

Blas Roca: Last of Cuba's

BY AL BURT

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HAVANA — Blas Roca sits in a plush office that once belonged to a capitalist, beneath a large painting of Lenin, and scratches out dogmatic Communist editorials in longhand.

That is his office, as editor of the newspaper Hoy.

Next door, at Communist Party headquarters, he sits at a bare desk in an austere office and carries out his duties as one of the seven national directors of the United Party of the Socialist Republic (PURS).

Blas Roca, 57, abrasive son of an Oriente Province shoemaker, is the last of the "old guard" Communists to sit at

the top of Cuba's power structure.

He was born Francisco Calderio to Francisco Martinez and his common-law wife and was given only a grammar school education and an inheritance of obscurity.

BLAS ROCA would have you believe there is no such thing as the celebrated "old

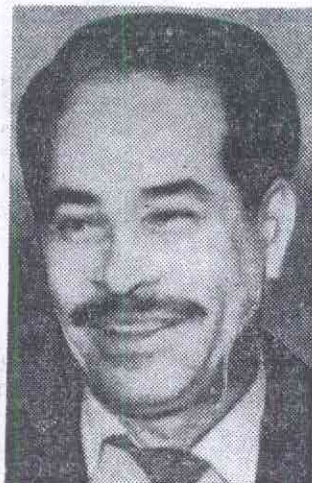
guard" Communist faction, only a happy, united revolutionary family. He views any other opinion as fiction.

Blas Roca is a short, balding man with a mustache, whose expressive voice grows loud with indignation or dwindles to the wheedle of Communist reason equally effectively.

The closest oldtimer to him in influence, the career Communist Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, fell from grace in February when he lost his prestige job as head of the Agrarian Reform Institute.

One by one the oldtimers, who once collaborated with the Batista dictatorship, have been cut from under Blas Roca, and he would rather talk about something else.

Red 'Old Guard'



BLAS ROCA

"United States is to blame."

WHERE **BLAS** Roca speaks with pleasure, and volume, is on international matters, where

doctrinaire dissent can be recited as from a handbook.

For instance, he explained bitterly how Cuba wanted relations with the United States and there was only one obstacle.

"The obstacle is the policy of the United States. That is the obstacle — the aggression, its anxiety of destroying the Cuban revolution, its incapacity to respect the right of Cuba to determine its own destiny, its incapacity to respect the principles of sovereignty and international rules of behavior . . ."

He said Cuba was a misunderstood country in pursuit of collective equality, painfully but surely en route to paradise.