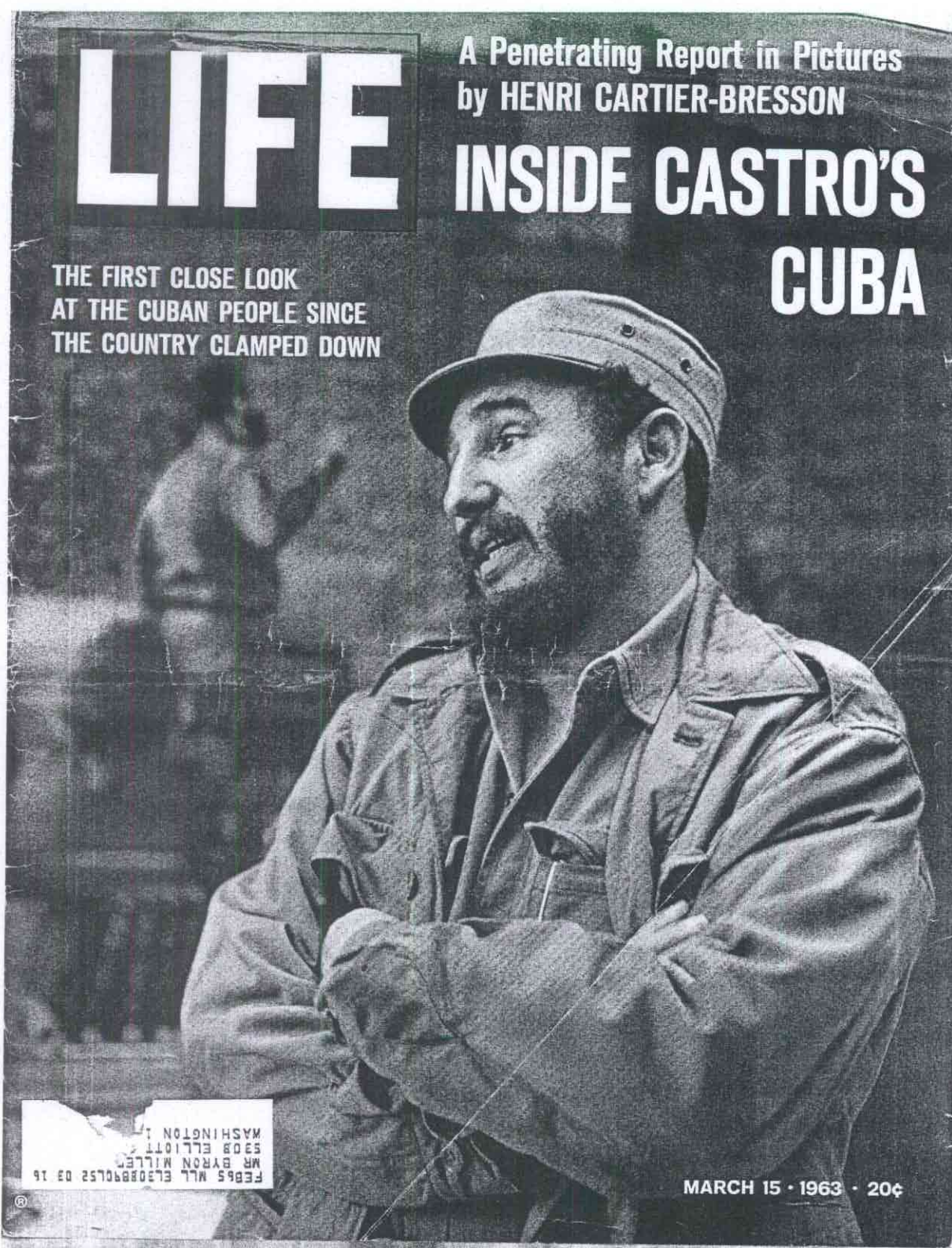


# LIFE

A Penetrating Report in Pictures  
by HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON

## INSIDE CASTRO'S CUBA

THE FIRST CLOSE LOOK  
AT THE CUBAN PEOPLE SINCE  
THE COUNTRY CLAMPED DOWN



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MARCH 15 · 1963 · 20¢





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EDITORS' NOTE

# How Fidel Castro Was Bearded in His Lair

This week's exclusive cover story on life inside Cuba was shot for us by one of the most famous photographers in the world—Henri Cartier-Bresson. Over the years Cartier-Bresson has made a practice of getting behind the curtains of the world and coming back with superb records of the people there. He is probably most widely known for his memorable stories on Russia (LIFE, Jan. 17 and Jan. 31, 1955), on China (LIFE, Jan. 5, 1959) and for his magnificent book *The Decisive Moment*. Last week when we told Henri we wanted to talk about him in the Editors' Note, his hands flew up. "Just make sure no picture of me, please. You see, I am a street photographer. I have to remain anonymous or I'm out of business."

O.K., we agreed, no picture. But please define your kind of street photographer. "Some photographers discover," Cartier-Bresson began, "others invent. I am a discoverer. With me reality has the last word. The camera is a kind of magnet—you want to catch the whole world in that little box, all the significant details that add up to life. The camera is a clinical eye. You sniff around with it waiting for that decisive moment that happens between you and your subject."

For the last five weeks Cartier-Bresson has been sniffing around Cuba with his camera, capturing its moods and attitudes. Because of his French citizenship and his reputation, he was allowed to work freely. "I told them every country has its secrets. I'm not interested in the military. I'm interested in *todo y nada*—everything and nothing. I come with no vinegar and no honey—just my camera and my intellect."

It was not until the very end of his stay that Cartier-Bresson finally caught up with Castro. "I made a nuisance about that," he says. "I've drawn the body of your country. I kept telling them. 'Now I want the head. I am a portraitist. How is it possible to make a portrait of Cuba without a portrait of Fidel?' Everybody would agree and they all tried to help me. But Castro is still the man of the Sierra Maestra. Between public spectacles he disappears. He hates routine and he despises formality. He is comfortable only with his beard and his personal privacy. Finally I met him before one of his public speeches. I said, 'I still am on my hunger—to see you at your work.' The next day he gave me an audience. I photographed him working, reading a magazine, having a cup of tea. We talked very little. Conversation was not necessary. For when I see a man through the range finder of my camera, I see him naked."

GEORGE P. HUNT  
Managing Editor





A famous photographer inspects Communism's Western outpost

Photographed for LIFE  
by HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON

# THIS IS CASTRO'S





**LIFE**

Vol. 54, No. 11 March 15, 1963

The gaunt staring faces belong to two Cuban policemen and a girl friend. In the accepted sense they could hardly be called world figures. Yet it is with the help of such people that the tyranny of Communism bridged an ocean. These three, unaware of their roles, are playing a part in the most explosive drama unfolding before the world today.

Though virtually all eyes in the Western Hemisphere have been riveted on Cuba, until now no one has been permitted to report extensively on what is going on there. (The problem of what to do about Cuba is of the highest priority in virtually every North and South American capital, especially Washington where President Kennedy has been circling the problem warily, taunted by opposition senators.) (Yet the U.S. and its allies have had to rely on intelligence reports and on the swift scannings by reconnaissance aircraft.)

Last week Henri Cartier-Bresson, the distinguished French photographer-journalist, completed a mission to which he had been assigned by the editors of LIFE. For five weeks he roamed the island with his cameras and notebooks, then brought out the remarkable document seen on these pages—the first close look at Cuba in many months.

To his intimate pictures of the Cuban people and their leader (see cover), Cartier-Bresson gives his running commentary in the captions and, on page 42, his general impressions of a people who have started down Communism's long one-way street.

In Havana, Cubans—surprised by the camera—watch a new ship dock. A Polish freighter, it was built for Cuba and named after hero of revolution.

# CUBA SEEN FACE TO FACE





**I**f they walked around with big signs, Russian technicians couldn't be more obvious than they are in their sporty shirts, carrying their square briefcases. They don't mingle much with Cubans—except, like GIs abroad, with kids who ask for their cigarets.

**M**achinery from Communist countries draws a more attentive crowd than people from there. A Russian technician (center foreground) explains workings of tractor to group of absorbed Cuban farm boys who still wear hats shaped like those of American cowboys.



**T**ractors sent by Communists are uncared at Havana docks—which have not been so busy since the American blockade. Communists

send mostly tractors, jeeps, trucks which can be used to replace Havana's worn-out buses. Cubans cling to their old dilapidated U.S. cars.



## A RUSSIAN

On the surface, the Russian presence in Cuba is seen in check-shirted figures ambling across the squares or technicians popping up to teach Cubans how to work tractors. But the more crucial Russian presence is shielded beyond security and was not seen by Cartier-Bresson. (About 17,000 Russian combat troops are deployed at various encampments and military





## PIPELINE POURS POWER TO BACK UP FIDEL

installations. They wait on hair-trigger alert at two dozen or more emplacements of SAM-2 ground-to-air missiles. They prowls the countryside with four armored task groups that are built around T-54 tanks and Snapper antitank rockets. They hone the combat readiness of about 50 MIG fighter-bombers with atomic capability. Together these various components

form a small but elite force whose mission is to bolster the power base from which the Communists seek to subvert other Latin American countries. (CIA Director John McCone disclosed that Cuba was bringing in between 1,000 and 1,500 trainee saboteurs from the other Latin American countries to learn the arts of violent disruption and guerrilla warfare.)

Everywhere the Cubans go they are confronted by portraits of Communism's dark saints, Marx and Lenin. (The Russians obviously exert enormous military and political influence on the Castro regime.) But Cartier-Bresson found that the Russians, who live clannishly in their own installations, have left little imprint on the ordinary Cuban people.



# IT IS STILL AN EASY LAND TO REST IN,



**C**ubans have to queue for clothes and textiles. This is not a natural way of life for people in such languid Latin countries, but Cubans

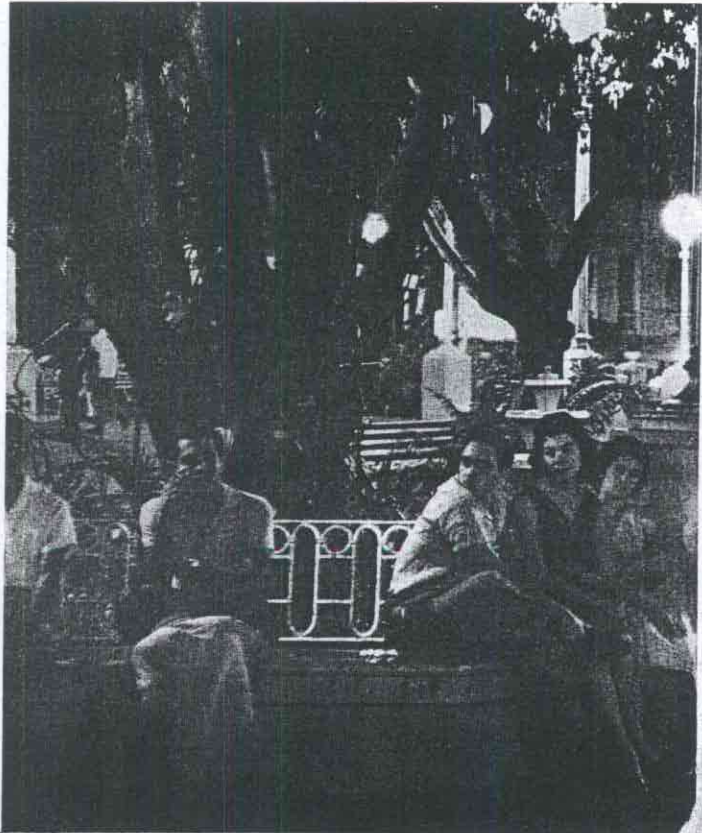
have learned to do it because it is the only way. This is an ex-Woolworth store in Havana, which still has some stocks of cheap clothing.



**I**n places like Santiago de Cuba, an affable city little touched by foreign ways but one which has hatched major Cuban revolts,



**A**lmost a quarter of the population of Cuba is Negro or mulatto, and these people for the most part support the Castro regime with enthusiasm. They feel that they are now sharing equally in the great effort to educate and to employ all of the Cuban people.





# UNLESS YOU WANT TO BUY SOMETHING

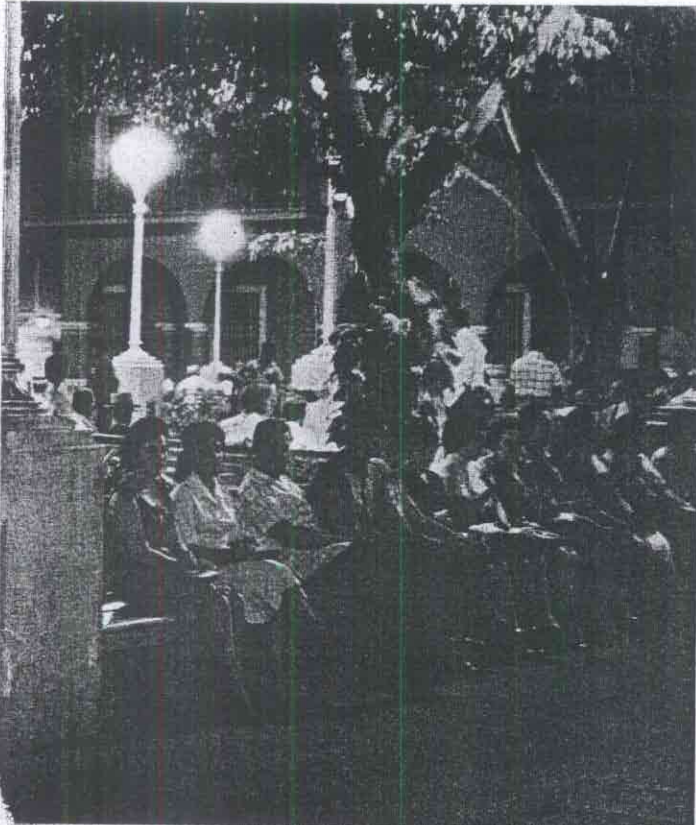


Including Castro's, old men still sit in cafes and talk. When evening comes everybody goes to the plaza (below) as to a big living room.



Russian shoppers finger cheap cotton shirts in Havana store. Good materials have now almost disappeared. Stores like this got new

slogan names like "Unity 200" when Castro came to power. Now Fidel has decided that they must be humanized and named after people.



Outdoor advertising for Fidel's new regime sometimes walks about very attractively. This young lady wears a patriotic T-shirt celebrating the date when Castro first launched his revolt, a date which became the name of the organization which first supported him.









**T**hese young girls perform what seems to be a graceful ballet as they move to and from their school cafeteria at lunchtime. Many changes big and small have come to Cuba, but two big ones are so profound that they are now irrevocable. One is the land reform which has broken up big holdings and made communal farms where many peasants work—though the state owns them. The other is the explosion of schools and education. (The brand-new school at left, designed to take 5,000 students, is built on the site of a former Batista military camp in Havana.) Under the direction of a crew-cut, sharp young Minister of Education named Armando Hart, scores of others have been built all over the island. The government provides thousands of scholarships, and these students go around in special uniforms which set them apart as *becados*, or scholarship holders. This is a proud thing. But the schools also have an air of regimentation. Students march in military step to and from classrooms, and even sports take place under strict discipline. Students learn to read and write and master modern technology. But they also get a steady diet of Marxist theories and slogans, and that is what they absorb.

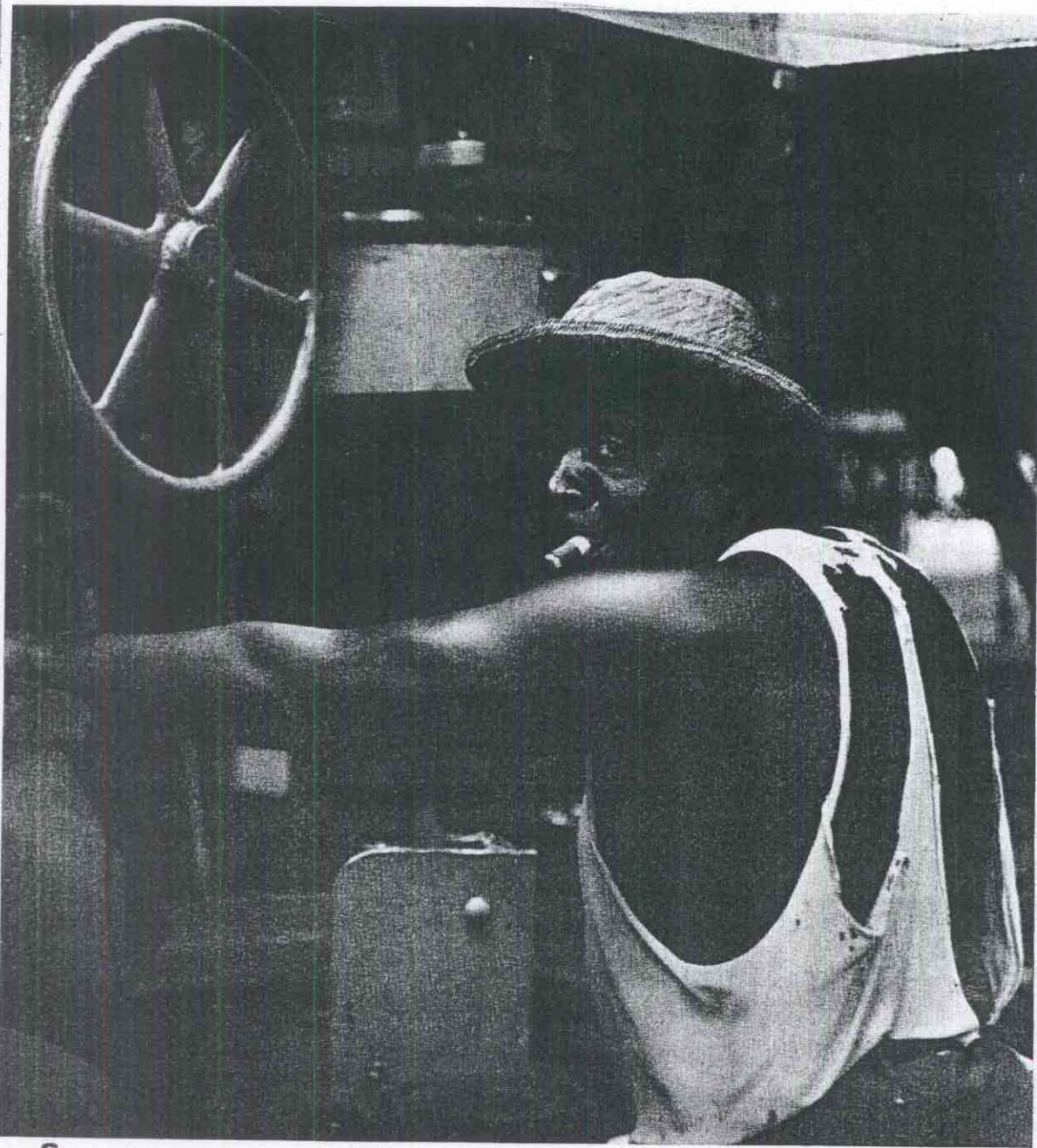


# SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL LIFE GOES ON, LIMPINGLY



**A**ristocratic Cuban ladies live much as before, chatting on Havana streets and entertaining at home—though more modestly than before. Younger women of this class line up daily at the Mexican Consulate for visas, but older ones prefer to stay where they have lived their lives.





**S**ugar is the chief cash crop which supports the economy of Cuba, and workmen like this one operating a pressing machine in the Ignacio Agramonte refinery have proved that they can run the complicated industrial equipment confiscated from U.S. companies.

But they are handicapped by a bad cane harvest this year and by a critical shortage of spare parts. Almost all of Cuba's heavy machinery and rolling stock came originally from the U.S. Now it is wearing out and there simply are no parts for repairing it.

Cubans are clever at making parts and they have set up entire factories for this purpose, but still there are long queues of workers applying for permission to buy the few parts available. Conditions in Cuban industry probably will get even worse.



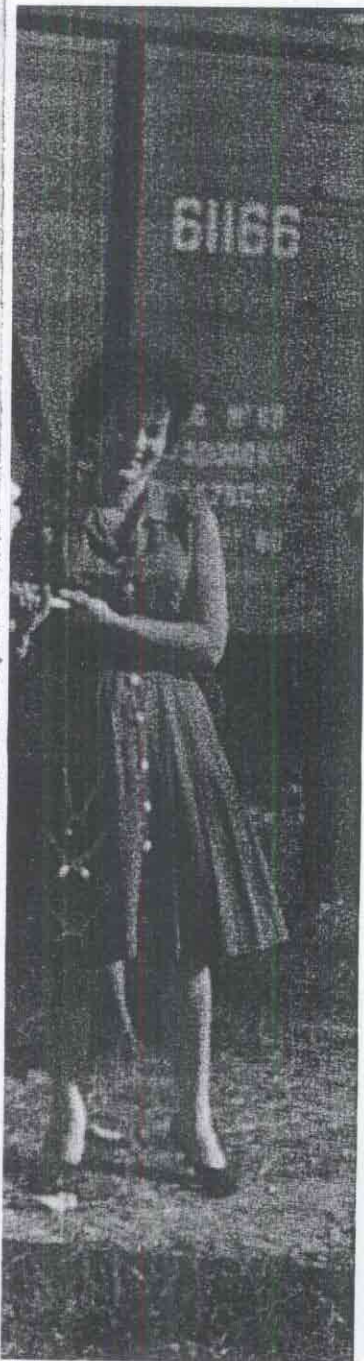


**T**o pay for Russian gasoline and machinery, Cubans have sugar cane. To get the precious crop in, men are coaxed to "volunteer,"

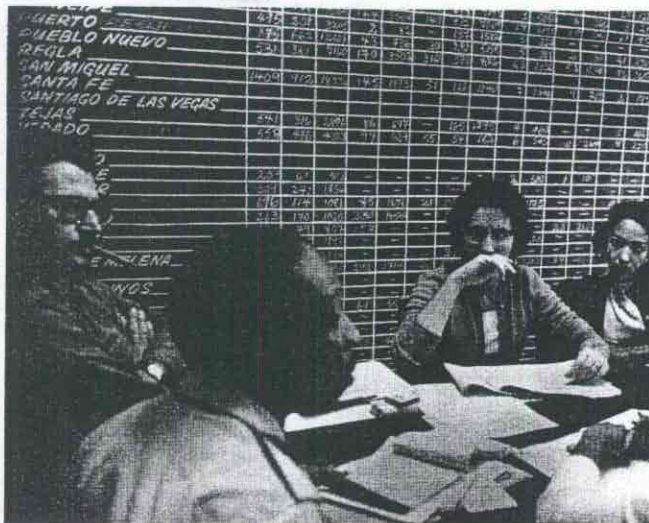
going off for weeks to the cane fields (above) while others "volunteer" to do double duty by filling in on the jobs they left. What

peasants wanted most of all from the Castro regime was a bit of land all their own. Instead, land reform has created communal farms





on which all work together, eating in mess halls like that at right. Food there is plentiful, and modern housing is being built for farmers.



**M**ost Cuban lives actually lie in the hands of something called the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution. This really is thousands of small committees organized down to the block level, like the one meeting above in Havana. The most active members belong to ORI, an

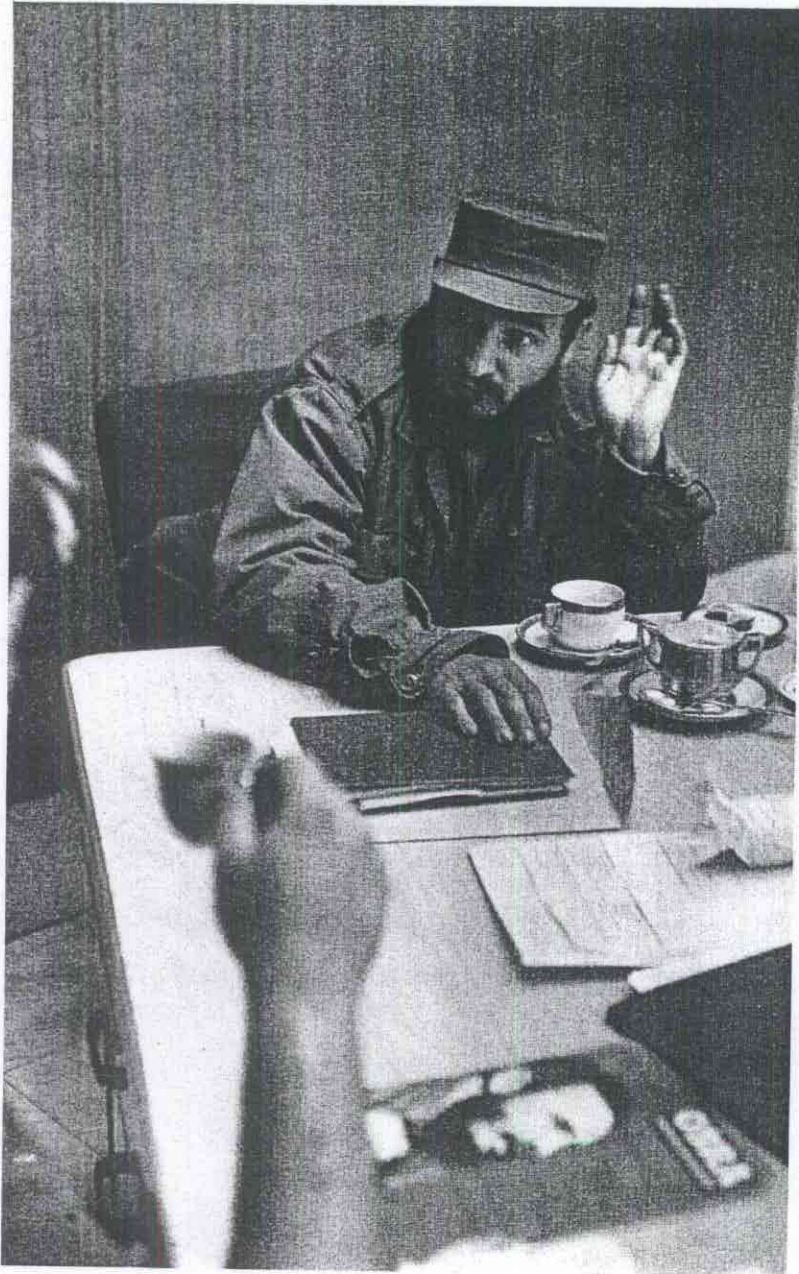
organization made up of both Castro supporters and Communists. They know everything in the life of everyone. Yet they also can give—and take away—favors, so most Cubans seem to accept their embraces without ever thinking that it could, in the end, smother them.

## COMMITTEES CALL THE TUNE, 'VOLUNTEERS' DANCE TO IT





# RESTLESS FIDEL IS STILL THE BOSS,



**C**astro is seldom seen like this in his office. He remains a romantic revolutionary, flitting around the country, needing always to be

in personal contact with the people. But he is still the boss and nothing happens in Cuba until he says that it is O.K. to happen.



**A**mbassadors from Russia, China are guests at dinner in the Havana Libre Hotel to award prizes to workers who made records



**C**arlos Rafael Rodríguez (above) is a Communist who runs land reform program, the most important single issue in Cuba today. He has a lawyer's steady, appraising eyes, lacking the flame which shows in Fidel's eyes. Even his beard is more controlled.





# RULING EVEN THE STRONG MEN AROUND HIM



In 1962 in "production," that word their countries like so much. Their names do not matter; they are just symbols, like flags.



**R**aul Castro (below), at home in Havana with his family, has no glamour though he is head of the Cuban armed forces. He is Fidel's little brother and he married a heroine of the revolution, guerrilla fighter Vilma Espin, which helped him achieve his eminence.



**F**idel's partner in running Cuba is Ernesto ("Che") Guevara, an impetuous man with burning eyes and profound intelligence

who seems born to make revolution—if it hadn't been in Cuba, it would have been somewhere else. He is now Minister of Industries.



# 'An island of pleasure gone adrift'

by HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON

I am a visual man. I watch, watch, watch. I understand things through my eyes. This means I had to put Cuba—which I had not seen in 30 years—in the range-finder of my mind, so to speak, and correct for parallax so as not to get a false vision. You would get a wrong vision if you depended too much on the Cuban press. I could read their newspapers; I understand Spanish and speak it, except for mixing in Italian words and Mexican curses.

The press is full of propaganda and imprecations. The messages are crude and in a stereotyped Marxist lingo. And I could not ignore the posters that plaster the billboards and walls. A very few are good artistically, but even these advertise social and political ideas or boast of production figures instead of pushing usable goods. A popular one shouts, "A country that studies is a country that wins!"

But it is clear to me that many people are less confident than the slogans suggest. They know they are at the center of a fluid and very complex situation. They are struggling to industrialize and they are worried about the future. They live with the stern Marxist morality because they must, but they are allergic to organization and to the usual Communist emphasis on conformity of any kind.

Cuba is a pleasure island that has gone adrift, but it is still a Latin country, a tropical country, a country whose rhythm has an African beat. The people are easygoing and full of humor and kindness and grace, but also they have seen a lot and they are intuitively smart. Nobody will easily convert them into hard Communist zealots.

If they are a puzzle to the Western bloc, they are just as puzzling to the Communists. I was having my shoes shined and listening while the shine men talked. "Socialism?" said the shine man. "Certainly, I agree to go to the moon with the Russians. But down here—show me the good of Communism." I heard many such jokes during my stay.

Freedom of speech is something which nobody has yet killed in Cuba. One day I sat with a most important government official and, when conversation dwindled, he asked whether I knew the newest joke against the government.

"A high military commander," the official began, "was permitted to make a trip to the U.S. But the officer stayed away. Indeed, Fidel began to say, 'Just another traitor.' But at last he returned and reported to Fidel. 'Aha,' said Fidel, 'we all thought you had defected.' But the military man protested that he had been absent for so long only because it had been unavoidable." These Americans are so backward," he said, patting his stomach, "that they still eat the way we did three years ago."

One Sunday I visited a priest who is also a very good poet. I was look-

ing over his recently published poems and was taken aback when some members of the state cinema board came to pay him a friendly visit—this in a country where, by Marxist belief, the priest should have been anathema. I was also surprised to find that *El Mundo* prints religious news.)

(The Cubans are doing a great deal of building but not the drab and dull utilitarian building of serious Communist countries. Here there is light and color, grace and imagination. Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn could see themselves reflected in Cuba today.)

The government seems to understand that some things about any absolute discipline do not fit the Cuban temperament. For example, nobody has tried to abridge that basic Cuban passion, the lottery. Instead, they have made it a tool of the revolution and have only reduced the prizes. The government simply takes a bigger percentage.

And, despite all the government talk about prohibiting ancient vices, prostitution has not been eradicated. Definite gestures to propriety have been made: the girls no longer roam the streets but conduct their business more discreetly. Some of the former girls have been persuaded to reform and to enter an institution—I cannot recall the name, but it is something like "A Center for Artisans"—at Camagüey. I could not photograph there because, it was explained, some of the girls will certainly marry and it would of course be embarrassing for their husbands to see pictures suggesting their former professions.

I confess that I am French and I like to look at the ladies. I was much aware that Cuban women have curves but on the opposite end and the opposite side from where they are situated on, say, Miss Jayne Mansfield.

Since curves are curves and not politics, I sometimes made errors. One night I was walking along a hotel corridor with a friend. A beautiful young woman, in the room next to his, suddenly opened her door and popped out her head and other parts which might have given Miss Brigitte Bardot serious competition at St. Tropez. I asked who this might be. My friend answered stiffly, "She is in the Ministry of Industry."

I must have looked amused because he added, blushing, "Every night she studies Russian books on industrial planning."

Some things about Cuba did give me pause. There were, for example, the rifles. Cubans of the militia carry rifles the way a tourist carries a camera. Of the rifles I will only say that when I must walk around a horse, I walk around the front end. And when I walk around a rifle, I walk around the back end.

(There is one matter which upset me most deeply—the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution. Ob-

viously they do social work and do a great deal of it. They distribute clothing, give vaccinations, fight juvenile delinquency. They do much good. But also they know exactly what is going on in every family in every block. This, to my feeling, is pernicious, an invasion of privacy at best, the beginning of thought control and witch hunting at worst.)

I kept asking to meet Fidel—nobody calls him Castro, only Fidel. Everybody tried to help me, but it was a problem because Castro still lives like the hit-and-run man of the hills.

While waiting I went on with my work, including portraits of Fidel's right-hand man, Che Guevara, who is much more than his title of Minister of Industries. To the camera as elsewhere, Che is a violent man but a realist. His eyes glow; they coax, entice and mesmerize. This is a persuasive man and a true anarchist, but he is no martyr. One feels that if the revolution in Cuba should break up, Che would appear elsewhere in Latin America, very much alive and throwing bombs.

In the end I did see Fidel. An auto came for me, a Cadillac so full of machine guns on the floor in back that my knees were doubled under my chin. I met Fidel backstage at the Chaplin Theater where he was to make a speech. This man is both a messiah and a potential martyr. Unlike Che, I think he would prefer to die rather than to see the revolution disappear. Also he is the respected boss; there is no question of that. His men laugh and joke among themselves until he comes in and then, you feel it and see it: the leader is there.

I think you could say of Fidel that his whiskers form a nest for the disinherited. Marxism he speaks aloud—but that is in the head, not in the beard or in the voice. He has the neck of a minotaur, the conviction of a messiah. There is a powerful magnetism about him; in a way he is a force of nature. He makes people sing and sway together and carries them with him. I observed, being a Frenchman, that after three hours of speaking, the women in his presence still tremble with ecstasy. But I must say also that in three hours he puts the men to sleep.



There is a fluid, mixed-up quality to the Cuban scene. A militiaman clumps past old sights—religious art and lottery numbers (above). On *día de los enamorados*—day of sweethearts, Feb. 14—"volunteer" sits sidewalk guard over a meager store display.