

CUBA, From Page B1

Foreigners are allowed to travel about the country—if they have a car and gasoline coupons—but hotel reservations must be made for them by a government agency. During a heated discussion about my desire to travel on my own, my Foreign Ministry guide finally burst out: "If we allowed that we'd have thousands of CIA agents running around." I lost the argument, as did at least one other foreign journalist visiting Cuba at the same time.

The belief that the United States is still a threat to Cuba's sovereignty and *soberanía* seems to be a factor in many Cubans' willingness to work long hours and make personal sacrifices for the sake of "the revolution."

On top of their 44-hour work week, most Cubans stand guard duty at their work places, do volunteer work in fields or factories one or two Sundays a month, help patrol their neighborhood and attend meetings of the multitude of civil and political organizations everyone is expected to belong to.

Preschool children tend their day-care centers' vegetable gardens, city teenagers spend six weeks working in the countryside each year, and mental patients at Havana's asylum raise chickens or man the hospital's many workshops. Housewives clean schools on weekends and distribute polio vaccine. Government bureaucrats are expected to schedule at least an occasional Sunday for cutting sugar cane or building a school.

All of this work, while perhaps not as "voluntary" as the government would like visitors to believe, gives most Cubans a feeling of participation in their country's development.

Fidel Castro's personal form of leadership is another factor that gives Cubans a feeling of participation in their country's progress. He travels from one end of Cuba to the other making speeches, visiting factories and farms and vigorously participating in any basketball games he comes across. His speeches are the best sources of information about what is going on in Cuba, with more facts and statistics than the daily newspapers. He loves to "dialogue" with his audience, asking them questions and exchanging jokes with them.

He is widely admired. One hotel chambermaid, listening to a recording of one of Castro's speeches, applauded and grinned, then said: "Fidel was born knowing everything."

Sharing the Wealth

FROM CASTRO on down, many Cubans appear to have a genuine feeling that the products of all Cubans' work must be shared by all. Many Cubans explained the system of rationing food and clothing by saying that it would not be right for some

families to have more to eat than others. "If there are any grapes in the country, then everyone must have grapes," said a middle-aged writer who is active in his union and neighborhood association.

This principle of sharing the available wealth has made Cuba the most egalitarian society in the hemisphere. The absence of extreme poverty is impressive in comparison with the rest of Latin America, but even more impressive is the absence of wealth.

There are unconfirmed reports that some government and party officials have servants, large houses and cars. The Cubans I visited lived in uniformly modest circumstances, with adequate but unexciting clothes, food and household goods.

The words *senor* and *senora* have almost disappeared. Everyone, including children, is addressed as *compañero*, a word that is closer to "companion" or "friend" than to "comrade."

There are still elegant restaurants with white-coated waiters, but the customers are just as likely to be construction workers as cabinet ministers. No tips are permitted, and the customers are waited on methodically, in the order of their arrival.

CUBA: A NEW PRIDE

All Cubans, including the most recalcitrant nonconformists, are provided with housing, food, clothing, education, recreational opportunities and free medical care.

There are nonconformists. Some intellectuals, open homosexuals, people who seriously practice their religion and those who have applied to leave the country are left outside the revolutionary process. They do not belong to the mass political organizations, and therefore are not eligible to buy special consumer goods, to go to the best schools or to win free vacations or trips abroad.

Thousands of Cubans are political prisoners, and little is known about their lives. The government has not allowed any international organization to send a mission to study the conditions of the prisoners. Several years ago, Castro said there were 20,000 political prisoners. Some exile groups say there are 60,000.

The Soviet Presence

THERE IS ALSO, of course, a new foreign influence. The Soviets are not as obtrusive as Americans are in many Latin American countries, but their presence cannot be ignored.

Sources in Washington estimate that

EW PRIDE



By Terri Shaw—The Washington Post

that Cuba will prevail, despite the "aggression" of the embargo. The trade embargo, called "the blockade" here, is a series of executive orders and legislation passed in the early years of the Castro government, after most American property in Cuba had been nationalized and when many Americans feared the establishment of a Soviet military base "90 miles from our shores."

The Cuban government constantly reminds its people of the U.S. reaction to these fears—the CIA-backed Bay of Pigs invasion and later exile attacks.

Cubans are trained to be ready for an attack at any time. Every employee must do "civil defense" guard duty at his place of work every few weeks.

Men are required, and women are encouraged, to do some sort of military service. Even at Cuban day care centers, the children ride on wooden "Mig-21s" instead of rocking horses. When I caught a glimpse of a cartridge belt in a Cuban worker's apartment, he calmly explained: "In Cuba we are all soldiers."

Cubans also are kept aware of the overbearing economic and political role the United States played here before Castro took power.

"The American ambassador used to run this country," said Humberto Hernandez, the head judge of the provincial court in Havana, who was also a judge before the Castro revolution.

Narciso Pons, a 21-year-old nurse at

the cracker factory outside Havana, described his knowledge of the American presence in Cuba: "I lived in Guantamo, near the U.S. naval base. And my family told me how crude and insulting the American sailors were. There is a famous photograph that is often published here of an American sailor relieving himself on the statue of Jose Marti," Cuba's most revered thinker and leader of the independence movement of the 1890s.

"My family told me of a sailor who forced himself into a house near ours and took a girl away with him," Pons added.

Despite the anger and fear directed at the United States, however, there is still an intangible and important U.S. presence here. The loudest station on the AM radio dial every morning and evening is the Voice of America. When atmospheric conditions are right, Miami television programs appear on Cuban sets. The 600,000 Cuban exiles living in the United States send letters, magazines and clothing to their relatives here.

A long-haired Cuban youth who apparently spends a lot of time hanging around the major hotels told me when we first met that he was not interested in resuming relations with the United States "because we get plenty of clothes from France and Britain now and they're more stylish anyway." On the last day of my visit the young man came to say goodbye and asked, with great embarrassment, if I could give him my blue jeans, because "they're very stylish here."

Controls Tightening

THE LINGERING psychological influence of the United States is apparently seen by the government as a threat, and it seems to be a factor in the strict controls over the press, the arts, education and foreigners' visits.

Some of the controls seem to be tightening. The government has recently begun a campaign against "ideological diversionism," which one newspaper question-and-answer column defined as counterrevolutionary ideas spread by foreign magazines.

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Farm worker Miguel Perez and his family are proud of their apartment in the new town of La Yaya.



A typical scene in the new, egalitarian Cuba: the restaurant, in the old section of Havana, is called El Patio.



Photos by Terri Shaw—The Washington Post

Workers building the Alomar housing project on the outskirts of Havana.

there are 5,000 Soviet military advisers and civilian technicians here. A foreign diplomat said the Soviets have 190 cars, a substantial number in what is one of the few capitals in the world with no trace of a traffic problem.

Soviet textbooks are used—along with pirated American ones—in Cuban schools. Hotel employees study Russian, and Russian language lessons are offered on the radio. But buildings and streets are not covered with Russian signs, the airwaves are not filled with Russian music and Russians do not live in luxurious suburban houses with large staffs of servants.

The Soviet and Eastern European advisers—euphemistically known as “foreign technicians”—live in separate, reportedly modest apartment houses. They buy food and clothes at a special “diplomats’ store,” which has a better selection of goods than the Cuban stores. Their children go to special schools.

Some Cubans I met expressed genuine-sounding gratitude for Soviet help. “If it had not been for the unselfish help of the Soviet Union this country would not exist,” said Lazaro Machado, a tall, thin man who is a Communist Party official at the cracker factory.

Others appear to view the “foreign

technicians” as eccentric but harmless people who do odd things like swimming at night and getting up at 3 a.m. to go fishing.

Along with the resident advisers, there is a seemingly endless stream of political celebrities, trade missions and artistic groups visiting Cuba. During my three-week stay, Havana was visited by trade missions from Mexico and Great Britain, ballet dancers from all over the world performing in an international festival, Japan’s top amateur baseball team, the Belgrade Philharmonic, a delegation from the Soviet Communist youth organization and a bevy of famous leftist women, including Angela Davis, to attend a meeting of the Cuban women’s federation.

The Cubans appear to feel a special kinship with visitors from other developing countries, especially those considered fellow victims of “Yankee imperialism.”

“Every bomb that fell on Vietnam fell in the hearts of the Cuban people,” said the middle-aged writer.

Esther Lopez, the technical school teacher, said she would be interested in renewing relations with the United States only when Washington “ends all its aggression, not only against Cuba

but against all the countries in the world.”

Many Cubans said they believed that most Americans sympathized with the Cuban revolution and opposed Washington’s policy of isolating the Castro government.

Miguel Quincosa, 58, a worker and party leader at a noodle factory near Havana’s airport, was asked about Castro’s violently anti-American speeches. “We have been squeezed very hard, and we have to protest against that oppression,” he said. “But we feel about the American people as we do about our own people. The American people have defended us. They have even sent brigades to cut sugar cane.”

“What’s Our Hurry?”

WHILE THOSE who have not benefited much from Castro’s revolution may hope for a warming of relations with the United States, most Cubans appear to be in no hurry. Almost all of the dozens I interviewed expressed some reservations about ties with the United States.

A woman construction worker at the Alamar housing project outside Havana said she would be in favor of relations with the United States “when they respect our policies and treat us as equals.”

Ignacio Arango, a black house painter, said he would not be interested in recognizing the United States as long as “there is racial discrimination there and they continue to subjugate the countries of Latin America and Africa.”

If the Cuban government is interested in a resumption of ties, it is keeping fairly quiet about it. There appears to have been an increase in the number of unofficial groups of Americans invited to visit the country, and at least one congressional aide has been to Cuba since the visit of Sen. Jacob K. Javits (R-N.Y.) and Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.).

Recent government statements have shown no urgency to make contact with Washington. In fact, Castro said in a speech earlier this month that all long-term planning—apparently including the country’s first five-year plan, now being drafted for 1976 to 1990—was made on the assumption that the U.S. trade embargo would continue.

“What’s our hurry?” Castro asked rhetorically. “Why should we be impatient, when now, more than ever before, our country is advancing in spite of the blockade, when all our projects are planned taking the blockade into account? . . . We planned to build all those hospitals and clinics and dental clinics and schools and day-care centers and universities taking the blockade into account.”

NEXT:

The neighborhood committees.

By Terri Shaw

Ms. Shaw, an assistant foreign editor of The Washington Post who is fluent in Spanish, spent three weeks in Cuba gathering information for this series. She was accompanied by two officials on government-arranged visits to factories, schools and other locations, but was able to make visits and conduct interviews alone inside Havana.

First in a Series

HAVANA — During World War II, Dora Gonzales worked in a chocolate factory, making candy for American GIs. "I got one peso a day for making chocolate that sold for two pesos a pound," she said. "I joined the union and was fired. For 18 years I was out of work. I just sat home and stared at the ceiling."

Esther Lopez' father was a mason. With considerable sacrifice he sent her to school to get a teaching degree. "But there were no jobs for women teachers then," Mrs. Lopez said. "Even men had trouble finding work."

Narciso, Nodaz quit school after the fifth grade and went to work to help support his family. He got a job in a grocery store for five pesos a month. When payday came, Nodaz was surprised to learn that the five pesos had been applied against his family's grocery bill.

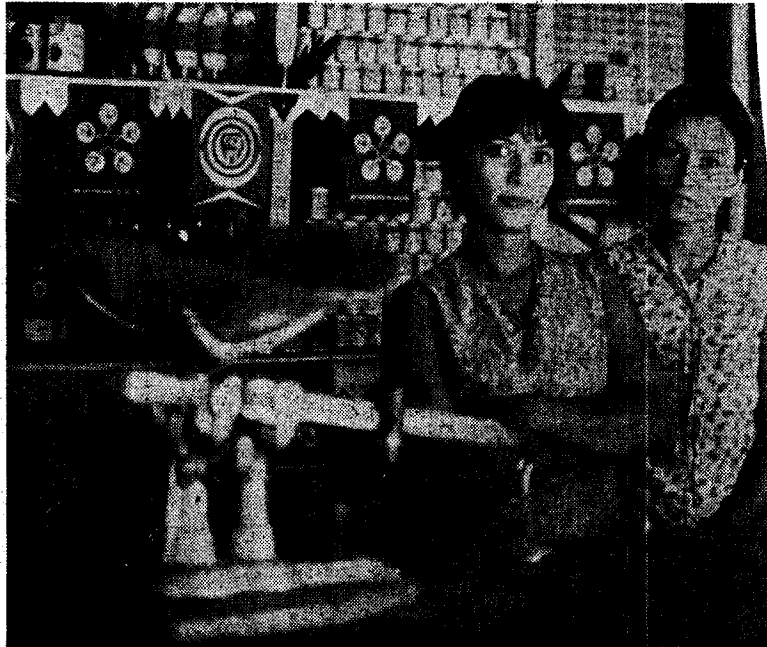
These three Cubans—and many others—now are doing work that they consider important to themselves and to their country.

Mrs. Gonzalez works in a cracker factory for a much higher salary, and lives in a modern housing development outside Havana. Mrs. Lopez is a teacher at the large Lenin technical school, where Cuba's brightest teenagers prepare for careers in engineering and science. Nodaz, who has earned a high-school diploma from night school, is a Communist Party official in Cienfuegos, a southern port.

The pride these three Cubans express about their progress since Fidel Castro won power almost 18 years ago is shared by many other people I met during a three-week visit to Cuba.

In Spanish, the key word is *dignidad*

CUBA: A N



—a combination of pride, dignity and self-respect. *Dignidad* is a quality that has often suffered in Latin America's relationship with the United States.

People who used to work for foreign companies or for rich Cubans now say they are working for themselves, for their country or for their children.

Mrs. Gonzales, 57, fat and garrulous, put it this way: "Before the revolution there were lots of things in the stores, but I couldn't eat. A man could stand on the corner and offer to sell five chickens for one peso and no one would come out to buy them. Now all Cubans eat.

"Some people say, 'My house comes first.' That is not right. The more pros-

perous our society is, the more things will be available for me."

Ready for an Attack

THE CUBANS' sense of *dignidad* is accentuated by the feeling, expressed by many, that Cuba has progressed despite the enmity of the most powerful country in the world.

The U.S. trade embargo, imposed in 1960, "was very harmful for us, but we have developed our economy despite it. Every day we develop more," said Rafael Alonso, a mechanical engineer who works at a machine factory in Santa Clara, 150 miles southeast of Havana.

Newspapers, textbooks and billboards hammer home the message

The Bay of Pigs: Imperialism's Waterloo



PLAYA LARGA, Cuba — One warm night, 13 years ago last spring, a small group of CIA-trained Cuban frogmen approached this rocky beach on the Bay of Pigs in a fiberglass boat.

They were to set up signals for a landing force that would establish a second beachhead from which the Cuban exiles of Brigade 2506 expected to launch a full-scale revolt to overthrow the two-year-old government of Prime Minister Fidel Castro.

Like the rest of the Bay of Pigs operation, the Playa Larga landing was plagued with mistakes and miscalculations of the strength of Castro's forces. The frogmen's first unpleasant surprise was being fired on by militia guards stationed in the shacks along the beach.

The shacks are gone now, and Playa Larga, about 95 miles southeast of Havana, is the site of one of the many "tourist centers" the Castro government has built for workers to visit during their two-week vacations each year.

One balmy evening last month, as the sun set turned the sky and water to a dark orange color, a man and two boys were swimming in the bay. They wore "snorkel" face masks and flippers, an eerie reminder of the frogmen of 13 years ago. As they waded ashore, their bodies silhouetted against the orange sky, they could be heard talking to one another in Russian.

There is nothing unusual now about Rus-

sians swimming in the Bay of Pigs, and their numbers may soon increase.

Since Cubans do not believe in swimming during the "winter" months — when temperatures go down to the 70s or 60s — the government plans to open up many resorts like Playa Larga to foreign tourists, mostly from Eastern Europe.

More "tourist centers" have been built a few miles inland, in the swamps where the invaders battled Castro's forces in 1961 and where many of the exiles died of heat, thirst and starvation after the fighting was over.

The new resorts and the many reminders of the 72 hours of fighting in April of 1961 are just the most noticeable changes in this desolate and inhospitable area since the invaders were repelled.

The Bay of Pigs invasion is seen here as an event of great importance in the history of the Castro "revolution," and is constantly mentioned in books, speeches and movies. It is usually described as "the first great defeat of imperialism in the Americas."

All along the roads leading to Playa Larga and Playa Giron, where the first invaders landed, are colorful billboards with stylized renderings of soldiers and their weapons to mark the sites of important skirmishes. More than 80 large stone slabs mark the places where defenders of the Castro government were killed.

Both sides of the road are lined with scrubby vegetation. The soil is not good for agriculture, and, aside from the resorts, the

main industry appears to be manufacturing charcoal. At several spots along the road, there are large, carefully stacked mounds of smoldering wood.

At Playa Giron there is a school for fishermen and merchant sailors. A sign at the entrance says: "Welcome to Playa Giron; Death to the Invader." A burned tank and the engine of a destroyed airplane are on display, and a museum is nearby.

Twenty-seven miles to the north is another billboard saying: "The mercenaries were stopped here."

Across the street is a small, white painted primary school, one of thousands that have sprung up in country villages all over Cuba since Castro took power.

"I heard the shooting and bombing then," said Elida Noda, a toothless woman with leathery skin who was waiting for a bus beside the billboard. "My son here was seven months old. My father and brother were killed fighting other counter-revolutionaries in the mountains before the invasion."

Are things better now? "Divine," she replied, grinning. "When I was a girl, the school was too far away. I know almost nothing. My son goes to school now, and he's learning mechanics."

A younger woman, waiting with her two children, added: "There were not enough weapons then, so I helped by cooking for the soldiers. I'm a member of the militia now, and I would fight if it was necessary again."

—TERRI SHAW