

Last month the author, former president of Students for a Democratic Society, visited Cuba for the first time, as a guest of the government. Here, sympathetic but questioning, he looks past the 200,000 waiting to leave—only 1,000 a week can go—to report on Castro's regime.

CUBA



An American radical views the Revolution after

by **CARL
OGLESBY**

Cuba's decade of revolution has produced a society at once flamboyant and austere. Outrageous energy, a furious will for creation which has not yet got the full feel of its tools, furrows here, seeds there, a tumultuous scramble to produce a pattern.

What gives you the feeling of austerity is much more subtle, finally, than the rationing or the queues at the almost empty shops, or even the pace at which the people must labor.

It comes across, rather, in the strangely detached curiosity with which even the militants appear to regard their revolution's future. Will they make it? How can they dare to think so? Yet how can they dare to fail?

They have gambled everything on the very long chance of making a very big revolution in a very small country. And having hurled themselves into this complex, nerve-jangling effort, they now seem to have achieved the serenity—a favorite word with Castro—which comes only to men and women who have permanently closed off all exits from history.

Which made coming to Havana strange for us. Primed to be witnesses to raw, full-face history, we came bang from daiquiris at the airport to the glittering Havana Hilton Hotel. Getting out of the bus I found it hard to trade glances with my fellow S.D.S.ers. Bruce Goldberg and Russ Neufeld. "Behold the Revolution," Bruce said softly, and we all made an effort not to look too hard at the huge, lit-up hotel. A young philosophy instructor from Colorado with soft eyes and a drooping mustache, Bruce had never been out of the States before. Now he had left it



twice: once to Cuba, and again to the Revolution.

The forbidden land, we thought, ought to look more forbidding than this. "They can call it the Havana Libre if they want to," Russ said, "but once a Hilton, always a Hilton." The Cubans had covered the entire La Rampa face of the Libre with a colored-light sign welcoming *los invitados*—us, among others—to the celebration of the Tenth Anniversary of the Revolution. It remained, however, a 25-story-tall sign in colored lights.

The three of us had met for the first time just after Christmas in Mexico City, where we also met a Western journalist who'd been some 20 years in the Caribbean. "Get outside of Havana," he said. "The Revolution is in the countryside." But by the second or third Scotch that pre-departure night, it was quite clear that he retained a Bogartian sort of fondness for La Parásita.

"The very depth of Old Havana's corruption gave it a kind of glamor. The best rum in the world and the best-run brothels in the hemisphere." He sipped and sighed, then shook his head. "But it only lived by draining the country of

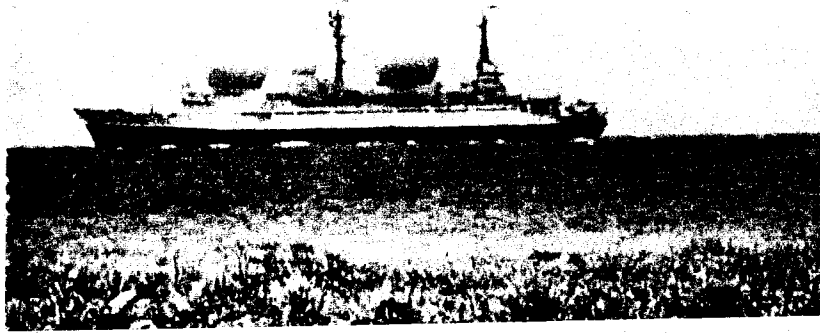
its blood like a parasite. The country revolted. And why not? In the days just before Fidel, construction everywhere, new banks, new stores, new apartment buildings—in Havana. But in the country, no doctors, no schools, not enough food, for eight months of the year no work. No hope. Havana belonged to those who could buy it—*los norteamericanos* mostly, who came either to conquer another piece of the economy or to take a moral holiday in their madras shirts. That's all gone. Like it or not, the blood of the country is pumping in the other direction now. That's why Havana will look so pale."

We thought it should have looked paler. Liveried doormen still open car doors at the Libre. Certainly the cars are breaking down for want of spare parts, and the livery has grown shabby. But the marble ostentation of the lobby seems to have surrendered nothing, not a scratch or a chip, to 10 years of socialist revolution. Over at Havana's other grand hotel, the Nacional, where grandeur carries itself with a seedier, more continental slouch, one's impression is the same: pale as it may



be, Havana remains a Western city.

Even after several days this reaction had not subsided. We understood the frustration of some other young Americans, 15 medical students, who on their first night



Although radome-topped Soviet weather ships still refuel at Havana, left, the Russian presence in Cuba is all but gone. This is in line with the Cuban goal—economic independence. ¡Los diez millones van! The 10 million tons of sugar (double the '68 harvest), says Castro, at far left with President Osvaldo Dorticós, are supposed to arrive in 1970. That would allow Cuba to stand on its own, which is why thousands of volunteers like those below work the fields.

10 years of Castro



in Cuba had been taken for supper to the 1830 Restaurant, posh before and still posh today. The maitre d' had nearly barred them for not wearing ties until someone was impudent enough to wonder

if Fidel himself, tieless for a decade and a half, would also be denied admittance. Our guide Sonia was amused at our reaction. "Why does it bother you so much?" At the tall age of

20 an advanced chemical engineering student, she's about to become probably the youngest member of Cuba's Communist party. And she didn't look any more Communist to me than the Libre-

Photographed by
LEE LOCKWOOD

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née-Hilton Hotel. With her modest mini, her taste for colorful sweaters and her simple hairdo, she could be a Big Ten sorority girl. "So you think it's too American-looking," she said. "So what? It looks plenty revolutionary to me if it belongs to the people, and this hotel belongs to the people."

I had met her some days into our stay and found her to be the brightest of the bright young Cubans we had found—and most understanding of Yankee-style hang-ups. So I let myself be tough with her. "Belongs to the people," I said. "That's a billboard slogan."

She flared. "We fought Batista's tyranny, not Havana's hotels. We march to the city and discover this thing standing here. So what should we do, destroy it? I think we should first be able to go beyond it, and that's not so easy." She paused. "I don't think 10 years is such a long time anyway. That's not enough time to think about everything, to do everything."

Is it? Sonia is a very persuasive young woman. When she gets through with 10 years, they look like 10 seconds. And what can you really do with a Hilton but call it a Libre? And what were we expecting to find in Cuba, anyway? The final redemption of man?

No revolution has succeeded in generating a deep transformation and extension of culture, of man's capacities to express his humanity more acutely. The ham-fisted attempt of the U.S.S.R. simply to decree a "revolutionary" culture into being stands as a leading disgrace of the 20th Century. This is partly why young American New Leftists have rejoiced in Cuba's refusal to denounce "bourgeois decadence" or to isolate itself from Western sources. It was important to know that the Cubans, too, were seeing the new-wave films. This helped keep us in touch, even across those endless 90 miles.

But our disappointment about the Hilton-Libre was no sooner subsiding than we found ourselves facing the New Year from a table in the famous old Tropicana. Very well. We all tried to make it with that scene: colored lights on clouds of steam, a brassy, ricky-ticky big-band a decade off the pace of Lawrence Welk and, most merciful of all, a piano player in a white tux at a white baby grand who went twirling up in the air on a white platform—yes, to the beat of *The Bumble Boogie*. With sequins.

"Dig Miguel," said Mike, a bushy-mustached New Yorker with a gift for the campy put-on. Round-faced Miguel, one of the guides, is a Cuban Charlie Brown. It seemed *The Bumble Boogie* had spaced him out. Eyes shut, he

bounced in his chair to the rippling cadenzas of a 20-year-dead mistake. Mike leaned across the table. "Miguel, you're wonderful!" Miguel blinked. Mike's ironies had ambushed him before. I think Mike sensed just then that Miguel was defenseless. Wanting to put him back at ease, he said, "I've never had a more revolutionary New Year's Eve." Too late. Miguel slumped in his chair, forced a wry smile. "Yes, yes, I know you guys."

For whose eyes does the Revolution dance?

Every Cuban a Che Guevara? Every gesture a blow for the Revolution? What demands we made!

But our tongue-biting could be facile too. The Revolution needs a way to express itself, and it isn't simply the harmless Tropicana that fails this need. The most admired pop music imitates the Beatles. The modern dance troupe reaches for Rudolf Bing pageantry and falls short of M-G-M spectacle; performs an old Jerome Robbins trifle, *Opus Jazz*, at a Gene Kelly level of feeling. The best poets and novelists—the most flaming Marxists among them—still are tied to the general definitions of art, craft, value and purpose which were framed by the West. Even the celebrated Cuban graphic works—the huge, buoyant billboards, the electric posters—still derive from the pop-op fashions that are already fading in the West. The Cuban National Ballet is touted as the equal of many European companies. Perhaps. But why should the European standard govern? Is it for European eyes, tastes—above all, for European needs—that the Cuban Revolution dances?

It may well be that we Americans were impudent, and certainly we were naive. But we wanted to forgo the cigars and the daiquiris, to forgo the buttoned-down diplomatic reception and set out promptly to wherever one had to go to see what practical socialism really looked like—to catch a glimpse of the Cuban idea of man's future.

But how could we do this, when we had not yet grasped the oppressive weight of the Cuban past, of the real meanings of this term we had grown so casual with—underdevelopment?

So what is it, this *subdesarrollo* which is, in some way or other, the topic of every other conversation in the lobbies, the streets, the living rooms, the offices, the fields and shops of Cuba?

"You Americans have a most peculiar conception of underdevel-

opment," I was told one hot, thirsty day by a very black young man named Alfonso Herrera, of the foreign relations ministry. We were touring an experimental dairy farm halfway down Havana Province, clearly a showpiece with its prize cattle, its computerized, automated feeding system and the mechanically elaborate merry-go-round where—so far as I could judge from the hard-to-follow but enthusiastic explanations—the cows were milked about a thousand times a day.

"Between the Atlantic countries and the rest of the world," Alfonso went on, "between the haves and have-nots, your government's theoreticians talk as if the only important difference is that we are developing later than you. A most fortunate theory. It allows you to forget your conquests and to patronize your victims. Yes, victims. Because we say: Why are we late? Why are we poor? Allow me to be terse. We are late because you made us your colonies. We are poor because you formed us economically in the image of your businessmen's needs. From that time onwards, we began to starve. What else do you think the Revolution is about?"

Very well. What? Virtually to a man, Americans are persuaded that these revolutions that blister up in this obscure little country here, that far-off continent there are merely international Communism's diabolical attempts to disrupt an otherwise tolerable world peace. If only all these power-mad Red lags would stop it, everything would be green and calm.

The revolutionaries I met, at least, could not more fervently disagree. "Cuba cannot be seen through cold-war eyes," said Alfonso. "The Revolution is more elemental than that. Men make the Revolution to keep from starving to death."

Everywhere in the world there is fertile land uncultivated, or land which modern technology could make arable or more fertile; millions of men whose labor, properly organized, could tap the resources

which their survival requires. So why can't the organization of men's power to produce wealth be carried forward without violence?

The Western powers, of course, insist that it can be—and they have sometimes understood that it must. "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible," said President Kennedy in a 1962 speech, "will make violent revolution inevitable." Fair enough. In large part a response to the Cuban Revolution (which preceded it by two years), the Kennedy administration launched history's most impressive effort at economic reform, the Alliance for Progress. And after seven years and 7.6 billions of U.S. aid dollars, Latin American food production still drastically trails population growth. The famous gap between the haves and have-nots is wider than ever. Latin America is getting steadily lower prices for its material exports, having to pay steadily higher prices for manufactured imports, and is consuming a rising portion of its foreign credits merely to finance its debt. And there are more right-wing dictatorships in Latin America today than when the Alliance adventure started.

So the revolutionary may suppose his case has merit. Does this mean to him that violent revolution guarantees instant salvation? The Cubans I talked with have no such idea.

"Listen, Cuba is not an easy country to live in," said Domingo Amuchostegui, a 28-year-old veteran of Fidel's July 26 Movement and an expert on revolutionary theory and practice. "We have so far created only the possibility of freedom. When you know what we started with, you know this is a lot. But anyone who tells you the Revolution is a paradise is a fool."

We met no fools in Cuba. In Havana especially, a city historically accustomed to a high style of living, the austerity is conspicuous to anyone. In the countryside, where the development is concentrated, *los habaneros*' loss becomes *los campesinos*' gain. Progress granted, it still remains that Cuba's material pleasures are currently few: one bottle of rum per person per month—because the rum is needed for export; two bottles of beer per person per week—because hops have to be purchased abroad and consume credits. Cigars went on ration in the fall of 1968, and this January so did sugar (six pounds per month per person), again because these products represent guaranteed foreign sales and thus more credits for investment in the purchase, say, of farm equipment.

In 1968 Cuba invested fully 31% of its gross national product in its

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A student worker on Isle of Pines



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agricultural, industrial and social development. That much spent for seeds, machines and schools means that much which cannot be spent on consumer goods. "Can an underdeveloped country afford to do anything else?" Castro said in a speech last March 13. "Isn't it plain that this country must invest its last cent, that it cannot invest in anything superfluous?"

"Fighting Batista was difficult enough," said Domingo. "But removing the political cause of poverty is not the same thing as finding an economic cure for poverty. We had to learn everything. Who knew how to build dams? All the engineers had gone. Who knew the amount of water in our rivers? No one had ever bothered to measure it. We need more food? Good. In that case we need experts, we need technology, we need a better organization of the work force. Since we had none of these, we had to buy them—and to buy them, we had to have something to sell to the world. What did our economy have to sell? Food. To get more food we are obliged to sell the food we have."

But how much of this can the people take?

Domingo smiled ironically. "Yes, we know how much everyone worries now about the poor, pitiable Cubans who have to work so hard and suffer so much. All this compassion in a certain northern capital, certain newspapers. Very well. Cubans are not supermen. But we are also not precisely a nation of sleepy, defeated peasants. A hundred years of rebellion, 10 years of revolution: nobody lives through this without being changed. Some people fall, we pick them up; others run—*adiós*. But many more only become stronger—arms, backs, heads: everything stronger. Cubans are just ordinary people. We merely do what we understand has to be done."

A drumbeat emphasis on moral heroism

The main pivot of this revolution is *consciencia*—a word which in Cuba combines the meanings of conscience and consciousness. "Create wealth through *consciencia*," runs the current slogan, "not *consciencia* through wealth." And this drumbeat emphasis on the moral rather than the material incentive can easily strike an outsider as the most outlandish Cuban idea of all. "Not supermen," said Domingo. Fine. But you wonder if there isn't after all something precariously romantic in this demand for universal moral heroism—until finally, once understood in the

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Spectators at the celebration included a delegate from China (top left), which since 1966 has been cool to Cuba; an officer from North

Vietnam (top right), which has always been warm to Cuba; and a pretty Swede, whose country will soon open an embassy in Havana.

context of the necessary and the possible, it begins to make practical sense. The moral incentive is the only incentive Cuba can presently afford, the collective satisfaction of being at last in motion toward the supreme goal, the conquest of underdevelopment.

"This revolution has momentum now," Domingo said. "Don't think these demands for sacrifice take us by surprise. When you see us rationing food in Havana, please have the sense to remember that 10 years ago the countryside was starving. We don't drink rum; our children have milk. We don't smoke cigars; there is no more polio here. None. No more swamp fever. Ninety percent of the babies born last year in this much-

Jaime Sonpoda sings what he calls "bull baritone" in the Cuban National Chorus, from which he was temporarily drafted to serve as the S.D.S.ers' guide. He is in his mid-20s and even in sport shirt and blue jeans looks like a *bon vivant* fashion plate; dressed for the theater, he was blinding. Black wavy hair, pugnacious jaw, twinkling brown eyes—put him in a room of pretty Cuban girls and watch him move. For a long time, well past the first week, I'd tried to get him into political conversations, erroneously assuming that an official guide would at least be a good source for official views. I decided to ask him about Régis Debray, the young French philosopher-revolutionary.

some 40 miles off the Cuban mainland, the rain was coming straight down and chilly, and Jaime was herding us into a contraptious East German bus for a visit to still another dairy farm. Not that we'd been shown so many, but it's hard to keep being impressed with so many tons of this and liters of that. Nevertheless, we climbed into the bus, bounced along for an hour, then stopped at a complex of neat, new-looking white buildings. Yes, it was a dairy, all right; you could tell from all those cows.

I got no inkling of Jaime's exasperation until he drew me aside that night back at the hotel.

"I try to understand," he said, "what this must mean to a *norteamericano*. You have hundreds of these farms in every state, thousands. And you can feed milk even to your kittens. Do you know how many children had milk before? Yes, you have an idea. The idea is not the same as the *hunger*. So you have to think about the zebu. You have to understand this stupid zebu fully or the Revolution will be invisible to you!"

I had heard about the zebu. With a rage usually reserved for Yankee imperialists, Castro denounced the beast last March 13: "Thousands, tens of thousands of men have been struggling during these years with these foul-tempered, angry animals."

The main virtues of these counterrevolutionary cattle—Brahmans brought to Cuba by the Spaniards—are that the heat can't kill them and that two cowboys can tend thousands. But the zebu cow produced a meager two liters of milk daily—not nearly enough for the people's needs. Thousands of country kids had never even heard of milk.

The rebels had no Yellow Pages they could finger-walk through to find a solution to the problem of the counterrevolutionary cow. But within a few years, advised by a leading British agronomist, they determined to "put the zebu into the museum" by crossbreeding it with champion Holstein stock. The result is a New Socialist Cow with the hardihood of the zebu and the productivity of the Holstein. By now there are several thousands of "los hijos de Fidel" (Fidel's children), and the computerized breeding program projects a half million by mid-1970. That means decreased outlays of precious foreign exchange for powdered-milk imports, more capital to invest in the mechanization of agriculture—and the beginnings, maybe, of a little rest for the people.

"This," said Jaime, "is what our revolution is all about. When you insist on talking about China, about Russia, about all the crazy mix-ups of your endless cold war—

you're just missing the point. There were no cold-war experts in the Sierra Maestra. There were men who hated tyranny, humiliation and hunger, men who wanted dignity and independence for Cuba. Why did a fight against these things make you our enemy, too? Yes, I remember: we execute!" He made a sharp cutting motion with his hand, no twinkle in his eyes. "We execute Batista's dogs and your newspapers weep. Where were all these weeping reporters when the dogs killed 20,000?"

'Before our socialism—your Bay of Pigs'

"Yes, I remember again: we take your companies' plantations. Now we're bandits. But who was made hungry by this, and how many did this begin to feed? Yes, I remember it all: we are socialists, a capital crime, and we send our agents to make revolution all over Latin America, everywhere. There must be a hundred million Cubans! But before our socialism came your Bay of Pigs, *compañero*, and for every Cuban guerrilla in Latin America there are a hundred of your Pentagon gorillas, for every Cuban bullet there, a thousand of your bombs. And yes, I don't forget anything: we are little Russian puppets, no? Because we sell sugar to the Russians and buy their machines? It was Russian guns that saved this country when American guns attacked it. And if you want us to buy your machines instead of Russian ones, then be good enough to make this possible—stop the embargo."

Next day the rain was gone. The air was exciting and the Isle of Pines had become sweet: flat across most of its area, but you're never out of sight of the *mogotes*, small, steep mountains that heave up sharply out of the plains, lumber along for a while, then subside. Sheltered in a cup of two such hills is the house where, in 1870, José Martí, Cuba's revolutionary saint, spent a year of exile for challenging Spanish rule in an underground newspaper. He was 17 years old.

"Jaime," I yelled across the little courtyard before the gray, sprawling stucco shrine, "did Martí hate the zebus too?"

"And also the Chinese."

Palace of the Revolution, another Batista heirloom: add it to the Hilton-Libre and the Tropicana and you have an architectural trilogy glorifying estrangement, boredom and the state. January 1: A reception at the palace produces its by-now-familiar effect on us New

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Coppelia (round building) in Havana serves 52 kinds of ice cream

pitted country were born in hospitals. Ninety percent! Whoever wants to pity us for having no more nightclubs anywhere should also pity us for suddenly having schools and nurseries everywhere."

He hunched his massive shoulders, raised his hands. "Do you think the people could possibly be ignorant of these things? Who built all these clinics? You think it's being done in the night by Russians? Who do you think learned how to read and write? Who is it if not the Cuban people who are making these dams and roads? Listen, you really want to know what this revolution is? This revolution is work! This revolution is 62,000 tons of fish, 90,000 coffee trees around Havana and 10 million tons of sugar in 1970!"

The New Socialist Man: someone who sweats a lot?

But that's Domingo's story, and Domingo is what you would have to call a hard-core type. What about the amateurs?

"What does Cuba think of Debray now, Jaime?" I asked. He turned his eyes from a shapely ankle: "Yes? Who? Ah, Debray. Yes, he's a good one. But not as good as the Coppelia's ice cream."

I'd about decided his interest in the whole revolutionary caboodle approached zero degrees. In the first few days he seemed to be a very pure specimen of the Accommodating Man. "Revolutions come, revolutions go," I'd remarked to Bruce: "the Jaimes always survive." Bruce asked him what he thought about the Chinese. He flashed a grin: "Even sillier than us Cubans. What else? Come on, look at these pretty baby cows!"

I was about to discover that it was I who was not talking politics—and more: that in the long run it's in the Jaimes—the ordinary people whom history has required to be extraordinary—that Cuba's revolution will find its most enduring makers and defenders.

We were on the Isle of Pines,

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Left Natty Bumppos, so I hang off to the side with an unexported inch or two of the people's rum, feeling sticky and unplugged—until at last the scene begins to arrange itself.

We were in a long, high marble hall divided lengthwise by an openwork stone partition. My mind had been wandering across several gowns and a few jeweled male fingers; and because I was thus distracted, it seemed from nowhere that the Chinese Presence had materialized on the other side of the room.

He looked like an older James Coburn made up for a high-camp political seduction. Lean and supple with short, tough gray hair, a soft, superior amusement on his face, he held his cigarette upright between his thumb and index finger, and was wearing a black Mao suit—did it even have a silken luster? And with his face always pointed elsewhere than his eyes, he glided slowly through the room on glistening black shoes. Save for the brown-Mao-suited young man with the flat, shocked-looking face who followed him at precisely two paces off his right heel, he was supremely and elegantly alone.

And camped by an hors d'oeuvre table, gesturing and munching, stood the beefy, pink-faced Russians in floppy business suits of no special color at all, laughing at in-jokes made, so the gossip had it, at the expense of the famous and lovable Cuban inefficiency.

Then, at the far end, Fidel.

I had got a first short glimpse of him through a doorway as we were filing into the main hall. He was standing in a line with a dozen others to greet the guests of rank; lit by the strong lights of the movie cameras, the scene was theatrically sharp, a tableau or even a painted temple frieze, with Fidel towering and casual at the center. I gave up hero worship at the age of 9, when I saw Joe DiMaggio take the field in a uniform with one dirty knee. But I suppose even his enemies will acknowledge that Castro might easily be the most turned-on human being in the world.

Later in the main hall, while the Chinese Presence waited in and out and the Russians behind me ate eggs, laughed and yawned, I stood half an hour in the circle five feet away from Fidel, unable even to hear his voice above the hubbub. But it was still an awesome pantomime and the vibrations were strong and pure. His face, to begin with, is a perfectly fused contradiction of the classical by the romantic, of serenity by bravura. The planes of his brow and nose, the beard, the black curly hair: who else but Pericles? But we never

saw Pericles gesticulating, the fingers of each hand pinched together over each shoulder, his head shaking for 10 consecutive seconds, with words coming out like bullets, then a pause, a probing look, a vigorous handshake, and the eyes swiftly panning around the room; then folding his arms, and cocking his head attentively toward the next person.

A white-haired lady appears and for 20 minutes Castro listens. Lips purse, eyes squint. Then from the breast pocket of his olive-green uniform he produces a notebook and pen, scribbles a hasty note. This scene is played all over Cuba. Where Fidel appears, the government of Cuba is at work.

That is, the Cuban dictatorship? At least try to sort out the meanings of this term. Most simply, it projects an image of a people cowed by force, not only voiceless in their state's affairs but driven to do bitter labor against their own understanding of their needs. Beyond that, you quickly get snarled in iffy speculations about the nature of a popular will and the possibility of its being embodied in a single personality. Can Cuba be understood and defined by this elusive term, dictatorship?

Cuba is run by revolutionary socialists whose objective is to make a social revolution, and anyone who opposes that effort will not live a happy life in Cuba. The slogan is, "Within the Revolution, everything." This includes a serious, open debate about where the boundary of the Revolution actually lies. However, its implicit corollary is, "Outside the Revolution, nothing."

Sonia told me she'd first opposed a certain policy of Fidel's but then changed her mind. "What if you hadn't?" I asked. "What could you do?"

"Keep discussing and studying it," she said.

"For how long? And what if you kept thinking you were right?"

El Caballo is always just about to arrive

The question made her clearly uncomfortable, so I pushed harder. Finally, exasperated, she jabbed my chest with her finger and said, "Look, we're not things with buttons that go on and off. But I believe we have to have the party to do what we have to do. So you have to defend the party, even when you're not sure."

I don't think I could say that. To me, a most Midwestern American, it sounded like an advance acquittal for all crimes. But how would I feel if I lived instead in a

tiny, underdeveloped island country, just 10 years free, which had to deal every day with a virtual siege thrown upon it by history's most powerful state? Emergency is all by itself a heavy argument for total mobilization, and hence for Cuba's preemptive centralism.

But bureaucracies are famous for outlasting their mandates: Lenin's honor leads to Stalin's shame. How can the Cubans build space into their system, create a structural ability to abandon the exhausted institution and freely create the new?

There are no guarantees at all, and the only hope is the permanent activity of the people: their deep involvement in the concrete acts of government. This means, before anything else, that they must have authentic communion with their leader—have access to him somehow, even when all the red lights are flashing—have his confidence and feel that they are always present before him. Above all, this requires real education.

Castro seems to recognize no more important general mission than this. *El Caballo*, Cubans call him, the Horse: not only for his

strength but also because, a nation of chess players, Cubans give him the name of the Knight, the most active piece. His motion through the island is constant, and that he is always unannounced means that he is always about to arrive. Without his simple poise and his bulging vitality, his evident need to be everywhere, to talk to everyone, to explain everything would be nothing more than a desperate evangelism.

Castro knows that Fidel is mortal. So he must also know that Cuba's towering political problem is this: How can *fidelismo*—that affectionate faith which certainly flows today between him and the huge Cuban majority—escape the limits of personality and become the organic base of Cuban society? Almost everything he does can be understood as an attack on this probably horrifying problem.

His speeches, for example. Are we so shallow as to think it's vanity, if not lunacy, that drives him to make three long speeches within a week? "Harangues," we call them, these famous marathons which are reckoned brief when they end in two hours. We are

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Even in rural Camagüey, girls dig miniskirts and fishnet stockings



more familiar with politicians who explain the world in a 30-second TV ad. Castro's March 13 speech runs to 80 pages in the printed transcript (all his speeches are unwritten). There is no better explanation anywhere of the politics of development in the Third World. Cubans need this explanation. Characteristically, not more than 10 minutes into the Tenth Anniversary speech, he was carefully telling the 800,000 people in the Plaza de la Revolución that net content of fertilizer is not the same as gross weight.

Isn't it dull? Surely the Cubans listen only because they think they must? Certainly some do, maybe many. So what? If the people are ever truly to govern themselves, they must grasp not just the end but also the beginning and the middle of the line of reasoning that concludes with policy and action. Maybe it's our own habituation to the politics of image that hides from us the importance of these techno-sermons on the theme of Cuba's survival.

Any violently transitional society is bound to be precarious. The suspense mounts only when major turning points are approached. The pressures of the U.S. embargo and boycott and its open-secret support of militant exile groups have been painful for the Revolution but far from lethal. Owning an impressive credit rating now with Britain, France, Spain, Italy and Japan, Cubans feel they are moving away from that economic dependency on the U.S.S.R. which, even if it had not been the aim, would have been the most likely result of U.S. policy. The Revolution has clearly survived the serious economic mistakes of the first five years, when an absurd industrialization plan set Cubans to building a spark-plug factory in a remote, rural town in Las Villas Province, reckoning the proceeds of forthcoming automobile and TV industries, and actually plowing under whole fields of sugar cane.

Came a cruel dawn and then the chastened "realism" of the past five years—sugar provisionally restored to the throne, industrialization from now on to take place within the farm economy, not beyond it. Most rational, these second thoughts. Cuba seems to come together.

But I thought I caught a soft current of sadness there, a whiff of some disappointment which no one would mention because mentioning it would sooner or later make you think about it, and if it got thought about too deeply or too soon, it might boil up into a

bitterness more lethal than a hundred American blockades or a thousand Bays of Pigs.

Recall the heroic days when we Americans were still allowed to think that Fidel Castro was a combination Thomas Jefferson and Robin Hood. Joyously indifferent to all the old limits, huge black cigars clamped tightly in their bright grinning teeth, the bearded young rebels were liberators not merely of Cuba but of the spirit of Don Quixote, too. What was impossible then?

Julio and a Cuban 'trip to the moon'

And when omnipotence confessed its weakness, and sugar was back in style again, the rebel imagination turned more sharply to the Latin American continent. "The Russian Revolution can survive," the old Bolsheviks had warned, "only if there is prompt revolution in the nations of Europe." Forty years later, these island Bolsheviks would say what amounted to the same thing: "Two, three, many Vietnams!" Meetings are held. Contacts are made—a guerrilla band here, a column there. Stern advice is given: "The duty of the revolutionary is to make the revolution," said Che. And Régis Debray, Boswell to the new revolution, prepares a manual to explain the current advances in the art. Were there no more Batistas in Latin America? No more Bolívars?

But one day Che is killed in Bolivia. The column is destroyed. "Accidents," says Domingo, "a few casual events. Bad preparation. The wrong choice of terrain. The strategy has not yet really been tried." A distant voice cries out in the pages of a new manifesto, "Back to the Bolivian hills! Che lives!" The poignancy of these words is not greater than their brav-

ery. "We are not gloomy," says strong Domingo. "It will just take longer."

Fidel's Tenth Anniversary speech said nothing about longer or shorter: no mention of the continent's revolution; one obligatory salute to Vietnam—as deeply felt as ever, this salute, but brief. "The Year of the Heroic Guerrilla" has passed. "The Year of the Decisive Effort" takes its place. The huge, bright billboards still carry the slogan, "Two, three, many Vietnams." But the new champion slogan is *los diez millones van*—the 10 million tons of sugar are coming. This is the promise on which the Revolution has staked its honor.

Something seems to dissolve and fade. An idea which not long ago had all by itself simultaneously rendered both the moral and the historical life coherent, and in fact identical, seems now to lose its explanatory and motivating power. Two coupled moments of towering audacity: We will be an industrial state tomorrow! The revolution is rising everywhere! The first became: The day after tomorrow, we will have mechanized many of our farms. The second became: Revolution will have at least one American island for a sanctuary.

"Did you talk with Fidel?" my friends asked when I got back. I wouldn't have known what to say to him. Except—maybe I could have mumbled it—that I would leave Cuba with a different and I think better idea of manhood, of *machismo*, than what I'd come with. Standing in the circle around Fidel that night at the palace reception, not at all perversely, I looked for Che's epitaph in his face. Can you possibly wrap your mind around even one small corner of his sorrow? I could see only that the epitaph wasn't there. And I'll assume that this is because he has chosen not to write it, that it's because he's finding some other way to keep Quixote upright in skinny Rosinante's sad-

dle. Or else on that stronger horse, *El Caballo* himself.

A soft-spoken engineering student named Julio stepped back from the Isle of Pines map. He had just finished his summary of Cuba's plans to turn that island into the birthplace of the New Man. They have renamed it the Isle of Youth. For three years now, swelling the population from 9,000 to 44,000, young volunteers have been coming here from all parts of Cuba to clear land, build dams, lay roads and irrigation pipe, construct schools, housing, hospitals and nurseries—the things they need to turn what was first a pirates' sanctuary and then a prison island into an image of what they hope all Cuba will become. Food, clothing, housing, schooling and medical care are already free here. By 1975, they say their island will produce as much citrus fruit as Israel. Perhaps by that time too there will be no wages and no prices: they want to put the money system into the museum with the zebu.

Julio was five years old when Castro, only 25 then, led the attack on Moncada barracks. He was only 10 when Batista fell. How can he and his generation make this revolution their own? What audacity is left for them?

"One more thing," he said. He went back to the map and traced a line from the western edge of the Isle of Youth up to the Cuban coast, some 40 miles away. "The sea is shallow here," he said. "Suppose we build a dam." Then he traced a parallel line from the eastern edge. "Another here. Suppose we push the sea back and fill this passage. More land for crops and cattle, more room for people." He turned to us and smiled. "A wild idea?" Then his smile turned into a confident grin. "We have no rockets," he said. "But maybe we can change the shape of the earth. This will be our trip to the moon." ◀

At a school in the model town of Nanchuaçu near Havana, children parade carrying a Vietcong flag

