

FIVE YEARS OF CASTRO'S CUBA

THEODORE DRAPER

ON THE fifth anniversary of Fidel Castro's regime, it is clearer than ever before that his crucial problem is and has been economic. For about half of these five years, he seemed to enjoy a charmed life. Every crisis worked to his advantage, every enemy made him stronger. After his total, dizzying triumph at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961, nothing seemed impossible to him any longer.

The turning point, at least visibly, came early in 1962. Ever since the purge of the old-time Communist leader, Aníbal Escalante, in March of that year, nothing has turned out quite right for Castro. We now know that the Escalante purge was part of an internal crisis far more serious than had previously been realized. The gravest aspect of this crisis was hidden deep in the Cuban countryside. It amounted to nothing less than a rebellious Cuban peasantry. I would not use these terms, "serious crisis" and "rebellious," if two of the foremost Cuban leaders—in the first case Minister of Industries Ernesto Che Guevara and in the second President (now Minister) Carlos Rafael Rodríguez of INRA, the agrarian reform organization—had not used them already.¹

Both Guevara and Rodríguez agree that the crisis was generated in 1961. According to Rodríguez, who has given the most detailed account, "serious errors" were committed in the last half of 1961 and the first two months of 1962. In 1961, food production was still largely in private hands, and the crisis hinged on the right of the private peasants to sell their products. As Rodríguez put it, "the great mass of *campesinos*—even the poor ones—showed the class tendency with respect to profit." They wanted, in other words, to sell at the highest price instead of hand-

ing over their wares to INRA for much lower fixed prices.

It was a classical confrontation. Faced with this traditional peasant desire to take advantage of a sellers' market, the Cuban authorities cracked down. Rodríguez specifically blamed INRA officials, local political leaders, and even the armed forces. The peasants' goods were seized and in some cases their land confiscated. This was not a war against *latifundistas* or large landowners, for there were no more. It was a fierce struggle against small and middle peasants, predominantly the former. The severity of the methods may be gathered from Rodríguez's observation that they violated "revolutionary legality" and made no discrimination between rich and poor. The strength of the resistance may be inferred from his allusion to the peasants' "disagreement and rebelliousness" [*inconformidad y rebeldía*].

In effect, the peasants sold on the black market or they went on strike. They sowed less and grew less. In 1962, especially in the months of March and November, the peasants had their revenge in the country-wide shortages that developed. Rodríguez, another old-time Communist, was brought in as the new President of INRA in February. Castro reversed INRA policy and temporarily gave way to the peasants by lifting all restrictions, but the damage had been done. The regime was so acutely worried that in June it ordered a parade of tanks and machine-guns in the city of Cárdenas as a warning to housewives who had come out in the streets beating pots and pans to protest food shortages.² Rodríguez implies that

¹ Che Guevara, *Siempre* (Mexico City), interview with Víctor Rico Galán, June 19, 1963; Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, *Revolución*, May 18, 1963. (In the following notes, I have cited the source, mainly newspapers, that I happened to obtain. Most of the information cited, however, appeared in all the Cuban papers but not always of exactly the same date.)

² A pro-Castro writer, Maurice Zeitlin, who visited Cuba after the Cárdenas demonstration, has confirmed the essential facts: "Organized dissent is prohibited, if one can judge by the government's response to a recent demonstration of a group of housewives in Cárdenas who went marching through the streets banging pots to protest food shortages. The next day the government put on an impressive military display which included helmeted soldiers (a sight

This month marks the fifth anniversary of the Castro regime in Cuba, and we have therefore invited THEODORE DRAPER—whose writings on the Cuban revolution have been the subject of world-wide discussion—to assess its over-all record. Mr. Draper has chosen to concentrate on the economic aspect, which he considers the least understood and most misrepresented. In addition to the recent *Castro's Revolution* (Praeger), Mr. Draper is also the author of *The Roots of American Communism* and *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (Viking).

it was a rather close shave: "Only faith in the revolution, only faith in Fidel, prevented the peasantry from losing confidence in the revolution."³

But the private peasants were not the only ones in trouble. The "cooperatives" were also caught up in the crisis. The essential reason was that they were cooperatives in name only. In practice, as Rodríguez later admitted, they had been transformed into *granjas del pueblo* or state farms. INRA administered them from above without in the least taking their members' wishes into account, giving them any voice in their affairs, or even holding *pro forma* meetings. From the point of view of their members, the cooperatives had all the disadvantages of state farms and none of the advantages, the most important of the latter being a guaranteed wage. Here again the crisis built up in the last half of 1961 and burst out in the first half of 1962. In November 1961, Castro himself remarked that the peasants had become so "allergic" to the cooperatives that they "feared" the very word.⁴ In June 1962, Rodríguez reported that the cooperatives had become "dead organisms" and their members had been fleeing to the *granjas* and private farms.⁵ And in August, they were officially transformed into *granjas*.

Not that the *granjas* had been doing too well. They were so badly run at the time, their chief administrator has revealed, that 80 per cent of the local administrators had to be removed.⁶ In 1962, then, the Castro regime ran into trouble on all three of its agricultural fronts—privately-owned lands, "cooperatives," and *granjas*. One of the more durable myths about Castro's Cuba is the idea that the "agrarian reform" has been the most successful aspect of the revolution. If this were true, the past two or three years would have been very different.

Gradually, the agricultural miasma settled over the entire economic landscape. It made rationing necessary, which in turn brought on inflation, because the urban population had more to spend but less to buy. The inflationary spiral infected the workers who no longer had the incentive to exert themselves for what they could not get anyway. Workers' absenteeism began to reach alarming proportions because workers found they could earn enough in two or three days to buy the little that was available. The quality of work also suffered with declining morale and reduced effective purchasing power. From the viewpoint of the regime, the chief culprits were the skilled workers, formerly the hard core of the organized Cuban proletariat. Castro had complained bitterly about the attitude of the electrical workers as long ago as December 1960, but his wrath with what he called "worker-aristocrats"—whom he grouped with the big and little bourgeoisie and imperialist monopolies—came out most forcefully in a speech

addressed to party members in the construction industry in July 1963. He assailed the drop in productivity in the construction industry and accused the workers of doing more under the capitalists than under his regime.⁷ Guevara recently ascribed the "terrible loss of conscience for quality" to the "initial scarcity of raw materials, and the suppression of private property."⁸

Yet one of the most significant aspects of this crisis was the fact that the Cuban leaders were not prepared for it. Nothing that had happened in 1961 had forewarned them because 1961 had been a relatively good year, so good that the former President of the Cuban National Bank, the late Dr. Raúl Cepero Bonilla, called it "the year of the highest agricultural production."⁹ This was especially true of Cuba's key crop, sugar, which still provided over three-quarters of its export earnings. The 1961 sugar crop was an exceptionally large one of 6.8 million tons, the second largest in its history. But the 1962 crop was only 4.8 million tons and the 1963 crop was still less, only 3.8 million.¹⁰ Between 1961 and 1963, the only negative factor beyond human control was the drought, which could not, however, by itself have accounted for such a drastic drop. All the other factors were man-made, and the results should have made the Cuban leaders happy.

But they did not. Why they did not is the economic key to Castro's first five years in power.

II

IN THE first year, 1959, Guevara had been put in charge of INRA's Department of Industrialization. His group worked on the "first simple and tentative lines" for the future Cuban economy. As Guevara himself later told the story, they made lists of products that had for many years been imported chiefly from the United States, and then began a "search for offers" of long-term foreign aid for the development of Cuba's own "basic industry." The "search" ended with the arrival of Soviet First Deputy Premier Anastas I. Mikoyan in Havana on February 4, 1960, and

one rarely sees in Cuba) and tanks" (*The Nation*, New York, November 3, 1962, p. 287). I described the incident at some length in *The Reporter*, January 17, 1963.

³ Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, *Revolución*, May 18, 1963. His fullest analysis of the crisis appeared in *Cuba Socialista*, May 1963, pp. 12-14.

⁴ *Revolución*, November 11, 1961.

⁵ *Ibid.*, June 19, 1962. More details are given in *Cuba Socialista*, May 1963, p. 12.

⁶ Interview with Crostóbal Díaz Vallina, Administrador General de Granjas del Pueblo, *Hoy*, July 6, 1963.

⁷ *Obra Revolucionaria*, December 15, 1960; *Revolución*, July 2, 1963.

⁸ *La Tarde*, November 11, 1963.

⁹ *Cuba Socialista*, January 1963, p. 89.

¹⁰ Gerardo Bernardo, *Hoy Domingo*, August 11, 1963.

the signing of the first Soviet-Cuban trade agreement on February 13 of that year. Then Guevara went on a junket of Eastern Europe, lining up Soviet bloc commitments of large-scale credits "to build a good number of basic industries." The Soviets promised \$100,000,000 for a steel industry, electric plants, an oil refinery, and a geological survey; Czechoslovakia, an automobile factory; China, \$60,000,000 for twenty-four different factories; Rumania, fifteen; Bulgaria, five; Poland, twelve; East Germany, ten. The offers were snapped up.¹¹

Soon after Mikoyan's departure, Guevara and other top Cuban leaders began a campaign to prepare Cuban public opinion for a rupture of the traditional economic ties with the United States, especially the preferential sugar quota. Guevara initiated the drive on March 2, 1960, in a speech which referred to the "quantity of slavery represented for our country by the three million tons which we sell at supposedly preferential prices." The leading Cuban Communist, Blas Roca, went to Moscow in May for his first meeting with Nikita Khrushchev and, unable to restrain himself until his return, wrote a letter published in the official Communist organ: "Cuba cannot be blockaded economically by the U.S. imperialists. Our factories will not be paralyzed from lack of oil, neither will our homes run short of bread in case the U.S. monopolies decide to reduce the sugar quota and refuse to send what we need for our normal life." Fidel Castro boasted that Cuba could produce more sugar and get more for it if there were no U.S. sugar quota.¹²

At this point, the Eisenhower administration, against the better judgment of the U.S. Ambassador, Philip W. Bonsal, played into the Cubans' hands. In June, 1960, three U.S.- and British-owned oil refineries in Cuba, in consultation with Washington, refused a Cuban request to process two barge-loads of Soviet crude oil. The Cubans promptly took over the oil refineries; the Eisenhower administration suspended the remainder of the 1960 sugar quota; the Cubans expropriated all U.S.-owned properties; the United States retaliated with a trade embargo. In retrospect, it appears clear that only a Cuban government which was already inwardly committed to, and had prepared the way for, a break would have pushed the matter of the oil to such an extremity; and only a U.S. government which had grossly miscalculated the forces at work or did not care any longer for other reasons would have made the break so easy.¹³

The Cubans welcomed the U.S. embargo. "Now," exulted Blas Roca, "Cuba has freed her foreign commerce from the monopoly of an imperialist power. Now Cuba has won freedom of trade with every country in the world." Fidel Castro scoffed at the idea that the United States

could hurt Cuba, since the Cubans could obtain all they needed and wanted from the "socialist countries" and "neutrals." Guevara assured the Cuban people that the U.S. embargo would have few serious consequences, that it would not imperil the revolution, and that the U.S. would be hurt even more than Cuba by its own action.¹⁴

THERE was an important internal political side to Cuban-Soviet relations. Cuban-Soviet economic ties were closely coordinated with Cuban Communist-Fidelista political ties. The process of Communist-Fidelista fusion was lengthy and complex from 1958 to the end of 1960, and the whole story cannot yet be told. But we know—to cite a single example—that, as late as May 1959, Fidel Castro personally engaged in an acrimonious public controversy with the Communists.¹⁵ By the end of the year, however, it was impermissible in Cuba to say about the Communists what Castro had said earlier; and with the arrest of Major Hubert Matos in October 1959, anti-Communism was made a counter-revolutionary crime. Castro intervened to save the Communists from rout at the trade union congress in November. This transition to anti-anti-Communism in public policy preceded the Cuban-Soviet economic agreement of February 1960. After the agreement, the active process of fusion speeded up. It all took place behind the scenes, of course, but we can now situate it in the context of Cuba's economic changeover.

Immediately after the suspension of the U.S. sugar quota, Guevara told a youth congress in Havana in July that the Cuban revolution was "Marxist." The following month, as U.S. businesses in Cuba were being expropriated, Blas Roca called for the perspective of "complete union" or "fusion" of all the revolutionary forces "in a single movement."¹⁶ We have more recently been told

¹¹ Guevara, *Cuba Socialista*, March 1962, p. 30.

¹² Guevara, *Revolución*, March 3, 1960; Blas Roca, *Hoy*, May 24, 1960; Fidel Castro, *Hoy*, May 29, 1960.

¹³ We now know that President Eisenhower authorized the training of a stand-by Cuban exile force in March 1960.

¹⁴ Blas Roca, *Hoy*, October 13, 1960; Fidel Castro, *ibid.*, October 16, 1960; Guevara, *ibid.*, October 21, 1960.

¹⁵ In a television interview on May 21, 1959, Castro discussed unrest in the village of San Luis and remarked that there were "many coincidences" between the Communists and the "counter-revolutionaries" responsible for the unrest. The Executive Bureau of the Communist *Partido Socialista Popular* immediately issued a statement protesting against "such an unjust and unjustifiable attack" (*Hoy*, May 23, 1959). This incident, together with simultaneous attacks on the Communists at the Fidelista-controlled sugar workers congress, was taken so seriously that the P.S.P. Central Committee was hastily called together on May 25 to deal with the situation (*Hoy*, May 26, 1959). In his "I am a Marxist-Leninist" speech on December 2, 1961, Castro alluded to his past anti-Communist "prejudices" and said that he had been a victim of imperialist propaganda.

¹⁶ Partido Socialista Popular, *VIII Asamblea Nacional*, August 16-21, 1960, p. 209.

that this was not the beginning but rather near the end of the process of fusion. On December 2, 1960, Castro presided at a meeting to set up schools, *Escuelas de Instrucción Revolucionaria*, to train cadres for the "united party." The director of these schools, Lionel Soto, a pre-1959 Communist, has disclosed that this meeting was the first formal manifestation of "the integration of the revolutionary forces."¹⁷

These dates are extraordinarily revealing. For Guevara did not discover that the Cuban revolution was "Marxist" in July 1960 and Blas Roca did not call for fusion in August because the ideas had suddenly popped into their heads; the first formal manifestation of fusion did not take place in December without a considerable period of gestation. The "search for offers" in 1959, the Soviet-Cuban trade agreement of February 1960, and the Communist-*Fidelista* fusion later that year were parts of a single, continuous process, not isolated incidents.

Another major decision came up at the end of 1960. This one grew out of the suspension of the Cuban sugar quota by the Eisenhower administration in July. The Soviet Union had committed itself to purchasing 1,000,000 tons annually for five years or one-third of the former U.S. quota. The Cubans could see no way, in the depressed world sugar market of 1960-61, to dispose of the remainder. Moreover, they were then obsessed by two main objectives—rapid industrialization and agricultural diversification. Sugar represented all that had stood in the way of industrialization and diversification in the past. Instead of facing the loss of the U.S. market with a certain trepidation, the Cuban leaders could barely repress their joy. They viewed more industrialization and less sugar production as opposite sides of the same coin, and embraced both causes with equal enthusiasm. When the U.S. quota was suppressed, therefore, they considered it to be a positive good and, as Castro later put it, "took the decision to cut down on all that sugar-cane and reduce sugar production."¹⁸

Drought or no drought, then, there would have been a much smaller Cuban sugar crop in 1962 and 1963 (not in 1961 because the preparations had been made the year before). The sugar acreage was deliberately reduced, replanting neglected, and weeding pursued halfheartedly: in general, the entire industry was given a very low order of priority. The drought hurt other crops but, in the all-important case of sugar, it might have been part of the plan. Between the drought and government policy, there was in the period 1961 to 1963 a reduction of 14 per cent in sugar area cut, of 42 per cent in ground cane, and 33 per cent in unit yield.¹⁹

Nevertheless, as 1961 opened, Castro's mastery of events, helped along perhaps by more than a

bit of luck, seemed infallible. He had freed himself from all economic and diplomatic ties to the United States in a manner that made him seem to many the aggrieved and innocent party. The Eisenhower administration's decision to suspend the sugar quota had fallen in with his own desire not only to get rid of the quota but to cut sugar production. The Soviet bloc had apparently agreed to underwrite what Guevara had called "a process of accelerated industrialization."²⁰ A new Ministry of Industries was created in February of that year with Guevara in charge. And after the April invasion fiasco, the Cuban cup ran over.

III

WHAT WENT WRONG?

The private peasantry, the cooperatives, and the *granjas* were not the only things that went wrong. When a Latin American sympathizer asked Guevara to name some of the errors which had been made in Cuba, his answer, only half in jest, was: "It will have to be only some, because we would need ten days to recount all the errors."²¹

Guevara's own program of "accelerated industrialization" was the source of some of the worst disenchantment. The original conception was almost childishly simple. Its aim was the substitution of home-made goods for those previously imported from the United States. Its method was the physical transplantation across half the globe of dozens of factories in the shortest possible time. Its financial basis was long-term credits or outright gifts from the Communist world.

By early 1962, Guevara knew that there was something radically wrong with the scheme. At that time, he analyzed the trouble as follows: "We failed to put the proper emphasis on the utilization of our own resources; we worked with the fixed purpose of producing substitutes for finished imported articles, without clearly seeing that these articles are made with raw materials which must be had in order to manufacture them."²²

In short, the Cuban industrializers thought solely in terms of factories, not in terms of raw materials for the factories. They were stunned to learn that, in many cases, the raw materials cost almost as much as the imported finished articles. In order to free themselves from dependence on the importation of finished articles, they had made themselves even more dependent on the importation of raw materials which they could not af-

¹⁷ *Cuba Socialista*, February 1963, p. 30.

¹⁸ *Revolución*, June 28, 1963.

¹⁹ Gerardo Bernardo, *Hoy Domingo*, August 11, 1963.

²⁰ *Hoy*, June 21, 1960.

²¹ *Revolución*, August 21, 1963.

²² *Cuba Socialista*, March 1962, p. 33.

ford. Guevara subsequently explained: "We began to acquire factories, but we did not think of the raw materials for them that we would have to import." In this way, he said, two years had been lost "installing factories for a series of articles which could be bought at almost the same price as the raw materials that we needed to produce them."²³

This unforeseen, though hardly unforeseeable, relationship between finished products and raw materials led to a Cuban balance-of-payments crisis. In 1960, when the Soviet bloc was anxious to displace the United States in the Cuban economy, it had been lavish in promises and credits. Two years later, however, it was less interested in what the Cubans wanted than in what the Cubans could afford. Either the credits had run out or they had been used so badly that the bloc had balked at throwing good money after bad.

At some point toward the end of 1961 or beginning of 1962, it is clear, the Soviets called a halt and demanded an accounting. We know from Carlos Rafael Rodríguez that, by March 1962, Soviet bloc "advisers," who had become ubiquitous in the Cuban administrative apparatus, had become highly critical of Cuban methods, especially in the Ministry of Foreign Trade. In the same month, Guevara published an article in which he warned that Cuba would have to pay for its raw materials through its own foreign trade and not with Soviet credits or handouts. To be sure, the Cubans did receive further credits from the Soviet Union, but as Guevara later explained, they were to cover the existing unfavorable balance of payments, not to build industries.²⁴

The indications are that it took some time and not a little anguish for the Cubans to give up the view of industrialization as a simple, rather naïve, two-way process of factories-finished products and to think in terms of the far more complex, critical triangle of factories-raw materials-exports.

In a sense, the Cuban problem had come to resemble the Chinese problem—how far would the Soviets go to pay for their speedy industrialization? In both cases, the Soviets started to go part of the way, but then, for reasons of their own, not necessarily the same in both cases, they demanded a slow-down of the pace and payment for services rendered. Consciously or unconsciously, the Cubans had gone ahead after 1960 as if the Soviets had given them not a \$100,000,000 five-year credit but an unlimited account. There would have been no balance-of-payments crisis if the Soviets had not called for payments.

As of the middle of 1963 at least, the Cubans still had few of the factories that the Soviet bloc had promised to install. It appears that only eight new factories had come from the bloc (Czechoslovakia three, East Germany three, USSR one, Poland one).²⁵

ONCE THE Cubans had to face the realities of production costs, profit margins, and balance of payments, all their other problems came down on them too. If they had to pay for imports with exports, they were driven back to the key economic fact of Cuban life from which they had fled—that sugar made up over three-fourths of Cuban exports. But for about two years, the Cuban leaders had been denigrating the importance of sugar production and had deliberately cut it down. The resistance of the private peasantry, the "disagreement and rebelliousness" in the sugar-growing "cooperatives," and the mismanagement of the *granjas* were not merely symptoms of an agricultural crisis; they were not merely contributing factors in the vicious cycle of rationing, inflation, absenteeism, high costs, and low quality; they were directly linked to the neuralgic points of Cuban-Soviet economic relations—the trade agreements, the negotiation of credits, the balance of payments.

Thus what Guevara called the "two fundamental errors"—the "declaration of war on sugar cane" and the desire for factories without "thinking of the raw materials for them"²⁶—intersected and interacted, exacerbating each other.

Guevara recently gave some examples of the blundering that brought the industrialization program to a standstill. Two of the factories from Czechoslovakia were to make picks and shovels. Cuba could just as well have bought the finished products from East Europe. Instead, the factories had to import raw materials which depleted the already extremely scarce monetary reserves. Another Cuban factory made sacks; it required imports of jute, which cost more than the finished sacks. The Cubans have now decided to buy another factory which will use a native fiber. Guevara also lamented the fact that Cuba had factories to make metal containers—but no tin-plate.²⁷ Judging from the frequency and pain with which the Cuban leaders have mentioned their expensive education in the economics of raw materials, these miscalculations must have been the rule rather than the exception.

In effect, Castro's first year in power, 1959, was one in which there was no "socialist" planning; in the second year, the "old order" was completely shattered but only the rudiments of a new order could be established; in the third year, the Castro regime was for the first time able to impose its basic ideas on the economy, and it thereby generated the subsequent crisis; in the

²³ *Revolución*, August 21, 1963.

²⁴ Rodríguez, *El Mundo*, March 25, 1962; Guevara, *Cuba Socialista*, March 1962, p. 33; Guevara, *Hoy*, February 12, 1963.

²⁵ *Hoy*, June 2, 1963, p. 6.

²⁶ *Revolución*, August 21, 1963.

²⁷ *La Tarde*, November 11, 1963.

fourth year, ironically called the "Year of Planning," the crisis erupted and caused a preliminary reconsideration of the policy; and in the fifth year, the crisis deepened in the first months and brought about a change of line in the second half.

The new line is, in theory, not so much a clear-cut choice between agriculture and industry as a reversal of their previously allotted roles. The old line had encouraged industry at the expense of agriculture. The new one is based on the development of agriculture as the precondition of industrialization. In practice, however, agriculture will get such a high priority that not much is expected to be left over, at least in the foreseeable future, for industry.

Above all, the Cubans have been rudely awakened from the dream of industrialization by courtesy of the Soviet Union. Henceforth, Cuba's industrialization will depend primarily on the classical method of "primitive accumulation"—squeezing its own peasantry to extract the savings necessary for industrial investment. In a sense, the Cuban leaders have had to go all the way back in order to start over again.

IV

THE CUBAN leaders have tried to account for the crisis in characteristically different ways. The three who have done the most talking—Castro, Guevara, and Rodríguez—have revealed not only a great deal about the crisis but also about themselves. Their main problem has not been to tell the people how bad the situation was, for this was common knowledge in Cuba, but to explain why it happened and who was to blame.

Castro spoke frequently and at great length in the last half of 1963 on what had been wrong in Cuba, and his emphasis was overwhelmingly on what the Cuban people had done that was wrong. Sometimes, as on June 4, he seemed to hold his own "Cuban revolutionaries" mainly responsible for the economic mess. He accused them of "agitating" and "mobilizing" too much, of building "in the air," blissfully oblivious to "the economic basis for everything." He was, he said, even "a little ashamed" of them. Sometimes, as on July 1, he complained bitterly that the workers did not work long and hard enough. "And we have to carry on this struggle," he said, "implacably, in all places, in all parts of the country, without a truce, without vacillation, one day demanding that the sugar workers, the agricultural workers, the shoe workers should produce more, should improve their quality." Or, on August 10, he turned on the "socialist administrators" whose waste, he said, was comparable to what the capitalists used to steal, who "consolidated" everything from garages to bars into nation-wide bureaucratic monstrosities, who could not manage the former U.S.-owned lands as

well as the "Yankee monopolies" had managed them. He made the broad generalization, on October 2, that "our weakness is principally in the lack of experience and ability of the people who have been in many places in agriculture." On October 21, he lit into the trade unions for accumulating funds by means of compulsory deductions and fund-raising parties, both of which were to be forbidden, and for their grievance committees, which he called an example of "illusionism" and "revolutionary infantilism." On October 30, he turned on most of his cabinet ministers for spending too much money. On October 31, he incited a crowd, not for the first time, against "the bum [*vago*], the parasite, the *lumpen*" (the latter has become one of Castro's favorite expressions since he officially adopted Marxism-Leninism).

The notable thing about almost all this criticism, scolding, and abuse is that they were directed at the people rather than at his own policies. The people were rarely in positions of any real power and most often totally without power. And by avoiding policies and power, Fidel Castro did not have to criticize, scold, or abuse Fidel Castro.

Guevara's emphasis, on the other hand, has been refreshingly different. He has made several attempts to analyze what went wrong, two of which are worth noting at some length. The first was his reply to a question from the French correspondent, Jean Daniel, on whether the U.S. "blockade" had endangered Cuba:

We have serious difficulties in Cuba. But not from the fact of what you call the blockade. First, there has never been a complete blockade. We have not ceased increasing our trade with Great Britain and France, for example. . . .

Our difficulties come principally from our errors. The greatest, that which did us the most harm, is, as you know, the under-exploitation of sugar cane. The others involve all the inevitable gropings which the adaptation of collectivism to a local situation implies.²⁸

But a speech by Guevara in Algiers on July 13, perhaps the most revealing confession of Cuba's misplanning on record, does not make the other errors seem so "inevitable." The fundamental trouble, said Guevara, came about because the Cubans tried to do two things that were contradictory. On the one hand, they "copied in detail the planning techniques of a fraternal country whose specialists came to help us," and on the other hand, they insisted on making their own decisions with "spontaneity and lack of analysis." He gave as an example of this planless planning the way they had arrived at their annual rate of economic growth. Instead of attempting to find out "what we had, what we should spend, and what we had

²⁸ *L'Express* (Paris), July 25, 1963.

left over for development," the Cuban planners simply assumed a 15 per cent rate of growth and made everything else in the plan conform to it. Cuba had never made more than 10,000,000 pairs of shoes but the plan called for 22,000,000, and cattle and technical facilities were already inadequate. The chief of the forestry department sent up such a fantastic estimate of lumber production that Cuba, traditionally an importer of lumber, planned to export it. "Result: we continued to import lumber," said Guevara, "but we imported it late, badly, desperately looking around where to get it."

One may imagine the frustrations of the "fraternal specialists" in Cuba in this period. If the full story ever comes out, we may be sure that neither side will be lacking in tales of woe. But even if the planning had been less "ridiculous," which is how Guevara characterized it, the major policy decisions, as Guevara described them, would have been near-disastrous anyway. "In industry," he said, "we made a plan of development based fundamentally on the idea of being self-sufficient in a series of durable consumption goods or intermediate industrial articles, which, however, could be obtained with relative facility from friendly countries. In this way we committed our investment capacity without completely developing our own resources of raw materials, including some intermediate products that we now make." And "in agriculture, we committed the fundamental error of scorning the importance of sugar cane, our fundamental product, trying to achieve quick diversification, as a consequence of which the cane stocks were neglected, and this, added to an extraordinarily intense drought that afflicted us for two years, led to a serious drop in our sugar production."

IN SOME WAYS, then, Guevara has been far more candid than Castro, but he has not been any more self-critical. The "errors" of high policy, which he has expressed more clearly than anyone else, obviously strike at the very top, including Guevara himself. Yet like the others, he always speaks of them as if they had been committed by some anonymous force and not by the top leadership itself. In fact, the reversal of Cuban policy has been in large part a defeat for some of Guevara's favorite ideas. It was he who first put forward the slogan of "accelerated industrialization." It was he who played the leading role in negotiating the trade agreements with the Soviet bloc. It was he who broached the theory that "Cuban socialism," unlike the other varieties, should be based predominantly on "moral" rather than on "material" incentives.

This last point is typical of what might be called "Guevara-ism." As late as March 1963, Guevara still insisted publicly that the "moral

stimulus" should take precedence over the "material stimulus," which he scornfully described as a "residue of the past" to be removed from the popular consciousness with every advance of the revolution. He told Jean Daniel in July: "For me, it is a question of doctrine. Economic socialism without Communist morality does not interest me."²⁹ Yet by August, even he had to recognize that the "moral stimulus" had not been very stimulating, and he grudgingly admitted that it was necessary "for the moment to give the material stimulus the importance which it has."³⁰ One can almost hear the debates in Cuba over relaxing or tightening the economic pressure on the peasants and workers in the guise of offering them more material or more moral "stimulus."

In a sense, Guevara has represented both the most distinctive and the most dubious sides of this Cuban revolution. In the name of Marxism, he has identified himself with theories—the peasantry as the leading revolutionary class, the countryside as the main revolutionary battleground, the primacy of the "moral stimulus"—that are far closer to the tradition of pre-Marxist Russian Populism and homologous movements elsewhere than to orthodox Marxism. He has embodied a peculiar doctrinairism of will and force to overcome all obstacles and enemies. His undoubtedly keen mind has invariably gravitated to the more extreme positions, which, sooner or later, and more often than not, have turned out to be Fidel Castro's positions.

Carlos Rafael Rodríguez has apparently represented a somewhat different tendency. He took over INRA with the slogan "technique, discipline, responsibility." While Guevara was stressing the "moral" over the "material," Rodríguez cautiously

²⁹ A further point he made in this interview raises an interesting question about his Marxism. Guevara continued: "We are struggling against poverty, but at the same time against alienation. One of the fundamental objectives of Marxism is to eliminate interest—the factor of 'individual interest'—and profit from psychological motivations." But Marx located "alienation" in the capitalist system of production, in capitalist exploitation. The concept had nothing to do with counterposing "material" and "moral" stimuli in a socialist economy, which is itself supposed to do away with alienation. For Marx, the solution for "alienation" was a material one, in the economic order though its consequences would be moral or psychological. The very dissociation of "socialist economy" and "Communist morality" would be alien to Marx's thought. From a Marxist viewpoint, a "socialist economy" should have a "socialist morality," and a "Communist economy" should have a "Communist morality" (assuming that Guevara is making the traditional distinction between socialism and Communism). Guevara's viewpoint actually implies that "alienation" can exist in a socialist as well as in a capitalist society, which may be true, but not in a Marxist sense. I am not suggesting that Guevara has no right to mix his categories; I merely question that it should be done in the name of poor, dead Marx.

³⁰ *Revolución*, March 25, 1963; *L'Express*, July 25, 1963; *Revolución*, August 21, 1963.

advocated both types of incentive. He has complained against what he once called "a certain Jacobin attitude" of underestimating the importance of the scientific approach. "The man of the Revolution," he said pointedly, "formed in the hard school of combat, caught in the clamor of battle, does not always understand the utility and the necessity for the intellectual, for long and patient work, hoped-for results and failures sooner or later overcome."³¹ Early in 1963, Guevara and Rodríguez seemed to be engaged in a struggle over control of the sugar industry. The question had arisen in the top leadership whether, in view of the sad state of the agricultural side of the industry under Rodríguez's jurisdiction, it might not be better to transfer control of the whole operation to the industrial side under Guevara's jurisdiction. The decision went in favor of leaving the agricultural sector of the industry in Rodríguez's INRA. But Guevara, evidently not satisfied, soon denounced the lack of coordination in the industry and demanded "only one road, only one view, only one voice." Rodríguez came back with a reminder that the decision had been made to leave the production of the sugar cane to INRA, but agreed that there was a problem and added that he intended to discuss it further with Che. Nothing more of this little squabble was heard publicly, and Rodríguez still has charge of the growing of sugar cane in the field.³²

A WELL-KNOWN French agronomist and Castro sympathizer, Professor René Dumont, who was given unusual opportunities to study Cuban agricultural policy and practice, has told revealing stories of his experiences. Dumont came to Cuba for the first time on his own initiative in May 1960. At that time he was struck by the dangerously excessive tendency to centralize and socialize (a better term would be the French *étatisé*). He foresaw that the centralization would lead to a top-heavy, deadening bureaucracy and the "socialization" to macrocephalic, inefficient production units. Significantly, he confided his doubts to Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, then editor of the official Communist organ, *Hoy*, who asked him to repeat them to Fidel Castro in person. Castro seemed most grateful to hear Dumont's criticisms, and a press interview was arranged for Dumont. Encouraged by Castro's seemingly favorable reception, Dumont publicly voiced his misgivings, but great was his astonishment when the entire Havana press failed to carry a word about the interview the next day.

He returned, however, three months later, in August 1960, at Castro's personal invitation. As he put it, "my disquiet increased." He was taken by Castro on a personal tour of the Ciénaga de Zapata, a large swampland into which Castro had sunk millions of dollars in an extravagant reclama-

tion project. His disquiet increased because Castro told him privately during this tour that he intended to set up the large-scale state-owned *granjas*. Dumont tried unsuccessfully to dissuade him. Not only did Castro go ahead with the *granjas* in 1961 but, as we have seen, they swallowed up the "cooperatives" the following year.³³

In September 1963, Dumont returned to Cuba for the third time. Most of his fears about the *granjas* had been realized. He encountered on a large scale what he has called "bureaucratized anarchy." Again he recommended smaller and more controllable units of production with a view toward trying to do less and to achieve more. Whatever may be the merits of Dumont's views, his insight into the different tendencies within the Castro regime is particularly important:

The most realistic Cuban leaders, headed by President of the Republic Osvaldo Dorticós and president of INRA Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, have well understood these problems. The dogmatists in the Planning Board and the Ministry of Industries, on the contrary, continue to defend the dangerous thesis of *ultra-centralized leadership of the economy, managed by means of budgetary credits*. The latter scorn the experience accumulated by the other socialist countries. Their justification is that Cuba is a small island endowed with good commercial media, where centralization will be easier than in the U.S.S.R.! Even more serious is the fact that they present the results of their system to the government with an over-optimistic slant and continue to make unrealistic, unattainable forecasts of production, even when the experience of the past years proves them to be wrong (*italics in original*).

The Planning Board (*Junta Central de Planificación*) is headed, it should be noted, by Prime Minister Castro, and the Ministry of Industries, of course, by Guevara. But Dumont still saw one source of hope:

But to fall into the other extreme of pessimism, to speak of the economic defeat of Cuba, would be an even more serious error. Fidel's intellectual grasp of the economic necessities becomes daily more concrete, more realistic. I would tend to believe that he would make even more rapid progress if he did not fear being treated as a "Bukharinist" or a "Titoist" by the Chinese.³⁴

At least one highly qualified observer, then, had

³¹ Rodríguez, *Hoy*, March 12 and 24, 1963.

³² Guevara, *Hoy*, February 12, 1963; Rodríguez, speech of February 24, 1963.

³³ Dumont wrote about his first trip in *L'Express*, July 28, September 8 and 22, 1960, and in Chapter VII of his book *Terres Vivantes* (Plon, 1961).

³⁴ *France Observateur* (Paris), October 3, 1963.

reason to believe that Guevara and Rodríguez belong to somewhat different tendencies within Castro's regime. My own experience with Rodríguez in March 1960 may be worth recalling. After he had patiently answered my questions for about two hours, he suddenly turned the tables and said: "Now I would like to ask you some questions. An outsider sometimes sees things that we are too close to see. What are your impressions of Cuba?" I replied: "My chief impression is that you are declaring war on your entire middle class. If that is what you want, you will get it, but if that is not what you want, you are heading for trouble." Rodríguez thought a moment and then said quietly: "I have tried to tell the same thing to my colleagues but they will not listen."

Nevertheless, one can easily get the wrong impression about a man like Rodríguez. He joined the Communist party of Cuba at the age of twenty in 1933. He went through all the twists and turns of the entire Stalinist period without any record of protest or embarrassment. When the party told him to become a minister in Batista's cabinet in 1944, he became a minister. He has had thirty years of Communist molding, discipline, and loyalty—to the Soviet Union. He has the mentality and training of an intelligent intellectual functionary, not an independent political thinker or leader. He has, whatever his private convictions, faithfully accepted the party line under Castro as he did under Stalin. And he is likely to continue doing so as long as Soviet Russia considers it to be in its interest to support Castro.

There is reason to believe, then, that a struggle of policies and personalities took place in the Cuban top leadership for perhaps a year or more. Out of this struggle has emerged a new stage of Castro's revolution as it enters its sixth year.

V

THE NEW STAGE is being called the Second Agrarian Reform. Its repercussions and implications are quite as drastic and far-reaching as those of the first "reform" in May 1959.

The timing of the new order suggests that it came out of the agreements reached by Castro and Khrushchev in Moscow in May 1963. In his report on his Soviet tour on June 4, Castro made known that an "international division of labor" was necessary, according to which Cuba would specialize in what she was best fitted by nature—namely agriculture. On June 27, he intimated that the "medium farmers," whom he accused of "sabotaging sugar production," were in for a bad time. On July 27, he announced that compulsory military service was coming. On August 10, he touched on a new "agrarian reform," but said that the final details had not yet been decided. On October 2, he publicly proclaimed the Second Agrarian

Reform. And on November 12, his brother, Minister of the Armed Forces Raúl Castro, made the official pronouncement on compulsory military service.

This sequence of events in the last six months of 1963 was interconnected because the new "agrarian reform" is but part of a much larger, sweeping changeover in the aims and methods of the regime.

Formally, the Second Agrarian Reform differs from the first in the proportion of privately-owned to state-owned land it establishes. By 1961, the first one had established a balance of 29.16 per cent state-owned *granjas*, 11.83 per cent "cooperatives," and 59.01 per cent privately-owned.³⁵ After the first two were merged, the balance became more simply about 40 per cent state-owned and about 60 per cent privately-owned. This relationship was, in effect, the ultimate result of the first Agrarian Reform.

The privately-owned 60 per cent was divided into three categories: 140,000 landowners with less than two *caballerias* of land (one *caballeria* equals 33 acres); 60,000 with two to five *caballerias*; and 10,000 with between five and thirty *caballerias*. The first two were classified as small farmers and the third as medium farmers.³⁶ The *latifundistas* or large landowners had been liquidated in 1959.

In its most elementary sense, the Second Agrarian Reform has shifted the balance from 40-60 in favor of the private sector to 70-30 in favor of the state sector. The shift has been accomplished by another great wave of expropriation, this time of the 10,000 "medium farmers." The remaining 30 per cent of small farmers, however, will also decline because those who drop out will not be replaced. In any case, the small peasants are totally dependent on the state and tightly controlled by an association closely linked to INRA. Gradually the state sector in agriculture will edge up to the 95 per cent of industry already owned by the Cuban state.

Technically, the Second Agrarian Reform has another important side to it. It will attempt to combine more state ownership with more decentralized operation. The plan calls for more regional control and smaller productive units, with greater responsibility for local farm administrators. The regime is counting heavily on youngsters sent to agricultural schools for periods of a few months to as much as two years to staff the new state farms. In effect, if anything, a larger and more efficient bureaucracy will be needed than ever before.

Whether the new system will work out any

³⁵ Report of Antonio Núñez Jiménez, *Bohemia*, May 28, 1961.

³⁶ Raúl Cepero Bonilla, *Cuba Socialista*, January 1963, for the division of the privately-owned lands; Fidel Castro, *Hoy*, August 11, 1963, on the classification of small farmers.

better than the old remains to be seen. The "bureaucratic anarchy" may get worse rather than better. I do not mean to suggest that there cannot be any fluctuations in Cuba's economic fortunes. The spectacular rise in the world sugar price will prove to be an enormous windfall if the shortage should continue and the Cuban sugar crop can be substantially increased in the next year or two. Castro has indicated that he expects to benefit from high sugar prices in 1965 and 1966, but that the price will plunge again toward 1970. But whatever the short-term factors, the agricultural crisis has had its roots in long-term, basic policies. The errors and misdeeds which Castro has been denouncing—exorbitant costs of production, lax or non-existent methods of accounting, administrative ignorance and bungling—have been symptoms rather than causes.

The underlying cause has been the determination to build "Cuban socialism" on agriculture if it could not be done on industry, and to "socialize" the peasants after socializing the workers had done little good. In large part, the new system is merely the old one writ large. The extension of state ownership in agriculture has become an immediate reality; the institution of efficient decentralization is only a goal. INRA will have to incorporate hundreds of thousands of acres more at the same time as it attempts to exercise less direct control over each unit. There will be more *granjas* than ever before, despite Professor Dumont's touching faith in Fidel Castro; and the only question is whether they will be more efficiently run.

IF THE economic side of the Second Agrarian Reform is still questionable, the political side is only too clear. The stage has been set for an unprecedented, government-induced paroxysm of "class warfare" in the countryside. Castro himself used the expression in a speech to agricultural students on October 2 in which he told them to expect a "harder class battle" than had taken place after the first agrarian reform. He did his utmost to whip the boys into a frenzy against the new "class enemy," the "rural bourgeoisie" of medium farmers, who were even more dangerous than the large landowners, he said, because the former had "a certain training, a certain education, many friendships."

Oddly enough, in all the criticisms of Cuban agriculture by Castro, Guevara, and especially Rodríguez for many months before the Second Agrarian Reform, the medium farmers had hardly been mentioned. After all that had been said about the misplanning at the top, the perversion of the cooperatives and the maladministration of the *granjas*, the political ax came down on the medium farmers.

The background of the compulsory military service law is equally curious. The Cuban military

buildup was so great by the middle of 1963 that Castro saw fit to boast on June 4 that Cuba enjoyed a "situation of security," as far as any direct invasion by the United States was concerned. On June 27, he claimed that the last "counter-revolutionary infiltrators" were being wiped out and had been abandoned by those who had sent them. Thus, his first explanation on July 27 for compulsory military service was purely internal in character. He said that it was one of two measures—the other was compulsory junior high school [*Secundaria Básica*] attendance—to prevent "the parasitical element, the potential *lumpen* of tomorrow" from developing. He linked the military service law solely with adolescents who dropped out of secondary school and became "uneducated, ignorant, parasitical."

It was apparently realized that it might be considered peculiar for "Socialist Cuba" to solve social problems by military means. By the time Raúl Castro officially presented the compulsory military service law on November 12, he found it necessary to make a special point of denying that it had been conceived "to do away with *los vagos*." He pointed out that the new law would mean a substantial saving in soldiers' salaries, because the recruits would get only seven pesos a month and not what they had earned as civilians, as in the former system; he argued that it would enable the armed forces more easily to discharge troops who had served their terms of enlistment.³⁷ But he did not succeed altogether in disposing of the suspicion that the new law may be far more important for economic and social than for strictly military reasons.

The unusually low age limit of seventeen will put many youths in the armed forces. Most of the new recruits, Raúl said, will actually come from the 17-20 age group. They will spend three to four months a year cutting sugar cane or picking coffee beans. Raúl justified a three-year service period on the ground that it would enable the armed forces to cut more cane and pick more coffee. In fact, the future Cuban army will be curiously divided into two classes: those who will and those who will not be permitted to bear arms. The latter category will be made up of "the *vagos*,

³⁷ In connection with this argument, Raúl Castro made an unexpectedly revealing reference to the arrival of Soviet troops in Cuba in August 1962. He recalled that one unit on the Isle of Pines was supposed to be demobilized that month, and then gave this explanation for the delay: "At those very moments, the Soviet troops were arriving in our country. It was logical to think that, for one reason or another, difficult days might be approaching." Raúl used the expression "*la tropa soviética*," or "Soviet troops," not technicians or instructors or some other circumlocution. Fidel Castro had previously made known that the Soviet-Cuban negotiations, which had resulted in "the strengthening of our Armed Forces and the dispatch of strategic missiles to our country" had taken place in June 1962 (*Revolución*, April 20, 1963).

the *lumpen*, the *gusanos*" and other undesirables.³⁹

Whether it is the main reason or a most important by-product, the compulsory military service law will give the Castro regime a cheap, militarized labor corps. This corps will take the place of the "volunteer" system on which the regime had previously depended in emergencies. For some time, it had become clear that the "volunteers" were less and less voluntary; they were, in fact, groups of workers hauled off in trucks from government offices and state-owned factories to perform agricultural tasks for which they were ill-fitted and ill-disposed. They were also highly inefficient; they cut the cane too high or picked unripe coffee beans. Worst of all, they were exorbitantly expensive. Fidel Castro admitted that the volunteer system had resulted in an economic loss because, as he put it, "we pulled out a worker with a productivity of \$10 and we probably set him picking coffee with a productivity of \$1.50." Raúl Castro cited the case of fourteen electrical workers who cost \$5,800 in salaries and other expenses and picked \$304 worth of coffee.³⁹

There is little reason to wonder at a law which is designed to solve labor and social problems through militarization. It is but part of a trend that is reflected in Cuba's penal system. There is, for example, Law No. 1098 which was enacted early in 1963. It provides for twenty to thirty years imprisonment for robbery or larceny of as little as \$100 if minors are involved and the death penalty if committed in uniform. The accused must be brought to trial in twenty-four hours and sentenced within seventy-two hours.⁴⁰ This law can only mean that militiamen in uniform went on a rampage of housebreaking and robbery, and that the regime could not regain control without resorting to methods no longer considered tolerable in civilized countries. And precisely such a rampage had taken place in Cuba, as the Cuban press has admitted in congratulatory articles and editorials on the efficaciousness of Law No. 1098.

There is also the revival in Cuba of labor camps, of which the world probably expected to hear the last when Stalin died. Since the Cuban government has refused to permit the International Red Cross or any other disinterested body to investigate these camps and other penal institutions, most of the information about them has had to come from Cuban exiles. At least one of these camps, however, has been mentioned in the Cuban press. It is located on the forsaken peninsula of Guanahacabibes at the westernmost tip of the island and seems to be chiefly populated by administrators or officials charged with infraction of rules. In a recent interview with Guevara in a Havana newspaper, it was suggested that this camp might have been responsible for producing "inhibitions" in the bureaucracy. Guevara was not impressed.⁴¹

It should not be impossible, especially for self-professed Marxists, to see the connection between the increasingly repressive and retrogressive penal system, the deepening economic crisis, and deteriorating social conditions. What is harder to understand is the lack of protest or even interest among those who would be shocked by such methods in any other country in the world.

VI

"WE WILL NOT establish Military Service because it is not right to force a man to put on a uniform and a helmet, to give him a rifle and force him to march."⁴²

These words of the Fidel Castro of January 1959 are so far from the Fidel Castro of January 1964 that there is no point in belaboring the difference. What is more significant and less well known is Castro's own attitude toward his past, both the more distant past of his struggle for power and the more recent past of his exercise of power.

Toward the period before 1959, the Cuban leaders have adopted an attitude of worldly-wise political estrangement. They speak of it as if they were blasé grownups looking back at their innocent and somewhat brainless childhood. Guevara, for example, told the Algerians on July 13 that the leaders of the Cuban revolution "were only a group of fighters with high ideals and little preparation." On October 30, after holding forth on the necessity of avoiding "tedium, uniformity, and monotony" under socialism, Castro thought of saying: "It is possible that we ourselves could not have expressed these things to the people years ago, because we did not know; but we knew that we did not know." And he went on with even greater modesty to say that they did not know any more than they had known when they had landed in the "Granma," the yacht that had brought them from Mexico to Cuba, in December 1956. All he could claim seven years later was that they were far more aware than they had been of the "extraordinary possibilities."

Of the period between 1959 and 1963, Castro has been equally disparaging. In October 1963,

³⁹ "Gusano" (worm) is the generic term of abuse in Cuba for "counter-revolutionaries." Thus, after the death of Dag Hammarskjöld, Guevara called him "un servil gusano imperialista"—a servile, imperialist worm (*Revolución*, October 30, 1961).

⁴⁰ Fidel Castro, *Revolución*, October 22, 1963; Raúl Castro, *ibid.*, November 13, 1963.

⁴¹ This law was explained and defended by the Public Prosecutor, Dr. Santiago Cuba, in *Hoy*, March 29, 1963.

⁴² *La Tarde*, November 11, 1963. An excellent study, *Cuba and the Rule of Law*, was published by the International Commission of Jurists in Geneva in 1962, but it does not report the worst excesses, such as Law No. 1098 and the labor camps, which had not yet appeared.

⁴³ Fidel Castro, speech of January 13, 1959 (*Revolución*, January 14, 1959).

the month of the Second Agrarian Reform, he referred to these years as "the era of spoiled children, of being tolerant around here, of mistakes, of infantilisms." A few days later, he said that "we cannot go into the sixth year of the Revolution with short kindergarten pants," and he asserted that it was necessary "to leave behind the stage of economic cretinism."⁴²

This harsh judgment of the revolution's immediate past, which is, after all, his own, does not prevent Castro from assuring the same audience that he has at last found the right road and that the agricultural future is just as bright as the industrial past was to have been. But the admission of ingenuous blundering is not without political purpose.

It serves, above all, to emphasize the sharpness of the coming break with the recent past, as if, in its sixth year, the Cuban revolution is going to enter not merely another stage but its first real stage and begin to take itself seriously. The Cuban leaders have felt a need to tear down and poke fun at most of their first five years in power in order to free themselves of all past commitments. This revolution has been peculiar in that it has periodically required a *tabula rasa*. Ironically, therefore, the very things about it that charmed and won over foreign sympathizers like Jean-Paul Sartre, C. Wright Mills, Waldo Frank, and others are busily being repudiated and denounced in Cuba. After "a few conversations and a quick look round" on the island in 1961, Mrs. Joan Robinson reported enthusiastically: "This free-hand style of administration, which astonishes visitors from East and West alike, can work (and somehow it does work, errors and omissions excepted) because the country is small and the administrators know each other, having been under fire together in the mountains." "That 'free-hand style of administration' is exactly what the Cuban leaders are determined to wipe out because it could not work. Those little concrete houses for peasants that went up in the first year or two of Castro's regime are now regretted as having been 'unproductive.' In the long list of errors that Guevara recited in Algiers, one was 'too much emphasis at the beginning to the satisfaction of social needs.'"

If any democratic leader confessed to the kind of errors made in Cuba, he would risk becoming a laughingstock. But the Cubans are not judged by ordinary democratic standards. They enjoy, in some circles, a special dispensation given to them by the old magic word, "Revolution," and in Latin America, the new magic word, "Marxism." The first one has virtually lost all meaning, and the same thing seems to be happening to the second. As it is widely used in Latin America, however, it might better be called "magic Marxism," because it has little in common with the

original. Socialism, after all, was not invented by Marx. He spent a lifetime trying to put the earlier utopian thought on a "scientific" foundation, that is, to determine the social and economic conditions necessary for its realization. There have been many "socialisms," but in our time, the old varieties tend to reappear in new guises under the single brand name of "Marxism." Thus, we now have Cuban "Marxists" who were capable of ordering factories and overlooking the little detail of raw materials; and who, when they could not make a success of 40 per cent nationalized agriculture, nationalized 30 per cent more.

As ONE looks back at Castro's five years in power, the main thread of continuity seems to be Castro's power itself. This power has rested primarily on those—in the leadership as well as among the masses—who have supported him unconditionally rather than on those who have supported what he has stood for. His personal cadre has been loyal to him for about ten years through his different public manifestations, as a constitutional democrat, an anti-Communist and anti-capitalist "humanist," a "Socialist," a "Marxist-Leninist," and a Communist. It is spread throughout the government and the party, but its chief stronghold is the armed forces which have become the virtually private preserve of the unconditional *Fidelistas* of longest standing. In his early period, Leon Trotsky once observed that the party organization substitutes itself for the party, the Central Committee substitutes itself for the party organization, and finally "a single 'dictator' substitutes himself for the Central Committee." Castro has reversed the process. He started as the Leader and only afterward felt a need for a Central Committee, a party organization and a party. But at all times, he has retained an inner group and an outer mass loyal to himself alone, and they have given him a margin of maneuverability vis-à-vis the old-time Cuban Communists and the other Communist states and parties that he would not have had with control of the government and party alone.

Without an original, creative, and indigenous doctrine of his own, he filled the void in himself—the void expressed in his "*No sabemos*," we did not know—with Communism, as he had previously filled it with other movements. But the challenging and difficult problem of his Communism is that he has filled it partly with his personal idiosyncracies and partly with hang-overs of the Latin-American revolutionary tradition. The result is a peculiar variant from any Communism we have known, and variants by their nature tend to be the same and different, depending on what one chooses to emphasize. Those who think of him as Khrushchev's puppet or Mao's secret agent

⁴² *Revolución*, October 22 and 31, 1963.

⁴³ *The Listener* (London), August 24, 1961, p. 265.

have grotesquely underestimated Fidel Castro's stake in Fidel Castro.

Hence, Castro has worked out a system of governing which he is both within and above. He does everything but cannot be blamed for anything. When Carlos Rafael Rodríguez told of the mistreatment of the peasantry in the last half of 1961 and first months of 1962, he found it necessary to add: "Many times the peasant showed his disagreement and rebelliousness against situations that were not just with these words: 'If Fidel knew about it.'"⁴⁵ But how could Fidel have failed to know? After all, he had in that very period been President of INRA, and the former Executive Director, Antonio Núñez Jiménez, had been directly responsible to him. If the peasants, including the poorest ones, had for at least eight months been provoked to rebelliousness by INRA officials, local political leaders, and even "comrades of the Revolutionary Armed Forces," as Rodríguez said, what was the Maximum Leader, the Prime Minister, the head of the Party, and the President of INRA doing all that time? At the end of 1963, the same actors played out the same little drama. This time Rodríguez was on the receiving end of one of Castro's tantrums. On October 30, 1963, as a result of another agricultural shakeup, Castro cried out: "Enough of revolutionary theoreticians, enough of purely theoretical Marxists! The purely theoretical Marxist-Leninist is really an unproductive expense to society." Whom did he mean? Forty-eight hours later, Rodríguez and the entire staff of INRA signed a long, self-debasing letter, addressed to Castro, confessing to all the errors and misdeeds that Castro had inveighed against.

The internal perspective for Castro's Cuba is a somber one. "Magic Marxism" has lost its spell, and all that remains is to exhort and drive the peasants to grow more sugar cane and the workers to put in longer hours for the state. The only thing that could conceivably enable Castro to regain his old bravado would be a *Fidelista* seizure of power in another Latin American country, for

which reason he has been willing to gamble so heavily in Venezuela.⁴⁶ But in the event of an even more extreme crisis at home, Castro is prepared to take even more extreme measures to remain in power. In the first year, he glorified the uniqueness of the Cuban revolution which, he said, enjoyed the support of 90 to 95 per cent of the people and sought "the unity of all sectors of all conditions of society" (May 21, 1959). In the fifth year, as the percentage of popular support had dropped sharply, and ways of disuniting more and more of Cuban society had been found, he came forth with a theory of revolution which will make it impossible for him to run out of enemies. "The Revolution," he said, "needs the enemy; the proletariat does not flee from the enemy; it needs the enemy. The Revolution needs for its development its antithesis which is the counterrevolution."⁴⁷ In different circumstances, Stalin developed a related theory that the class struggle sharpens as socialism advances. If he did not have enough enemies, he invented them. Castro's enemies are also more and more of his own making, and more and more among the peasants and workers who must be "disciplined."

The ultimate tragedy of Cuba may well be that there was no country in Latin America in 1959 where the social and psychological conditions were more favorable for a truly progressive democracy, and that there is one country in Latin America in 1964 where all that socialism once stood for is being discredited.

⁴⁵ *Revolución*, May 18, 1963.

⁴⁶ It should be added: against the precepts in Guevara's little manual, *Guerrilla Warfare*. Guevara wrote: "Where a government has come into power through some form of popular vote, fraudulent or not, and maintains at least an appearance of constitutional legality, the guerrilla outbreak cannot be promoted, since the possibilities of peaceful struggle have not yet been exhausted." But the Venezuelan government came into power through an undeniable popular vote. Guevara also wrote that "it is the countryside that offers ideal conditions for the fight." But President Betancourt was strongest precisely in the Venezuelan countryside.

⁴⁷ *Hoy*, February 24, 1963.