and considered by them to represent and respond to their interests (if the interviews I had with countless workers throughout the country are typical), there is little question that in practice the Party is responsible to itself—and, above all, to Fidel—and not to the citizenry at large. In the seven years since I last visited Cuba, little has been done to create a political organization which is responsible to the people. The Central Committee of the Communist Party was not chosen by the rank and file of the Party throughout the country, and there seems to be no inclination to carry out such elections within the Party itself. On the contrary, the first national congress of the newly created Communist Party had been scheduled for 1969, but was canceled, with the "explanation" that there was too much work to do, that it would divert energies from the ten-million-ton harvest. There was no public debate about this decision, and there has been none about fundamental questions concerning the revolution for several years.

In the past, especially when Che was active in the revolutionary leadership, genuine differences between government leaders were still publicly debated, if in muted tones. The pages of *Revolución,* the newspaper of the 26th of July, and of *Hoy,* the old Communist Party newspaper, clashed openly over issues as diverse as the revolutionary responsibility of the artist and the road to revolution in Latin America. *Cuba Socialista,* the theoretical journal of the embryonic Party, and other journals such as *Verde Olivo, Nuestra Industria,* and *Trimestre* frequently had articles debating such critical questions as the role of a bank under socialism, the relative merits of central versus decentralized planning, and material versus moral incentives. Today, public debate is absent. The Communist Party newspaper, *Granma,* and the edition published by its youth group are equally unilluminating and uninformative about how the views of the revolutionary leaders may differ on domestic and foreign questions.

The only views that reach the public on a national level are the official views of government leaders, and only after the debates—which reportedly involve the expression of a wide range of views on policy questions—have been resolved in private among the members of the Council of Ministers. A relevant example of this process occurred while I was in Cuba. The Revolutionary Government passed Law 1225, on September 1, 1969, which requires that everyone in the labor force carry an identification card listing his occupational and employment record, and making the maintenance of such records on their employees mandatory for all administrators. Without prior authorization from the Regional Office of the Ministry of Labor, no one may change his place of employment, and administrators may not employ new workers without such authorization. This is an essential economic measure which, however, has inherent political implications. The Revolutionary Government, if it is to be able to plan economic development rationally, requires accurate information on the composition and mobility of the labor force; it must be in a position to correlate wages, productivity, prices, and the growth and movement of the labor force, so that employment and investment are kept in proper balance, without the intervention of the market and the consequent disemployment, unemployment, and underemployment of men and resources. However, this unquestionably entails some limitation on the freedom of individuals to choose where they live and work, and will involve a system of formal controls. There was extended debate on this question in the Council of Ministers, between those in favor of greater regimentation, or "labor discipline," and those favoring procedures to facilitate the free change of jobs, within the minimal limits required by planning. The debate was apparently resolved by a compromise which requires the administration of the place of work to state in writing to the worker within sixty days the reasons for not permitting him to leave his present position. (I say the debate was "apparently" resolved because the Statute had not yet been officially promulgated.) The worker may then appeal to the Workers Council, which may overrule the administration, permitting the administration, however, up to two years to find a substitute for the worker if his skills are essential and difficult to replace.

The range of differences expressed in the Council of Ministers concerning the contents of this law was not made public in Cuba. Nor has there been public discussion of it in centers of work throughout the country, as is customary with other laws (such as those on workers' emulation) which specifically require the participation and consent of the mass of workers for their practical implementation. Yet here is a practical revolutionary measure which is the epitome of the inherent tension between socialist planning and individual

liberties. The system of controls necessary to implement and enforce the law has an inherent authoritarian potential which, as elsewhere throughout a socialist society, can only be kept in check by the conscious creation of mechanisms to check that potential; it requires the establishment of formal procedures which permit planning and individual liberty to complement rather than contradict each other. The surest way to resolve this tension with the least damage to either social or individual needs is to encourage free and full discussion in workers' assemblies, in public meetings, and in the mass media, so that meaningful alternatives can be debated and chosen by the people themselves. This would increase the likelihood, on the one hand, that questions would be examined thoroughly and the range of options explored, and, on the other, that revolutionary measures would be understood, approved, and implemented with the least difficulty.

The fact is that, despite their experimentalism and originality in many areas, the Cuban revolutionaries have so far done little to establish institutions that will guarantee that competing points of view can be heard within the revolutionary socialist consensus; that meaningful alternatives are debated; that policies are initiated, as well as implemented, by the citizenry at large.

This does not mean, so far as I was able to observe, that dissent is repressed or that ideas cannot be expressed freely —even ones hostile to the revolution. Cuba is a remarkable revolutionary country, where the Voice of America and Spanish-language counterrevolutionary broadcasts by exiles, as well as regular programing on such Miami stations as WGBS, can be heard on the radio anywhere. People listen to these broadcasts without noticeable hesitation and without interference. Old Hollywood movies starring Ronald Reagan or John Wayne show on late television, and films from Japan, England, France, Italy, Mexico, and Brazil, as well as Eastern European countries, may be seen at the neighborhood theater. The libraries at the universities, and the National Library in Havana, have many fully accessible anti-Communist volumes. Among those at the National Library (José Martí) are: M. Djilas, *La Nueva Clase: Análisis del Régimen Comunista;* Fulton Sheen, *Communism and the Conscience of the West;* Hilaire Belloc, *El Estado Servil;* Imre Nagy, *Contradicciones del Comunismo;* Victor Kravchenko, *I Chose Freedom;* J. Edgar Hoover, *Masters of Deceit;* G. N. Shuster, *Con Mi Silencio Hablo: la Historia del Cardenal Mindszenty;* and Eli Stanley Jones, *Cristo y el Comunismo.* Journals and newspapers, in English, German, and Spanish, are available, including the current issues of the *New York Times,* the Los Angeles *Times,* the *New Statesman,* and *Excelsior* (from Mexico). Less current, but obviously still dribbing in are the Latin American editions of *Time* magazine, *New Republic, Nation,* and *New Politics.* There is a relatively good representation of works on the Cuban revolution, including my own writing; Paul Baran, *Reflections on the Cuban Revolution;* the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Cuba* (the "white paper" written by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.); the German edition of Boris Goldenberg, *The Cuban Revolution and Latin America;* and Theodore Draper's *Castro's Cuba.*

In art, the experimentation with a mix of modern and classical forms is evident in the exquisite ballet of Alicia Alonso and the films directed by Alfredo Guevara. The novels of Edmundo Desnoes and Norbeto Fuentes, the drama of Anton Arufat, and the poetry of Heberto Padilla, none of which by the remotest criterion would fit the test of what passes for "socialist realism" in other Communist countries, are published by the Union of Cuban Writers, the Casa de las Americas, and other agencies. To be sure, some of the more experimental works are criticized, often severely, by other writers, who are self-styled defenders of "revolutionary art." Thus, Fuentes' novel on the anti-Batista struggle in the Sierra Escambray was condemned as "counterrevolu-

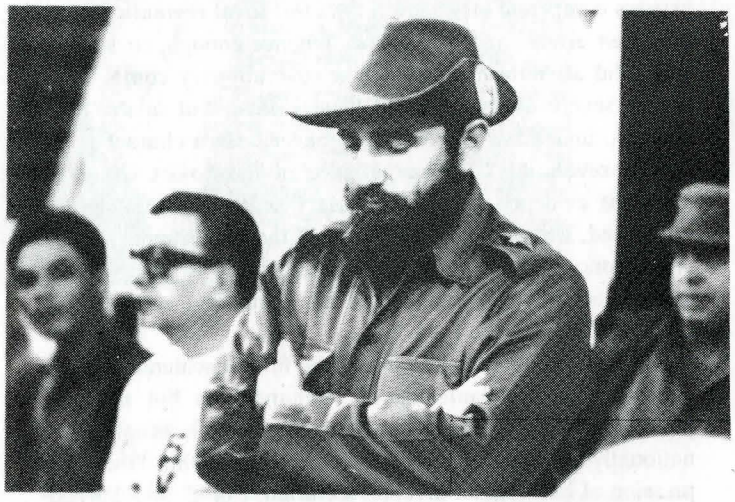
tionary" by the pseudonymous writer Leopoldo Avila in the pages of *Verde Olivo,* the official journal of the armed forces, as was Padilla's poem, "In Difficult Times," and others in his collection, "Out of the Game." The Union of Writers and Artists published these works, awarded them literary prizes for which they were chosen by an international jury, and included the critiques which denoted them as "counterrevolutionary."

"Marxism-Leninism" has been elevated to official philosphical status; it is a required course at the University and the Worker-Peasant Faculty, yet "input-output" economic analysis and functionalist sociology are also studied at the University; and the selection of readings is representative of these disciplines in the United States. Those who want to qualify for membership in the Communist Party are supposed to be free of "religious doctrine," but the churches are open, and services offered without hindrance. I attended mass at the San Carmen Church, for instance, and witnessed the baptism of the infant son of a young black couple; they, and the priest, were obviously pleased to have me take their photo and their names and addresses, and promise to send them copies.

Discussions I had with the workers ranged over domestic and international questions. There was little indication that any subject was taboo or point of view sacred, or that people attempt to hide their dissatisfaction with the revolution. In the midst of one such discussion at the Venezuela sugar central, in which the workers had been detailing the benefits to them of the revolution, one leaned over to another, gave him an elbow in the side, and commented, "And you want to go to Miami, huh?"

Wherever I went, Cubans seemed to speak freely about whatever they wished, despite the fact that in literally every block in Havana, and similarly in towns and cities across the country, there is a Committee for the Defense of the Revolution, charged with being informed fully about the actions of their neighbors. In Havana alone, 973,494 members of the CDR are involved in "revolutionary vigilance." Close to three million members of the CDR are active in the entire country. Among their activities, aside from "vigilance," are urging people to get chest x-rays, and women to get vaginal smears, and checking to see that they do, repairing neighborhood housing, collecting old newspapers and used cans and bottles, and "recuperating" other raw materials, coordinating volunteer labor in agriculture, and seeing that the streets are kept clean, flowers planted, and children in school. The CDRs seemed to be an accepted part of the neighborhood, according to my random talks with CDR volunteers and their neighbors, not unlike air-raid wardens and civil-defense volunteers in our own country during the Second World War.

The CDRs do engage in surveillance, however, as does the secret police under the Ministry of the Interior, and Cuba reportedly has several thousand political prisoners (there are no official figures) in camps said by their relatives and friends to be located in every province (though I could not verify this personally during my brief visit). What constitutes a "political crime" is not specified by law. There continue to be no formal safeguards of freedom of speech and association, or of personal, civil, and political rights. In practice, Cubans typically seem to feel secure in their persons and to speak freely, even with strangers, despite the absence of institutions and juridical procedures designed to protect the individual and guarantee his freedom from unreasonable search and seizure or arbitrary arrest and punishment. Of course, even when such institutions are long-established, they are still fragile; "guarantees" may be irrelevant when a government is determined to eliminate serious political dissent, and to utilize vague "conspiracy" charges to harass, intimidate, and imprison its political opponents, as is happening at the moment in our own country. Nonetheless, to the extent to which the liberties that exist in practice in Cuba continue to depend on what Fidel has called "the revolution's generosity," the situation is inherently unstable and dangerous.

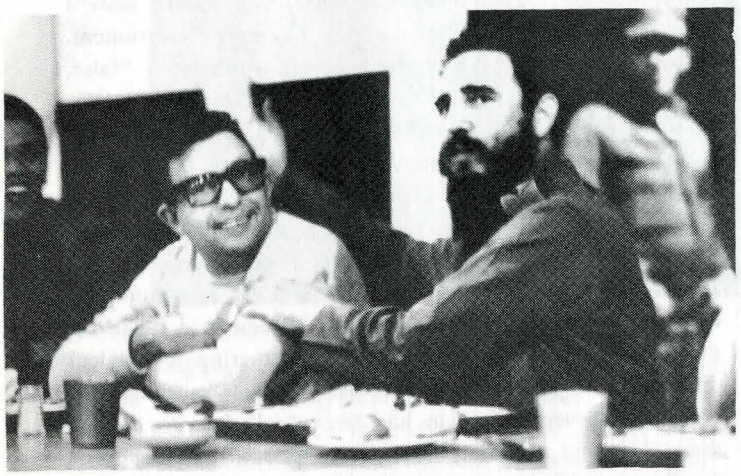


In the recent trial and conviction (January, 1968) of the so-called "microfactionists" led by Aníbal Escalante, former organizational secretary of the prerevolutionary Communist Party (PSP), several of the government's charges were sufficiently vague to encompass even *pro*revolutionary dissent from the present policies of the Revolutionary Government. Aside from the specific charge that they presented "false, calumnious data about the plans of the Revolution to Officials of foreign countries [Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Soviet Union] with the intent of undermining the international relations of Cuba with other governments, [and took] secret documents from the Central Committee and the Ministry of Basic Industry," the charges are essentially that Escalante and his comrades differed with the Revolutionary Government's policies and attempted to convince others of their views. They were accused of "furthering ideological differences" in the Party, despite the fact that "on numerous occasions" several of them had been "called in to discuss their *ideas* and *attitudes* which were opposed to the line of the Revolution" (my italics). The Statement of the Central Committee summarizing the charges concluded, finally, that "the arguments utilized by such elements, by coinciding with those of the pseudo revolutionaries of Latin America and the

imperialists' themes, actually situate this group within the complex of forces opposing the Revolution." Escalante was sentenced by the Revolutionary Tribunal to fifteen years' imprisonment, the others to shorter sentences.

To say the least, this trial might have had a chilling effect on the expression of opposing views even within the Central Committee itself, and in the country at large among revolutionary cadres; and it sets a precedent for the imprisonment of revolutionaries who deviate from the Party line. The fact that Escalante was unpopular for his previous attempt to control the formation of the Party and restrict access to important positions only to old Communists loyal to him made his imprisonment easy; it does not seem, from my conversations with leading government figures and revolutionary intellectuals, to have been interpreted as a precedent that could be applied to them as well. But this is precisely the danger. Once "attitudes, ideas, and arguments" can lead to imprisonment, the potential for the repression of any and all who express competing views, even the most loyal revolutionaries, has been established. It is good, but not enough, to say, as Fidel did after the trial, that "the revolutionary courts were not as severe as some would have wished, but in the final analysis, unnecessary severity has never been a characteristic of this revolution." The experience of the Soviet Union is sufficient evidence that "unnecessary severity" is not easily controlled, whatever the intentions of the revolutionary leadership, once the precedents and procedures (including secret trials like that of Escalante and his comrades) are set into motion.

Seven years ago, at the time of the first "Escalante affair," which led to Escalante's public denunciation but not imprisonment, Fidel's major lesson to the Cuban people in a nationally televised and broadcast speech was that "the suppression of ideas was a myopic, sectarian, stupid, and warped conception of Marxism that could change the Revolution into a tyranny. And that is not revolution! . . . And what must the Revolution be? The Revolution must be a school of courageous men, the Revolution must be a school in which there is liberty of thought!" What lesson do Fidel and his fellow revolutionary leaders want drawn today?



The threat to the revolution from the United States is real and unavoidable, but the revolution's social base among the workers and peasants is secure. There is no serious internal opposition to the revolution; there is no threat from within. The revolution has been a profoundly liberating experience for the Cuban people; they are conscious of themselves as historical actors, and have learned to believe in themselves, to take the implausible for granted and the unprecedented as certain—as "no one," they will tell you, "who has not lived within the revolutionary process can understand."

"The most transcendental changes are within us," they say, "the ones that you cannot see, that are visible only to ourselves. No one who knows the Cuban past as only we can, of whoredom and corruption, of the infinite capacity to deceive oneself and others, to sell oneself to the highest bidder in all things, to lack faith in anything but the vulgar and to accept the obscene as natural—no one who lived this past as we did can doubt the great changes in our beings.

"What was Cuba?—an insignificant whorehouse for the West, a country known only for its sugar and the delights of the flesh, a country of 'simple blacks and *tropicales*,' and now we are trying to create 'the new man.' "

Such talk of creating the "new man," while it has its element of Spanish overstatement, self-flattery, and romanticism, is real. To create that "new man" will require not merely new economic but also new political forms. It will require the consciousness and the will of the revolutionaries; indeed, it will require an effort even more "decisive" for the revolution's future than the present one to produce ten million tons of sugar. Without it, they will not create that form of socialism which Che dreamt of. "The socialist society that we want," he said, "is absolutely democratic; it is based on

the needs and the aspirations of the people, and the people have a major role in all decisive points."

The revolutionary leaders have consciously rejected the Soviet model of "how to construct Communism." Cuba is "the black sheep of the family," as Fidel put it, "because it does not follow the beaten path even if that path leads nowhere!" But that Soviet path included not only material incentives and vast inequalities, but also the use of force to repress dissent and the establishment of a monopoly of political power in the hands of the Communist Party. Social inequality and authoritarian controls reinforce and strengthen one another. If the revolutionaries in Cuba reject the one, they must reject the other. "Our task," Che told me in 1961, "is to enlarge democracy within the revolution as much as possible. As you have well said, we are pragmatic. . . . We feel that the government's chief function is to assure channels for the expression of the popular will. What forms this will take, we cannot say yet. This will depend on the political system to be elaborated."

Elaborating this political system is now on the order of the day. The revolutionaries have avoided this task so far in part because of their fear of prematurely institutionalizing forms which will freeze their relations with the people, and prevent that spontaneity and improvisation and the sense of common effort and participation which has characterized their activity so far. The revolutionaries have acted to a great extent, as I wrote several years ago, as if unconsciously guided by a paraphrase of the German socialist Rosa Luxemburg's famous revolutionary axiom: "Mistakes committed by a genuine revolutionary government are much more fruitful and worthwhile historically than the infallibility of the very best central committee." Most important, they have no models which they simply can adopt wholesale. Political forms in the Communist countries, especially in the Soviet bloc, have led, in Che's words, "into dogmatic extremes, into cold scholasticism, into isolation from the masses"; they do not want to "create salaried workers docile to official thinking nor 'fellows' who live under the wing of the budget, exercising 'freedom' in quotation marks."

"We are," Che wrote, "seeking something new that will allow a perfect identification between the government and the community as a whole, adapted to the conditions of the building of socialism peculiar to our country, and avoiding as much as possible the commonplaces of bourgeois democracy transplanted to the society in formation (such as legislative houses, for example). There have been some experiments intended to gradually create the institutionalization of the revolution, but without too much hurry. The major thing holding us back has been the fear that any formal mechanism might separate us from the masses and the individual, making us lose sight of the ultimate and most important revolutionary aspiration: to see man freed from alienation."

Anyone who thinks the answers to the revolutionaries' dilemma are easy has not thought seriously about the questions. The establishment of socialist democracy will require the same pragmatism, experimentalism, and boldness, and the "same strong feelings of love for the people" (Che) and revolutionary optimism that have brought them this far, and have allowed them to transform the prerevolutionary social structure more profoundly and rapidly than has any other "socialist" revolution anywhere. Some questions that they must deal with, while yet involved in a struggle for development, are: How can they guarantee a free press when there is no private ownership of enterprises? What sort of representative system—and what kind of judiciary—is compatible with public ownership of the means of production and central planning? How are the technical requirements of expertise and authority in a planned economy to be reconciled with popular election of government officials? What forms will prevent bureaucratic control of the new society? And how can they do all this while defending the revolution?

Whatever the answers the revolutionaries give to these questions in practice, it is unquestionable that they must choose soon between that "beaten path that leads nowhere" and one far more difficult for not having been trodden before, toward the establishment of socialist democratic political forms commensurate with the revolution's egalitarian and liberating content. "Then," in the vision that Che bequeathed the revolutionaries, "they will come to sing the song of the new man with the authentic voice of the people."

Footnotes

[1] Some of the features of the prerevolutionary social structure which were significant in determining the pace and direction of the revolution and reinforcing its humane and libertarian aspects and potential are discussed below, pp. 271-76. See also, my "Cuba: Revolution Without a Blueprint," *Cuban Communism*, ed. I. L. Horowitz (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969).

[2] What does it indicate about the thinking of U.S. officials and policy planners, the Cubans might wonder, that someone like Hans Morgenthau, a former top State Department adviser who publicly opposes United States intervention in Vietnam, could recently write: "As part of the settlement of the missile crisis of 1962, we pledged ourselves not to intervene in Cuba, *which is today a military and political outpost of the Soviet Union and the fountainhead of subversion and military intervention in the Western hemisphere, and as such directly affects the interests of the United States.* On the other hand, we have intervened massively in Vietnam, even at the risk of a major war, although *the Communist threat to American interests from Vietnam is at best remote and in any event is infinitely more remote than the Communist threat emanating from Cuba.* . . . It appears incongruous that we intervened massively in the Dominican Republic, whose revolution was, according to our government's assessment of the facts, a mere symptom of the disease, while *the disease itself—that is, Cuban Communism—is exempt from effective intervention altogether.* . . . Intervene we must where our national interest requires it and where our power gives us a chance to succeed. The choice of these occasions will be determined not by sweeping ideological commitments nor by blind reliance upon American power but by a careful calculation of the interests involved and the power available. If the United States applies this standard, it will intervene less and succeed more." *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (April, 1967), pp. 423-33, 436. Italics added.

[3] Labor Law No. 1126 in force since January 1, 1965 permits more severe sanctions, including wage deductions and dismissal. In practice, however, under Labor Minister Captain Jorge Risquet, such sanctions are rarely imposed.

[4] Arthur McEwan, Assistant Professor of Economics, Harvard University, who visited the brewery in the summer of 1969, is my source for this information.

the following pictures

are of the first

VENCEREMOS BRIGADE in cuba

The preceding article appears as the introduction to the paperback edition of Revolutionary Politics and the Cuban Working Class by Maurice Zeitlin.

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