

Notes on the Political Economy of Cuba: Burn  
Down the Cane Fields!<sup>1 2</sup>

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# 1 Introduction: Castro's "Touristrika"

The mood in Cuba today is somber. The problem is more than just hard times, although times are hard in Cuba. There is also the question of where the country is going.

A decade of "rationalisation" that resulted in a tangle of *three million* work norms (more than the total number of workers) and piece rates and pay scales set according to enterprise or production-brigade profitability could not stave off the economic stagnation that has once again overtaken Cuba's economy.<sup>3</sup> Cutbacks in rations of milk and meat and higher prices for transportation and other necessities have followed in the wake of Castro's current "rectification" campaign whose rhetorical clothing of "building socialism through moral incentives" can't hide the resemblance to the standard IMF-ordered retrenchment, with its slashing of imports and promoting of exports so as to pay foreign creditors.

Castro was said to look glum during Gorbachev's April 1989 visit to Cuba. Gorbachev seemed to be enjoying himself. Although few details of their conversations have been announced, the general idea is that Cuba will have to enter into specific contracts with Soviet enterprises, which in turn are subject to "cost-accounting," with the result that Soviet-Cuban economic arrangements will be overhauled piece by piece and each of its individual components may be expected to show a profit.

Cuba's economy works like this: Cuba produces sugar. The USSR buys the bulk of it at a fixed price, paying partly in Soviet oil. Cuba sells the oil on the world market, along with the remainder of its sugar production. Then Cuba uses the mix of roubles and dollars to import food and other materials and make more sugar. Now, with sugar prices and oil prices low simultaneously, it seems that more dollars are indispensable to make the Soviet's capital investment in Cuba turn over faster. "Tourism is far more profitable than oil," Castro recently exclaimed<sup>4</sup>, as though he had just made a terrific discovery. To many Cubans, this must seem like a recurring nightmare. The "second harvest" of tourism, as the complement of Cuba's sugar dependency used to be called, was supposed to have been ended along with U.S. domination. In Havana, in 1959, 100,000 women - over 10% of the capital's total population - found work as prostitutes, crowding certain streets thick as a cattle market along with the thousands of taxi drivers, beggars and others awaiting American businessmen, tourists and sailors. Gambling was the island's biggest growth industry. In 1959, 300,000 U.S., Canadian and

European visitors came to be waited upon, entertained and otherwise served by those the sugar economy made “surplus.”<sup>5</sup>

In 1988, with, it is true, slightly more emphasis on beaches, Cuba attracted 225,000 Canadian and European tourists. The Cuban government hopes to bring in *two million a year* by the end of the next decade. The giant Hilton hotel from which black Cubans were once excluded, later symbolically used for the 1966 Tricontinental Conference where Castro denounced both the imperialist U.S. and revolutionary China, is again packed with well-fed, sun-dazed couples from Milan and Montreal. The chorus girl cabarets, once a hated symbol of Cuba’s subjugation, are again parading the glittering degradation of Cuban women for the amusement of drunken foreign big spenders. Contract discussions are under way with Club Med.<sup>6</sup> After thirty years of little construction of new housing, tens of thousands of hotel rooms and vacation cottages and a whole new international airport are to be built in the next five years, financed by joint enterprises set up with European investors.

A currently popular song protests, “The dollar is more important than the Cuban people.” The one thing that many Cubans thought surely had been achieved, an end to their country’s humiliation at the hands of the U.S., now seems to be up for sale. Cubans say that Castro has his own version of perestroika: “touristroika.”

A 1988 Cuban party document warns of “states of opinion reflecting discontent, concern, incomprehension and irritability” among the Cuban people and lays great stress on measures to control “the persistence of manifestations of labour and social indiscipline.”<sup>7</sup> Castro’s interminable speeches rail against popular lack of morale and enthusiasm. Recent visitors’ anecdotes are more pungent about the prevailing cynicism in regard to the government.

The “aid” provided to Cuba by the USSR for almost thirty years cost Cuba its soul, as we shall see, but it bought a certain stability (whose content we shall also examine). Now, when there is every reason to believe that Gorbachev’s perestroika will hold more difficulties for Cuba, even this is in doubt. “If there were only one socialist country left in the world,” Castro told a recent closed meeting of the Cuban party, “it would be Cuba.”<sup>8</sup> But this braggadocio cuts the man that wields it. Once the *possibility* that the USSR might cease to be socialist is admitted, then even those who reject our Maoist argument that the Soviet Union had *already* restored capitalism when Castro took up with it would have to question the wisdom of a thirty-year Cuban policy to make the island dependent on the USSR. As an unidentified “foreign diplomat” (probably Soviet) pointed out, “Castro needs Gorbachev

much more than Gorbachev needs him.”<sup>9</sup> The ugliness of Cuba’s future, now floating to the surface inside and outside the country, evokes an underlying question: how did it get this way in the first place?

## 2 How Sugar Created Cuba

There being no God, it fell to sugar to create Cuba.

There were people on the island long before sugar came, but the island was not yet Cuba. Sugar changed its face and created its people, whose history is a history of revolt and war against the evolving relations of production and the other social relations that arose in consequence and gave sugar its terrible power.

The Europeans brought cane sugar from India to the West Indies in the sixteenth century, along with the African slaves to cut it down. In turn, the trade in these two commodities was a driving force in the development of capitalism and its political triumph in Europe.

In 1793 the slaves revolted in Haiti and drove out the French slavemasters. The long political unrest and clash among the colonial powers for that island brought more colonists fleeing to Cuba and an enormous impetus to what had hitherto been slow development there. The whole of the nineteenth century was one long sugar boom in Cuba. Sugar commanded the felling of the tropical forests, just as earlier it had required the extermination of the Caribbean natives who resisted forced labour. There was little trace left of the island’s original life, except for some place names which no longer resembled the settings they had been named after.

The commodity sugar was sent to Europe where it was transformed into money, the money went to Africa where it became slaves, and the slaves were sent to Cuba and other places in the New World where they were ground up to make more sugar. In the nineteenth century, Cuba was the main destination of those Africans unlucky enough to fall into white hands. About 600,000 Africans were brought to Cuba between 1512 and 1865, most of them after 1820 when the international slave trade was supposedly banned. Nevertheless, Cuba’s black and “mulatto” population in the mid-1800s was no more than half that number.<sup>10</sup> The cane fields killed Africans after seven to ten years of labour. According to an account written at that time, slave men and women worked 19 to 20 hours a day, six or seven days a week. Most owners found it more profitable to renew their workforce through constant

purchases rather than allow slaves a few hours a week away from the field for breeding purposes. Slave mothers commonly carried out abortion or infanticide rather than bear children into slavery.<sup>11</sup>

Poor whites tended to work in coffee and especially tobacco. Only in the latter half of the nineteenth century did Europeans begin to arrive in great numbers, along with Chinese brought as bound labour. In the early twentieth century, more bound labour was brought from Jamaica and Haiti, as well as Yucatan Indians from Mexico. Cuba's population today is not as black as some neighbouring islands (estimates range from a third to a majority, depending on the criteria of the authors). But the rate at which Africans were brought to renew Cuba's population, the long life of this slave trade (until about 1880), the late abolition of slavery (1886) and the fact that later white settlers came to a country that had long been mostly black made the emerging Cuban nation a daughter of Africa, raped by the slavemaster. To this day, aspects of the language, religion, and other cultural features of the Cuban masses, especially among the poor and above all in the countryside, are easily identifiable as those of the Yoruba and other peoples of West Africa. In fact, these cultural features, to some extent, mark Cubans of all colours.

Under Spanish law and the Catholic religion, it was forbidden to beat oxen, but not slaves. Slaves needed beating because they revolted. Often they set fire to the cane fields and escaped into the mountains. (This was one reason why fragile coffee beans and especially tobacco leaves were more often tended by free labour.) Major organised revolts took place in 1795 and 1844. Freedom from slavery could not be imagined without the overthrow of the Spanish-supported slaveowner regime. Beginning in 1868, Cubans began a ten-year war for independence and emancipation. Spain sent a quarter of a million troops to suppress the one million Cubans. In 1880, another major revolt broke out and was put down. In 1895, black and white guerrillas under a black general launched yet another war, which this time was successful... except that on the eve of victory, the U.S. declared war on Spain and snatched up the Spanish colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines.

American troops invaded Cuba with the double mission of dealing Spain the final coup de grace and preventing the island from becoming a "Negro republic." The victorious Cuban rebel army was barred from entering the cities and disbanded. U.S. troops occupied the island from 1898 to 1902. Before they left, they wrote into the constitution of this supposedly independent country the Platt Amendment, a provision allowing the U.S. to intervene in Cuba at will. A new law requiring written deeds to land in a country

where small peasants had farmed individual or communal lands without title enabled the American companies who bought up the sugar plantations to expel those who got in the way of the gargantuan expansion of sugar lands required to feed the newly-mechanised sugar mills. To protect this way of life, American troops invaded again in 1906 and stayed three years. They invaded a third time in 1912, and again in 1917. This time they stayed five years, until they established a Cuban Army and political figures who would rule for them. Later, in return for allowing Cuban sugar a preferential place on the U.S. market, Cuba dropped all restrictions and duties on imports from the U.S. In addition, the U.S. snatched Guantanamo, on the eastern end of the island, where it still holds a major naval base. The U.S. was later to use Guantanamo to supply bombs and napalm to the Cuban government to fight Fidel Castro's rebels; today, U.S. aircraft stationed at Guantanamo could be over Santiago de Cuba, the island's second city, in three minutes.

For centuries the profitability of sugar had depended on slavery, although it was a slavery in service of the emerging capitalist world market, and in turn slave Cuba was deeply penetrated by capitalism. By the mid-1800s, Cuba's capital, Havana, was the third largest city in the Americas, just behind New York and Philadelphia. Cuba was among the first countries in the world to have a national railroad system, at about the same time as the U.S. and long before Spain, its colonial owner. In fact, Cuba's cities, engorged with the U.S. investments that began to flow in towards the end of the nineteenth century, were among the world's first to be lit by electric lights. But the railroads were to carry cane, not people; the lights illuminated city districts inhabited by plantation owners, merchants and their urban employees, and the country clubs, yacht clubs, and night clubs of the Americans, and not the huts and shacks and windowless mill barracks in the countryside.

When finally the profitability of capital in Cuba itself demanded the abolition of slavery for the sake of the mechanisation of the mills, the rapid development the island underwent was not the development of Cuban capital, but of American capital in Cuba. Cuba did not develop an agriculture that could feed industrial workers and supply industry and an industry that could in turn supply agriculture and the rest of the domestic market. Instead, increasingly it became a country where practically nothing was manufactured and little even stockpiled. Almost everything it used came on the freighters, the ferries and the flights from the U.S., 150 kilometers away, and almost everything it produced was shipped back to the U.S. on the return trip. It was said that Cuba's manufacturing district was in New York, its warehouse

district in Miami and its telephone exchange connected Havana and the U.S. far more than Havana and anywhere else in Cuba.

Immigrants of the 1920s brought with them revolutionary Marxism. There emerged a Communist Party, part of the Communist International. The party led strikes and other struggles and even insurrections in the 1930s, when it called for organising soviets (revolutionary workers' councils) among the mill workers. But instead of centering on the peasants and the labourers in the fields as allies for the relatively small industrial working class in the mills, cigar factories and ports, the party looked elsewhere. It ended up supporting a U.S.-installed puppet, the former sergeant and now general Fulgencio Batista, in the name of the alliance against fascism. During the period of the international united front against the fascist powers in World War 2, the Communist Party entered Batista's government. When the U.S. had Batista break off that alliance, after the war was won, the party was spent as a revolutionary force. Instead of the party taking responsibility for launching and leading the armed struggle, in Cuba it was the self-described follower of "Jeffersonian democracy," Fidel Castro,<sup>12</sup> who took up arms to topple the Batista government.

Different classes opposed the status quo in Cuba for different reasons. One class that came into sharp conflict with the Batista government and the plantation system he represented were the *colonos*, outgrowers who leased or bought land, hired labourers and supplied cane to the mills. Many were rural capitalists in whose hands the land was used far more productively than the immense stretches of land directly in the hands of the mill owners, for whom monopolising the land was often more important than farming it and who left much of their lands idle. But these *colonos* found themselves tied to all sorts of restrictions imposed by the biggest plantation and mill owners. Cuban capital arose and found itself hemmed in in other spheres of agriculture and industry as well. Castro's father was a Spanish immigrant who became a successful *colono*. Fidel Castro himself was a lawyer - in despotic, rural Cuba there were ten times more lawyers than agronomists - and a leader of the bourgeois opposition party. There was a confluence of different streams of opposition. Under other conditions, if there had been a communist party with the line and ability to lead the struggle against imperialism and the Cuban landlords and compradors tied to it, it could have taken advantage of such bourgeois opposition. Instead, the bourgeois opposition took advantage of the Cuban Communist Party.

The party at first opposed Castro, then, in the last months of the war,



joined him. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, a main CP leader and “Communist” minister in the butcher Batista’s cabinet, went up into the hills to talk to Castro. Today he is considered the “ideologist” of the “new” communist party that Castro built himself in 1965 out of cadres from his own 26th of July Movement and others like Rodriguez from the old CP.

It could be said that sugar made Batista and sugar broke him: the long postwar stagnation and decline of Cuba’s sugar trade set the stage for events in which representatives of certain of Cuba’s propertied classes rose up.... Rose up for what? Against U.S. domination and, at first, against sugar. And then, as we shall see, for sugar: they rebelled against King Sugar, and ended up becoming his ministers.

As revolutions go, it wasn’t much. It was more a case of the Batista government crumbling than being overthrown. Castro’s forces accumulated strength for 25 months in the mountains. They were city men, for whom the relatively inaccessible and thinly populated mountains of the Sierra Maestra was a good place to fight and nothing more. In the early days they depended on the help of the small coffee growers in the Sierras, but aside from that they sought little participation at all by the broad masses, except on an individual basis. The April 1958 attempted general strike in the cities and plains is considered unsuccessful by many historians today, because its results were uneven, while others consider it proof that the labouring people supported Castro. At best it can be said that they were partisan spectators. For the most part of the war, until the last few months, the rebels numbered only a few hundred men and women under arms. Batista’s army was never decisively defeated in battle. The U.S., which helped bomb and napalm the rebels, had hedged its bets by backing Castro too. The CIA funneled him money, although Castro was left to guess where it came from.<sup>13</sup>

As soon as Castro’s forces entered the city of Santiago de Cuba, Batista fled the capital at the other end of the island. Shortly after, the U.S. became the second country (after Venezuela) to recognise Castro’s new government. The American ambassador who had been known as a close friend of Batista was replaced by a new one who “was encouraged to believe that we could establish a working relationship that would be advantageous to both our countries.” Such was the attitude of both Castro and the U.S. at the moment, though within a few days after Castro assumed power, the U.S. was already hedging its bets again by preparing a plan to assassinate Castro if necessary.<sup>14</sup>

Castro had taken pains from the beginning to assure the U.S. he was no radical. “First of all and most of all, we are fighting to do away with dic-

tatorship in Cuba and to establish the foundations of genuine representative government... We have no plans to expropriate or nationalise foreign investments here,” he told a reporter from a popular U.S. magazine in the Sierra.<sup>15</sup> In 1959, speaking in New York where he had hastened after his victory, he declared, “I have said in a clear and definitive fashion that we are not communists.... The doors are open to private investments that contribute to the industrial development of Cuba.... It is absolutely impossible for us to make progress if we do not get along with the United States.”<sup>16</sup>

But when the Castro government took over some of the land of the biggest sugar estates, the U.S. flew into a rage and blockaded the island. The Soviet Union had been a buyer of Cuban sugar under the Batista government; now Castro turned to the USSR to double its purchases. “Castro will have to gravitate to us like an iron filing to a magnet,” Khrushchev is said to have remarked after their first meeting.<sup>17</sup> The U.S. launched a cowardly and inglorious invasion in April 1961. As American ships approached Cuba’s beaches, “I proclaimed the socialist character of the Revolution before the battles at Giron” (the Bay of Pigs), Castro later recounted.<sup>18</sup> More to the point, Castro announced that it was with Soviet arms that Cuba would defend itself. On May 1st, Castro, who until then was always photographed wearing a medallion of the Virgin, announced that he and his regime were “Marxist-Leninist.” This was the first time the Cuban people had heard anything but anti-communism from Castro.

Castro has tried to explain himself in many interviews over the years. He told the American journalist Tad Szulc that he had planned to announce that Cuba was socialist on May 1st, so that the U.S. invasion had only speeded up his plans by a few weeks. He also explained that while he had secretly considered himself a Marxist for a long time, it was not until confronted with a U.S. invasion that he considered socialism “an immediate question” for Cuba. As to why he had kept this a secret, his answer was rather direct, “To achieve certain things, they must be kept concealed, (because) to proclaim what they are would raise difficulties too great to attain them in the end.”<sup>19</sup> Earlier, during the revolutionary war, Castro is supposed to have remarked to others in his circle, like his brother Raul and Che Guevara, who were openly pro-Soviet, “I could proclaim socialism from the Turquino peak, the highest mountain in Cuba, but there is no guarantee whatsoever that I could come down from the mountains afterward.”<sup>20</sup>

If Castro was lying when he said he had considered himself a “Marxist-Leninist” all along, then there is not much reason to believe that he ever

became one. If he was telling the truth, than what can you call a “revolution” that hides its goals and ideals from the people - a fraud?

Szulc, one of Castro’s more or less authorised biographers, speculates that by the end of the rebels’ war, Castro was already beginning to think about how to use the Soviet Union to Cuba’s advantage, although he probably could not have guessed what the result would be when he sought to play off the U.S. and the USSR. Szulc also speculates that Castro must have been aware, then or soon after, of the Soviet-Chinese debate and Mao’s denunciation of Khrushchev for overthrowing socialism in the USSR and opposing revolution everywhere else. By 1960, the USSR had attempted to sabotage China’s economy in an effort to encourage pro-Soviet forces in China; the following year, the USSR was to betray the anti-colonial struggle in the Congo led by Patrice Lumumba. Castro must have known who he was dealing with. Did he calculate that these circumstances would increase the price the USSR would be willing to pay to bask in the reflected light of Cuba’s revolutionary prestige?

In hindsight, one can certainly ask what would have happened if the Soviets had not been able to use the prestige of the Cuban revolution in their battle against the political and ideological line represented by Mao Zedong, a battle whose objectives included turning the world’s revolutionary struggles into capital for Soviet social-imperialism. Cuba represented a key Soviet breakthrough into the oppressed countries, especially in the Western hemisphere, until then run exclusively by the Western imperialists. Khrushchev considered the capture of Cuba his greatest success.

Che Guevara, often thought to represent the radical wing of the Cuban revolution, is said to have written a letter to a friend in 1957, while fighting in the Sierras, contrasting his views to those of Castro: “I belong, because of my ideological background, to that group which believes that the solution to the world’s problems lies behind the Iron Curtain, and I understand this movement [Castro’s 26th of July Movement] as one of the many provoked by the desire of the bourgeoisie to free itself from the economic chains of imperialism. I shall always consider Fidel as an authentic left-wing bourgeois leader.”<sup>21</sup> Later, in his farewell letter to Castro before leaving for Bolivia, where his attempts to raise a secret army to wage war on the U.S. in Latin America were cut short by his murder at the behest of the CIA, Guevara wrote Castro, “[M]y only shortcoming of some gravity was not to have trusted in you more from the first moments in the Sierra Maestra and not to have understood with sufficient celerity your qualities as a leader and

as a revolutionary.”<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps, however, Guevara was right about Castro that first time. At any rate the essence of Guevara’s self-criticism is that he did not at first understand to which he and Castro would ultimately prove to be in agreement. Guevara was always a defender of the revisionist USSR, and would remain a rabid opponent of revolutionary China until his death.

It is not surprising that the Cuban masses did not share U.S. imperialism’s horror at Castro’s announced conversion to “Marxism-Leninism.” But for Castro and Guevara, the term had little meaning apart from opposition to the U.S. For them, Marxism had little to do with Marx’s definition of the ideology that can guide the revolutionary proletariat to abolish all classes and class distinctions, and the relations of production on which they rest and the social relations and ideas to which they give rise,<sup>23</sup> but rather with seeking refuge from U.S. imperialism in the bosom of Soviet imperialism. That made it unnecessary, in their eyes, to transform Cuba’s economic relations, and in reality made such a transformation impossible. The military strategy of the Cuban revolution, which they later tried to pawn off on others in opposition to Mao’s strategy of protracted people’s war, is far beyond the scope of this article and requires study and refutation in its own right.<sup>24</sup> The point here, in terms of political economy, is that how political power was fought for is linked to what Castro and his circle were seeking to accomplish and what they were actually in a position to do once power was in their hands. Chinese revolutionaries were said to have remarked that the Cubans had found a purse lying in the street and were advising others to count on the same good luck. The problem, of course, is that Castro and his followers could only spend that purse by entering into certain social relations, whose laws existed independently of whatever subjective ideas those men and women may have had. Our thesis is not simply Castro was a master of deceit. Both before and after he claimed to be a communist, there was a consistent thread to his political career: he sought to lighten the burden imposed on Cuba by the U.S., and to obtain a certain kind of development for Cuba. At first he hoped to do this with the U.S.’s help. This vain and contradictory hope was founded on an outlook that could not see any other practical way to do it. Later, when this proved impossible, he accepted the bridle Khrushchev offered (Khrushchev is said to have called Castro “a young horse that hasn’t been broken”).<sup>25</sup>

For thirty years Castro has combined pompous self-aggrandisement with subservience to imperialism. In a sense, when Castro proclaimed his “Marxism-

Leninism,” it was not Castro who was speaking, but sugar: in order to be more than stout grass, sugar needs to be sold, and the USSR was willing to buy it. That is how “socialism” came to Cuba. King Sugar put on fatigues, grew a beard and sprouted a cigar. Castro may have wanted a break with the sugar system as imposed by the U.S., but he would not and could not break with the relations of production that gave sugar its ineluctable power.

### 3 The Cuba Castro Inherited

On the eve of Castro’s revolution, in 1959, it was common wisdom that “without sugar, the country would cease to exist.” Well over a third of total production - 36% of the GNP, to be precise, was for export, and sugar accounted for 84% of exports.<sup>26</sup> These figures do not fully reveal their significance unless it is understood that it was precisely in production for export that capital was most concentrated. The sugar industry almost tripled its consumption of fertiliser in the five years before the revolution and came to represent an enormous percentage of the total machinery<sup>27</sup>, while the roots and tubers and other foods that made up the basic diet of the masses continued to be coaxed out of the ground by hand.

Cuba’s rural landscape was dominated by 161 mills. Only 36 were directly owned by U.S. companies,<sup>28</sup> but the sugar trade itself - like almost all Cuban trade - was dominated by American capital. Just over half of the cultivated land was planted in sugar, and much of the land was uncultivated, given to enormous (and relatively unproductive) cattle ranches. Twenty-eight families, enterprises and corporations controlled over 83% of the land in cane, and 22.7% of the total land.<sup>29</sup> Alongside the giant stretches of land owned outright by the mill companies, there were usually medium-sized estates owned or operated by the *colonos*.

The key problem in growing sugar profitably is that vast amounts of labour must be kept available for a harvest that only lasts a few months. About 100,000 men worked most of the year around in the mills themselves; of the masses in the countryside these were among the best off. Another 400,000 men worked two to four months a year cutting and loading the cane. For the most part they were black or “mulatto.”<sup>30</sup> In 1955 the average labourer in the cane fields worked 64 days at \$1 a day, though the cost of most of what they might have bought in a store was not much less than in the U.S. at that time.

How did this system manage to continue to exist, since the landowners paid these men less than the cost of their labour power (the cost of keeping them able to work and of raising a new generation of labourers)? Unlike slave times, they could not be so easily replaced, although there was an element of that in the continued influx of labourers from elsewhere in the Caribbean. But the system reproduced itself because what these men and their families lived on was only in part paid for by their wages. Just as the slave owners had granted the slaves tiny plots to cultivate for themselves, so as to reduce the cost of feeding them (and to hinder the slaves from running away or burning down the plantation), so also a great many of those who worked for wages part of the year in sugar and other seasonal harvests were tied to small peasant farming, or at least a few rows (*conucos*) of manioc (cassava), sweet potatoes, *taro* or other tubers cultivated in tiny, narrow strips in the spaces between fields or along roadways. Such “privileges” entailed relations of personal obligation to the landowners.

These men led a contradictory existence as rural semi-proletarians rather than wage slaves proper, at least for the most part.

It is reported that the typical field labourer in Camaguey, who was considered a wage labourer and not a peasant in these statistics although his cash income amounted to only \$118/year, lived off *guarapo* (sugar cane juice) and sweet potatoes for nine or ten months a year.<sup>31</sup> A survey carried out in Cuba in 1966, done by a European researcher seeking to make up for the lack of reliable pre-revolution statistics, finds that among the men sampled 38% had reported themselves as “agricultural proletarians” in 1957 owned or had use of a plot of land at the time,<sup>32</sup> a figure which probably does not include *conucos*. These men and their families, the women and children who usually worked these plots without being counted as labourers in anybody’s statistics, were both prisoners of the land and denied it, held in bondage by the *latifundia* (plantations) which could neither absorb them fully nor permit them enough land to become independent and fully productive. The profitability of the capitalist mode of production which employed these men as wage labour depended on the persistence of the pre-capitalist mode of production.

At that time there were also almost 300,000 peasant families without income from wages, including small landowners, renters, sharecroppers and squatters. At least 175,000 of them were considered minifundistas, with a maximum of 67 hectares and an average of 15 hectares of land; this average itself hides great inequalities, since some had enough land to raise a family

while most had less.<sup>33</sup> It was these peasants who produced most of the food that the rest of the population lived on; their productive abilities, too, were shackled by the latifundia which monopolised land and other resources and by the political power of the latifundistas.

Oriente province, Castro's birthplace in eastern Cuba, was a stronghold of the rural bourgeoisie, especially on the plains. In its Sierra Maestra mountains where Castro's army formed and grew, most people worked in coffee, typically as sharecroppers who would have to turn over up to 40% of their crop to the landowners, or as squatters of a small piece of land carved out of the mountainside from which they could be expelled at any time. The long lifecycle of coffee plants (which take up to five years to mature and last for about 40 years) meant that an expulsion, for a sharecropper, a squatter or a peasant who paid money rent to a landowners, would be a catastrophe, and this fact in turn greatly increased the authority of the landowners. Coffee is very labour-intensive. But often the work of the husband and his wife and children would be sufficient for most of the year; the grown sons would return only for the few months of the coffee harvest before going back down into the plains to harvest sugar or other crops. Often their wages were the family's only hope to hold back the crushing debts imposed by the landowners for land or goods (since the landowners controlled commerce as well), although in some cases they could hope to use the son's wage to acquire land.<sup>34</sup> In tobacco, prevalent in the hills at the other end of the island, small and medium farmers - a mixture of owners, leaseholders and sharecroppers - usually of old Spanish and not slave descent, relied upon the unpaid labour of their families much of the year and hired labour for harvesting and processing the leaves.<sup>35</sup>

Chicken and rice, said to be Cuba's national dish, was beyond the reach of most people in the countryside. Instead they ate *sopa de gallo* - "rooster soup" - which is really just unrefined sugar and hot water. According to the 1953 Cuba census, two-thirds of the rural population lived in mud-thatched dirt-floor shacks, about 85% had no running water or electricity, over half lacked even a latrine (outhouse) and over 90% had no baths or showers. Cuba's annual per-capita beef production was 32 kilogrammes per person, but only 11% of all rural families regularly drank milk and only 4% regularly ate beef.<sup>36</sup>

In the cities especially, nearly everything was imported from the U.S., except beer, soft drinks and some food. The nearly 400,000 people employed in manufacturing, like their brothers and sisters in the fields, were usually

working for the foreign market, making cigars, clothing, shoes, wood and cork products, etc., as well as food processing for domestic consumption (which was often controlled by imperialist companies). A quarter of a million people worked in commerce; twice that many were employed in the bloated service sector.<sup>37</sup> This begins to give a picture of the parasitic urban economy where the masses laboured to feed, clothe and entertain the rich and intermediate classes who for the most part ultimately depended on agriculture, and the North Americans and Europeans who came in their hundreds of thousands, attracted by the degradation in which Cuba's deformed economy obliged its people to seek employment.

## **4 Agrarian Revolution: The Road Not Taken**

The slaves who rebelled and ran into the mountains and the peasants who fought Spain and America always burned the cane fields. They were right. They were right not only because they were right to rebel and burning the cane fields disrupted the enemy economically and militarily, but also they were right from the point of view of Marxist political economy. Castro burned some cane fields too, during the war. Afterwards, for the first few years of the 1960s, the revolutionary government made efforts to cut the country's sugar dependency and industrialise, through the strategy of import substitution (manufacturing some previously imported consumer items, with the idea that this would allow Cuba to accumulate the capital and technical capacity to make its own producer goods later). But it seemed that Cuba could not manufacture these items as cheaply as the imperialists could sell them. Rather quickly, Castro set out to replant and expand the cane fields.<sup>38</sup> That was the end of the revolution's brief first period.

The initial agrarian policy adopted by the Castro government in 1959 was to limit latifundia to a maximum of 400 hectares, while distributing some of the state land over this size to smaller peasants. This step most favoured the rich peasants and the rural bourgeoisie, although some sharecroppers and squatters did obtain titles to the land they farmed and some small peasants got additional land, especially in tobacco. After 1963, when the decision was made to return to sugar, a limit of 67 hectares was imposed, not in order to distribute land further to smaller peasants, but rather, in effect, to give it to the latifundia which were now considered state farms. Later, after 1968, in order to concentrate still more economic and human resources on sugar, sugar



estate workers were forbidden to maintain their family plots. Eventually 80% of the land was nationalised.

The 1966 survey previously referred to makes it clear that Cuba's "agrarian reform" had brought little change in the countryside. About four out of five of those who had lived off small plots of land (without depending on substantial income from wages) before Castro took power still did so, with most of the rest becoming wage workers on state farms; only one out of 10 of those who had lived mainly on wages and one out of six of those who had lived off both wages and their own land had acquired enough land to live on and for the most part they too were added to the labour force on the state farms.<sup>39</sup> In other words, those who had the most property got some more, while those who had the least lost it.

Why wasn't the land divided up among all those enslaved by the latifundia system? Castro's own explanation is revealing.

"I found upon the victory of the Revolution that the idea of land division still had a lot of currency. But I already understood by then that if you take, for example, a sugar plantation of 2,500 acres... and you divide it into 200 portions of 12.5 acres each, what inevitably happens is that right away the new owners will cut the production of sugar cane in half in each plot, and they will begin to raise for their own consumption a whole series of crops for which in many cases the soil will not be adequate."<sup>40</sup>

In other words, the decision to continue basing Cuba's economy on sugar cane and the decision not to divide up the land went together in the minds of Castro and his followers, as well as objectively. The land wasn't divided up because that would have been bad for sugar; sugar cane had to be grown because that was the crop most suitable for large, bureaucratically-run state farms. The all-round development of Cuba's economy and the feeding of Cuba's people had nothing to do with it.

There was also no question of carrying out mass line, that is, of uniting with and giving leadership to the advanced desires of the exploited masses, which were much more in accord with what Cuba really needed for its liberation than Castro's ideas. The French agronomist Rene Dumont, called to Cuba as an advisor to Castro in 1960, gives this account of a conversation with Castro while accompanying him on a tour of Cuba's countryside during the period when the question of what to do with the latifundia was under discussion within the ranks of the new regime: "My advice was asked for, but

not that of the workers and peasants who were to work on these enterprises. I was even forbidden to discuss it with them. ‘These people are illiterate and their ideas are usually pretty conservative,’ I was told. ‘It’s our job to lead them.’<sup>41</sup>

This “leadership” consisted in Castro and his circle simply seizing the latifundia for themselves, with the pretext that the extent of wage labour in the countryside allowed Cuba to skip the stage of agrarian revolution and go directly to “socialism” by turning the latifundia into state-run enterprises. They argued that the latifundia had to be kept intact and even expanded because large-scale production was the most cost-effective way to produce sugar, and sugar the most cost-effective thing to produce.

Cuba is considered by capitalist and revisionist economists alike to enjoy a “comparative advantage” in sugar, since the results (expressed in money) of a given amount of capital applied to a given amount of land there are higher for sugar than for example, rice, or for any other application of capital immediately available to Cuba. This theory, first formulated by Ricardo in the nineteenth century, and later declared “socialist” by the Soviet revisionists to justify their concept of “the international division of labour,” holds that a country should concentrate on producing whatever it produces most cheaply and import everything else, no matter if this results in low profitability or even losses, which apparently was the case for most Cuban state farms by the mid-1980s.<sup>42</sup>

This is an expression of the capitalist logic of profitability, rather than the revolutionary proletariat’s necessity to transform all of society and the world, and goes completely against the theory and practice of constructing genuine socialist economies, first under Lenin and Stalin in the USSR and especially Mao’s path of building a self-reliant socialist economy. The labouring people have every interest - in fact far more than the exploiters - in decreasing the socially necessary labour time involved in production, and this can be furthered by mechanisation and technology as well as strict cost accounting expressed in money. But still, this must serve - and be subordinated to - the proletariat’s mission to “emancipate itself and all of mankind.”

Further, this logic of profitability works in a particular way in the oppressed nations, those “subordinate formations in the production relations of imperialism” whose economic structure “is shaped mainly by forces external to them: what is produced, exported and imported, financed, etc., reflects first and foremost their subordination, and not principally the internal requirements and interrelations of different sectors. They answer to

another's 'heartbeat'<sup>43</sup>

Turning the sugar estates into state enterprises was comprador logic. Instead of revolutionising the relations of production, both internally (in terms of production relations in Cuba) and externally (in terms of Cuba's relationship to the world imperialist system), this measure sought to preserve them (and to allow their evolution to some extent).

From the point of view of prices and commodities, it may be most advantageous to grow sugar in Cuba, but from the point of view of the country's liberation, economic development had to be based on all-around development of agriculture, even if, for instance, it might initially be less cost-efficient to produce rice in Cuba than to import it, as Castro insisted in a speech justifying the ripping up of rice fields to expand sugar production and the tearing up of a Chinese aid agreement meant to help Cuba become self-sufficient in rice.<sup>44</sup>

First of all, the very existence of the latifundia and the predominance of sugar in agriculture are only possible as long as Cuba is subordinated to the world market. Cuba's dominant relations of production taken internally, that is, those embodied in large-scale modern sugar production, were called into existence by and dependent on Cuba's production relations taken externally. This subordination of Cuba to the world market is a production relationship, and without breaking it, there could be no freeing of the productive forces overall in Cuba, especially the productive force represented by the labouring people themselves whose ability to transform Cuba and often even to work at all was crippled by the existing international organisation of production.

The more capitalism developed in sugar, the more the rest of the economy became extroverted, that is, the more its various sectors tended to become linked with foreign capital instead of each other. The more land, labour and other resources were concentrated in sugar, the more they were denied to other sectors of Cuba's economy, especially the growing of food for domestic consumption, and the more, therefore, the country had to import, in a deepening vicious cycle. The very inputs the sugar industry depended on - chemicals, machinery, transport goods, etc. - were themselves imported. In contrast to the imperialist countries, where capitalism arose on the basis of a unified national market and the articulated development of agriculture and industry, the surge of capitalism in Cuba tended to disarticulate its economy. This disarticulation both arose from and deepened Cuba's dependency, and also constituted a production relation and a fetter on Cuba's working people.

Secondly, imperialist investment did accelerate the development of cap-

italism in sugar, but its effect overall was contradictory. The development of the sugar cane industry, and to a lesser degree the tobacco industry, had brought a high degree of capitalism in some aspects (including widespread wage slavery) to Cuba, making it among the most advanced in Latin America in 1959 in terms of per capita production measured in money.<sup>45</sup> But at the same times its profitability rested on preserving many backward remainders of slavery and semi-feudalism. As Lenin pointed out in his study of the development of capitalism in agriculture, the biggest estates are often not the most advanced in terms of capital-intensive farming and efficiency.<sup>46</sup> A survey of the amount of land under cultivation on various size farms in Cuba before Castro's revolution illustrates an aspect of this, since in general, the bigger the farm, the smaller the percentage of its area under cultivation,<sup>47</sup> even though very often the smaller farms were on hillsides and the biggest on plains. This had to do with the fact that the latifundia, in order to be profitable, had to monopolise the land, denying the peasants land not only so that it would remain in the hands of the latifundistas but also so that the peasants would be forced to work for the latifundistas, even though the latifundista might lack the capital to use the land for more than pasturage at the moment. While the big sugar latifundia were capitalistic in some important aspects they were not the most advanced sectors of Cuban agriculture, even in capitalist terms, and they used all their economic and political power to maintain the system of backward, small-scale *minifundia* and *conucos* and to subordinate all other production. In sum, it was true, as Castro and his apologists claim, that capitalisation of sugar production was leading to the proletarianisation of the rural population and the development of capitalism. But this is only one side of the question. The kind of capitalism it represented was capitalist development bound up with the preservation of more backward modes of exploitation, subordinated to foreign capital, and therefore impeding the overall and harmonious development of the productive forces. The production relations embodied in the predominance of sugar cane - dependency, disarticulation and continued backwardness - constituted chains on Cuba's labouring people that could not be broken except by uprooting sugar. Sugar had become a target of both the democratic and national aspects of the revolution. But for Castro and his followers, relying on sugar and relying on the existing production relations were two sides of the same coin, the coin with which imperialism brought them.

As the Castro quotes eloquently show, the choice that presented itself was: grow sugar cane or divide the land. From the point of view of Cuba's

liberation, the sector of the economy where it seemed that the level of the productive forces was most advanced - sugar cane - was the most harmful to the all-around independent development of the island's economy and actually held back the country's potential economic development. From the same point of view, the most backward sector of the productive forces - the small peasant economy - presented some vital potential economic advantages, since it comprehended both export crops less dependent on imperialist capital and, most importantly, the means to feed the people and the only basis for developing an independent economy once all the existing production relations were shattered.

The food crops typical of Cuba, the roots and tubers and rice and beans, are far more labour-intensive and require fewer capital inputs than sugar cane. At the present level of the development of the productive forces in Cuba (or most places in the world) some of these crops are not so readily mechanised as others like sugar which are more amenable to large-scale, highly centralised and bureaucratically-run enterprises. Such crops can only be successfully grown by relying on the knowledge and initiative of those who work in them. This does not mean permanently enshrining individual ownership in agriculture, nor preclude achieving various levels of collectivisation at a rapid pace and a similarly rapid advance in the level of the productive forces.

Breaking up the latifundia, burning the cane fields (and thus clearing and preparing the land for new crops) and enabling many people engaged as agricultural workers to return to the small-scale farming and the land from which they had not been definitively separated would, it is true, have required going through a stage of small-scale production and opened the way for a certain capitalist development in agriculture. But this destruction of the old system would have also opened still wider the door to socialism, as such measures did in China, because it would have provided the economic and political basis for collectivisation and the socialist development of the country.<sup>48</sup>

The key question is on whom to rely. In China, where the degree of wage-labour in the countryside was far lower than in Cuba, it was possible to rely on the most exploited in the countryside, the poor and landless peasants, to destroy the old production relations, emancipate the productive forces (especially themselves) and continue to revolutionise the relations of production throughout the course of the national-democratic and socialist revolutions.

While a large number of forces in the Cuban countryside held back by the

latifundia must be considered rich peasants and capitalist farmers who would have resisted a future transition to socialism to various degrees, there were far greater numbers of poor and landless peasants as well as proletarians whose interest lay in the most thorough-going revolution. These people were not aroused, organised and relied upon, neither in the revolutionary war nor in the country's economic construction. Instead, Cuba has relied upon imported and import-dependent machinery and other imports, Soviet-bloc agronomists and economists and the Cuban revisionists they've trained, and generally acted as though large-scale production, a high level of mechanisation and state ownership were in themselves revolutionary.

In order to justify the path they have taken, the ideologues of the Cuban revolution often stress the material differences between Cuba and Mao Ze-dong's China. The differences are certainly great and important, but the similarities are even more so. While Cuba did not have the same history of feudalism as China, still the very organisation of capitalism in Cuba was to some extent based on the persistence of relations that had arisen through pre-capitalist modes of production. Second, Mao's point that the growth of capitalism in China was not the development of Chinese capital but of foreign capital in China<sup>49</sup> is just as true of Cuba, even if this capitalism was more developed than in China. Mao said of China, "The landlord class and the comprador class are appendages of the international bourgeoisie, depending on imperialism for their survival and growth."<sup>50</sup> In Cuba, where the natural (locally self-sufficient) economy was weaker than in China and commodity production (production for sale) far greater, the latifundistas and the big bourgeoisie in industry as well, whether Cuban or foreign-owned, were even more dependent on the constant transformation of capital into commodities (sugar) and of commodities into capital (wages and physical inputs) through the workings of the international circuits of capital. In this sense, the capitalistically-developed sugar sector is the point through which Cuba's economy is most tied to imperialism, an "appendage of the international bourgeoisie" and not a factor for independent economic development. Furthermore, the level of the productive forces in these areas of agriculture which a revolutionary government would consider most important - the growing of food-crops - was very low and needed to be given first priority, at the expense of dismantling some of the things that seemed to make Cuba "advanced" and reallocating the resources.

The Cuban experience of trying to skip the agrarian revolution shows the correctness and basic applicability of Mao's line of new democratic revolution,

even in countries far more developed than China. Generally speaking, in the oppressed countries the revolution will take the form of protracted people's war, itself linked to carrying out the agrarian revolution and building up revolutionary base areas where the peasants exercise revolutionary political power under the leadership of the proletarian party.

In Cuba, although Castro's armed struggle took place in the countryside, where the overwhelming majority of the population lived, the Sierra Maestra mountains were a theatre in which urban actors played their own drama with a rather secondary local supporting cast. The labouring people of the plains, and the cities as well, could at best be considered extras in Castro's script - and without a protracted people's war led by the proletariat in the countryside, what was there for them to do? Even though one could consider Castro's forces "lucky" in their sudden and relatively cheap victory over Batista's government, the situation presented certain disadvantages from the point of view of carrying out any real revolutionary economic, social and political transformation of the country: the vast majority of the oppressed had not been aroused, armed, organised and politically and ideologically trained. Of course, for Castro's forces, this method of seizing power was entirely appropriate for what they were to do with power after it was seized.

For Mao, the pivotal point of the national-democratic revolution was agrarian revolution guided by the policy of "land to the tiller." The Cubans have always touted their policy of nationalising the latifundia as more revolutionary than the Chinese policy of distributing the land, because, the Cubans claimed, they were thus able to wipe out most private ownership at one blow, whereas even several decades after the revolution in Mao's china ownership in agriculture had not yet advanced beyond the level of ownership by peasants' collectives, in terms of the long-term goals of gradual transition to state ownership. But how else, except by all the most exploited and oppressed seizing the fields that they slaved in, could they help free themselves and help free the country from semi-feudal and imperialist-dependent production relations and the other reactionary relations that arose on that basis? How else could the political and economic conditions for socialism emerge?

In China, the seizure and distribution of the land took place first in stages and sometimes in a modified form, in the red base areas formed on the basis of the peasants' armed political power under Communist Party leadership. After state power was taken nationwide, following Mao's line, a massive peasant storm was unleashed in the countryside and peasants' committees distributed land individually and in equal shares to every peasant

soul, women and children included, and including the landless peasants and rural wage labourers as well as the small peasants. This was done in order to most thoroughly free the productive forces from the shackles of the landlords and to hit all feudal survivals in the superstructure, including patriarchal rule, the domination of the family by the male “head of household”<sup>51</sup> (which was carefully preserved in those cases where land was distributed in Cuba).

Thus in China, agrarian revolution was indispensable for achieving both the objective and subjective conditions for socialism. Because the Chinese peasants had established their mastery in the countryside, under the leadership of the proletarian party, they could embark upon a rapid though step-by-step process of raising their level of collective labour and collective ownership, even before a very high rate of mechanisation was achieved. As Mao emphasized, such policies allowed the proletariat to form a close alliance with the peasantry, rely most especially on the poor peasants, and lead them in the struggle against the representatives of the old society both *before and after* the proletariat seized power. Mao’s concept of New Democracy was the method in theory and practice by which backward China was able to prepare the conditions for her advanced socialist revolution.

What about the farmland Cuba didn’t nationalise and the agricultural co-operatives it did form? For many peasants, the co-ops introduced by the Cuban government were simply a method by which their land was taken from them, since they had little say in the matter when it was absorbed by the state farms, and some of this land went to cane sugar. Aside from this, for almost two decades there was little attempt to lead private landholders through collectivisation towards higher levels of ownership (which would have been impossible anyway, without relying on those who had been the most exploited in the countryside rather than those who often had a bit more property). Instead, there was a certain amount of the polarisation typical of capitalist development in agriculture with private farmers tending to become fewer and richer while others among them were turned into wage slaves. The increase in the number of co-ops in the last decade cannot be said to represent an advance in terms of production relations, since their organisation and goals as economic units are not meant to create “socialist farmers,” as they used to say in China, but small-scale capitalism which enters into varying degrees of harmony and conflict with the interests of Cuba’s bureaucrat-comprador state capitalists.

In the last decade family farming and co-ops have persisted and in fact have played an increasingly important role in Cuban agriculture. They are



especially vital in producing coffee, which does not, especially in Cuba, lend itself to capital-intensive methods. They dominate the growing of tobacco, which could not be profitably cultivated if private ownership did not compel the unpaid labour of family members, especially wives.<sup>52</sup> There are also a number of private peasants involved in raising food crops and livestock (such as pigs). Up until the mid-1970s, the Cuban government kept prices paid to private-sector farmers for their crops and rent paid to them for lands taken over by the sugar estates quite low, in order to force these family members to work on the big latifundia, just as before Castro's revolution.<sup>53</sup>

These policies were modified as mechanisation of sugar somewhat decreased the need for such labour, but in 1986, faced with a decreased availability of farm inputs due to a hard currency crisis, the Cuban government launched yet another "revolutionary offensive" that led to the abolition of the popular private markets where private-sector farmers received higher than government-set prices for their produce and other foodstuffs. The purpose, of course, was to re-divert resources to sugar, at the expense of the development of food crop farming. This is an example of local capitalism developing hemmed in and subordinated by foreign capital via that capital's intermediary, the state-owned sugar plantations. It has been argued by people determined to see something good in Castro that if nothing else, at least Cuba has eliminated the remnants of feudalism. But even this judgement would be one-sided. In his analysis of the different paths of the development of capitalism in agriculture, Lenin described what he called the Prussian road, in which capitalism develops in agriculture on the basis of maintaining the old estates and converting the landowners into rural capitalists, which encumbers the most thorough economic development of agriculture.<sup>54</sup> Cuba's agriculture has developed, as we shall see, in the sense of becoming more mechanised, but both its pace and qualitative development has been stunted compared to what a New Democratic revolution leading to genuine socialist revolution would have made possible.

There is a certain Prussian odor of feudal remnants in the air above Cuba's state farms where government administrators now sit in the chairs once occupied by landowners, and where there has been little change in the other social relations inherited from slavery and semi-feudalism (including the relations between white and black, between men and women, and between the various classes). The appropriation of the latifundia and the mills by Castro's government have not brought much more change in these relations than occurred in the Dominican Republic when the government also took

over many of the sugar cane latifundia and most of the mills.

In Castro's Cuba most of the rural labouring population has been socialised in the sense that capitalism socialises the masses by separating them from their land and transforming them into wage slaves, but the ownership of the means of production has only been nationalised (taken over by the government) and not socialised (taken over by society as a whole). The land, mills, and everything else remain in hands hostile to the masses' interests, a government that expropriates the surplus Cuba's labouring people produce so as to hand it over to Cuba's real owners: imperialist capital. There has been no revolution in the relations of ownership in these terms. The development of the productive forces in Cuba presents advantages, as well as disadvantages, for revolution there, but in itself does not mean emancipation of the labourers, any more than had been the case when the slaves began to be transformed into wage slaves by the surging of capitalism in Cuban sugar mills at the end of the nineteenth century, nor does it bring the emancipation of the country any closer.

## Part II

### 5 The Evolution of Neocolonial Planning

In 1963 Castro went to the USSR to discuss stepped-up trade; shortly after, Cuba's plans to cut back on sugar production turned to plans to increase it.

For Che Guevara, who was in charge of Cuba's economy, the words "socialism" and industrialisation were equivalent: they meant the development of the productive forces. The goal was to accumulate surplus as bountifully and quickly as possible - which meant growing sugar. As he explained,

"The entire economic history of Cuba has demonstrated that no other agricultural activity would give such returns as those yielded by the cultivation of sugar cane. At the onset of the Revolution, many of us were not aware of this basic economic fact, because a fetishistic idea connected sugar with our dependence on imperialism and with the misery in the rural areas, without analysing the real causes, the relation to the unequal balance of trade."<sup>55</sup>

In other words, he imagined that the decisive feature of Cuba's dependency was external - to whom and for how much its sugar was sold, rather than seeing dependency as inherent in the organisation of capital in Cuba itself. It amounted to believing that "socialism" means doing a better job of running the same old plantation.

Through the mid-1960s until 1970 the Cuban government attempted to run the economy by direct command from top government officials and to mobilise all possible resources to drastically increase sugar production, with the idea that the surplus could then be used to buy industrialisation. Because of official efforts to stir up popular enthusiasm to achieve bourgeois goals during this period, and because of Guevara's emphasis on "spiritual" rather than material rewards for labour, some scholarly critics of Cuba have erroneously labelled this Cuba's "Sino-Guevarist" or "Maoist-Guevarist" period, a confusion which, in turn, has been adopted by leading pro-Cuban scholars as well.<sup>56</sup> A more correct understanding was put forward by a writer who pointed out that the Cuban leadership was "coining slogans of the Chinese type while staking everything on development of the Russian type."<sup>57</sup> What he meant was that the Cuban government was trying to use a "Chinese" method - or a caricature of one, since the Chinese revolutionary policy of relying on the masses was not simply a matter of stirring emotions but rather based on their political consciousness and all-around initiative in politics and economics, and did not exclude paying people according to work - for "Russian" goals, i.e., for the purpose of accumulating surplus in the most profitable sectors of the economy rather than building up the economy in an all-around way, based on balanced and simultaneous development of agriculture, light industry and heavy industry.

The Cuban government had no choice but to switch to "spiritual" rather than material incentives during this period because the economy was a disaster and remained so for well over a decade. This didn't mean that its policies became revolutionary, for as Mao himself remarked about similar developments in Poland in the 1950s, "Overemphasis on material incentives always seems to lead to the opposite. Writing lots of cheques naturally keeps the upper strata happy, but when the broad masses of workers and peasants want to cash in and find they cannot, the pressure to go 'spiritual' is no surprise."<sup>58</sup>

From the mid-1960s on, Castro's government subordinated everything to the goal of obtaining 10 million tons of sugar in the 1969-1970 harvest. The sugar was sold through advance contracts but the harvest was a failure and

the sacrifice of the rest of the economy left the island in a shambles. In the 1970s Cuba began using the methods of economic calculus introduced during the 1965 Liberman reforms in the Soviet Union. This method formulates economic plans by weighing possible profit and loss as determined by complex economic calculations - simulating a free market mathematically, and applying capitalist criteria on every level, while maintaining state ownership over most of the means of production. In fact, these techniques associated with Kosygin in the Soviet Union were not fully implemented there until the advent of Gorbachev; in this sense, Cuba can be considered a pioneer in some of the economic policies brought in with *perestroika*.

The 1975 First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba institutionalised the logic that had implicitly set the country's general orientation since the revolution, with the change that henceforth it was to be applied nakedly, thoroughly, systematically and from top to bottom, by computers instead of guesswork.

"The peso should really control all economic activity," the Congress resolved.<sup>59</sup> This is tantamount to declaring the accumulation of capital as the *purpose* of Cuba's economy. However, the consequences of such economic policies for Cuba were different than for the USSR. The USSR was an imperialist superpower, while Cuba, upon joining Comecon (the Soviet bloc common market) in 1972, was consigned to the role of sugar producer in the Soviet-led division of labour - the same position it once was assigned in the U.S.-led Western bloc.

The SDPE (System of Economic Management and Planning) enthroned at the Cuban Communist Party's First Congress in 1975 set workers' wages according to bonuses (up to 30% of base rate) for meeting or surpassing production norms and allowed for awards to administrative and technical personnel of up to the equivalent of an extra month's salary per year. In 1980, the system of "free or direct labour contracting" gave management the right to hire and fire with few restrictions. In the mid-1980s, with the introduction of "permanent productivity brigades," the system was further refined so that workers were paid according to the profitability of their particular small-scale work unit.

Then in 1986, in the wake of the collapse of sugar and oil prices, the Cuban Communist Party's Third Congress called for a "return to Guevarism" and renewed emphasis on "spiritual incentives." Guevara's writings and slogans in praise of "spiritual incentives" were hauled out of the storerooms where they had mouldered since the early 1970s, and Castro, who had barely men-

tioned Guevara for a decade and a half, began to crank out references to Guevara at a furious rate. The threat that Gorbachev's perestroika might mean even further belt-tightening in Cuba sent Guevara's stock soaring still higher on Castro's rhetorical market and fueled a "rectification" campaign that is still continuing. Its basic content is austerity. Castro has had no trouble in factoring this "Guevarism" into the Soviet-installed "economic calculus" that replaced Guevara's more impetuous style of management, because they share the same underlying orientation.

Today it has become undeniable that Cuba's economic prospects are as bleak as those of the rest of Latin America. But the theory of "comparative advantage" Guevara espoused is still brought out to claim that at least Cuba has used sugar cane to buy some development. To refute this claim, it must be shown that *this development itself has been a driving factor in Cuba's current disaster*, or, in other words, that what Cuba has "bought" with its sugar sales money has not been socialism, but increasing dependency.

## 6 The Industrialisation of Dependency

What has been accomplished in the thirty years of Cuba's post-revolutionary development and the decade and a half since the adoption of the SDPE?

The most dramatic change has been the mechanisation of loading sugar and much of the process of cutting it, a feat unmatched anywhere else in the world. If this had not been accomplished, it would not have been possible to abolish the tiny plots on which families sustained themselves during the "dead season" between harvests.

But this degree of industrialisation of sugar has not freed Cuba from sugar monoculture. Sugar workers and their families represent one-sixth of the total population. Sugar also takes up one-third of the country's industrial means of production. It represents 82% of the country's exports,<sup>60</sup> little changed as a percentage since the 1920s.<sup>61</sup> The only real difference from the pre-Castro situation is that now 69% of the sugar is exported to the USSR and its bloc instead of to the U.S.<sup>62</sup>

Although the percentage of cultivated land planted to cane has risen to 75%, the total amount of land actually under cultivation has declined.<sup>63</sup> Canefields considered too isolated or hilly to be profitably farmed by machine are now simply abandoned, and for that reason, the government has not attempted to boost sugar production from its recent average level of

about eight million tons, about the same as in Batista's time. Aside from a few export crops like citrus fruits (which have replaced tobacco as Cuba's second most important export), food crop production has shrunk. This is not because more food can't be grown or because it is not needed, but because it cannot be produced profitably according to imperialist criteria. Non-sugar agriculture sank from 35% of total farm production in 1962 (an historic high point) to 29% in 1976, livestock declined from 34% to 31%, while sugar production rose accordingly.<sup>64</sup> Although there was some investment in rice, with production shifting from labour-intensive to capital-intensive methods (i.e., from the "Chinese" model to the "American" model), the amount of this most basic staple of the Cuban diet allotted each individual under rationing was cut in the 1970s and held down in the 1980s because demand continued to far outstrip domestic production and imports in general had to be squeezed somewhere.<sup>65</sup> Production of yucca, malanga and beans dropped precipitously; milk production declined; production of potatoes, tomatoes and pork rose somewhat faster than population growth. Only in eggs (which are especially amenable to high-tech capital-intensive production) has there been big progress.<sup>66</sup> But the chickens eat Soviet grain.

According to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Cuba's agricultural performance overall, including sugar, was tied for last place in Latin America from 1962-1976.<sup>67</sup> Since 1976 sugar and citrus fruit production have improved considerably but not production of the items that make up the basic diet of the masses.

The individually-owned farms and co-ops which utilise 8% and 12% of agricultural land, respectively,<sup>68</sup> present a complicated situation, since they grow export crops (tobacco, coffee, even sugar cane) as well as producing most of the root-crops, vegetables, dairy and other domestic foodstuffs. Overall, this land increased its productivity more than state land between 1962 and 1984.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, this sector was drained by low government prices for produce (especially until 1976) and taxes (from 1982-1986, during the period when free farmers' markets were allowed).<sup>70</sup> After 1986, these markets were abolished and once again obligatory government prices were fixed. The 1986 move coincided with difficulties in securing chemical inputs for the canefields due to the shortage of foreign currency, and the Cuban government reacted predictably. This, too, shows the structured dependency of Cuban capitalism, because while from the point of view of capitalism taken in the abstract, i.e., of production efficiency, the individual and co-op sector should have received more, not less, state support, still the sugar crop is far more vital in

terms of earning the foreign capital the economy is addicted to and which is of paramount importance to Cuba's comprador-bureaucrat ruling class.

In the decades after the revolution, Cuban industry grew at an average rate of 5% according to an estimate for the years 1959-1972 given by a critic of Castro,<sup>71</sup> and 6.5% during the years 1965-1980 according to a competing estimate by a more pro-Castro researcher.<sup>72</sup> This is not very impressive in itself. During the first decade and a half, manufacture as a share of overall production is said to have declined sharply.<sup>73</sup> Since then, there has been some industrial development; Cuban industry has been more "successful" than agriculture, in terms of the increased value of its output. But in qualitative terms it has only industrialised dependence, because of the relations between industry and agriculture, because of the relations between various branches of industry itself, and because of the relations between Cuban and imperialist capital. South Korea is an example of a country that has attained the status of a major exporter of manufactured goods without ceasing to be crushed by imperialism. In other words, Cuba's most basic problem is not the level of its productive forces but its production relations. Again, the comparison with Mao's China is useful, since China was a far poorer country that accomplished much more than Cuba by travelling an entirely different road.

First, regarding agriculture, Mao established a general policy of taking "agriculture as the foundation and industry as the leading factor," as a Chinese textbook on political economy written under the leadership of Mao's line explains.<sup>74</sup> This means "the support of agriculture by all trades and industries is an important characteristic of the socialist economy."<sup>75</sup> China's agricultural production rose by 1.5 times from 1949-1970 in China, and food grain production doubled during this period, while industrial production rose by 18 times.<sup>76</sup> Although Mao saw agriculture as an important source of accumulation, he was most emphatic that the development of the economy overall had to mean developing agriculture as rapidly as possible and not looting it to build up industry at the expense of agriculture. In Cuba, agricultural output has stagnated for the last 30 years and food production in particular has suffered. Mao regarded a proper balance between agriculture and industry as indispensable for the proletariat's ability to ally with and transform the peasants, and he contrasted this to the exploitation of agriculture by industry and of the rural areas by the cities in bourgeois society.<sup>77</sup>

Agrarian revolution as the only means to feed the people is one aspect of its importance for new democratic revolution. The other is that development of industry also depends on the development of agriculture, in terms of

cheapening wage goods (the food and other goods people buy with wages), providing important raw materials necessary for self-sufficient industry (such as foods to be processed, cotton, hemp, leather, wood, etc.) and in providing a market for industrial production of both consumer and producer goods. In most imperialist countries, agriculture developed in the earliest stages of industrialisation. In Cuba, however, both before and after Castro's revolution, the linkages between agriculture and industry have been weak and industrial production has been oriented by foreign capital rather than by the needs of agriculture and overall economic development. This disarticulation between industry and agriculture in Cuba is no different from the pattern of development in other oppressed countries in Latin America and elsewhere.

The question of whether or not industrialisation serves the development of an integrated national economy also involves the mix of what is produced, that is, the relations between the various sectors of industry, including the balance between the production of the means of production (machinery and physical inputs, i.e. department I goods) and of wage items (for consumption, i.e. department II goods). The extreme imbalance and disarticulation between these two production departments is another important link in the chain that binds Cuba to foreign capital.

In the last decade Cuba has increased its ability to partially or wholly produce a few department I goods, so that today it produces about a third of the capital goods it uses. This is considerably lower than Brazil, Mexico or South Korea, to take what bourgeois economists consider "positive" examples of industrial development in the Third World, and qualitatively different from revolutionary China, which became basically self-sufficient in capital goods. Furthermore, the advances in producing capital goods Cuba has achieved are leading away from balanced industrial development and a self-sufficient economy.

Almost 30% of Cuba's domestically-made producer goods are for machines to plant, harvest, load and mill sugar cane, without counting those items indirectly destined to serve cane, such as transportation goods, which make up the second biggest category after machines.<sup>78</sup> The mechanisation of the cane harvest has led the development of capital goods production, and indeed, Cuba's industrial development. But because it is rooted in the linkages of sugar cane (that is, the backward linkages, involving the process of planting and harvesting cane, principally, as well as, to some extent, the forward linkages involving processing sugar and cane products), the evolution of Cuba's capital formation has not been able to escape the general lines



imposed by imperialist production relations. It has actually demanded an increase in imports. Cuba does not produce bulldozers, tractors, excavators, etc., nor the other agricultural inputs it depends on, such as pesticides, herbicides and chemical fertilisers. At the same time, light industry (essentially for consumer goods) has lagged far behind the country's needs, because of the allocation of industrial resources to the needs of sugar cane, instead of developing a light industry based on agriculture that in turn can both fulfill the consumption needs of agricultural and industrial working people, and serve as a market for producer goods and a source of accumulation.

This lack of light industry has resulted in a continuing high burden in consumer goods imports that must be paid for in foreign currency, while the bleeding of resources from non-sugar agriculture has meant that a continuing high percentage of the country's basic foodstuffs must also be imported.<sup>79</sup> All this in turn dictates exporting more of what Cuba does best: sugar. Because of these factors, the ratio of imports to overall production had already increased substantially in the late 1970s.<sup>80</sup> Exports were supposed to rise in parallel, but by the mid-1980s Cuba was not able to export enough to pay for the imports without which its economy cannot run. Hence its current economic malaise, which, taken globally, comes down to a crisis of the organisation of capital in Cuba and capital it must be, despite its "socialist" tag, since without the imperialist world market Cuba's sugar industry is nothing but useless hunks of metal and muddy fields. It is a crisis in which the immediate triggering factor is the increasing difficulty in the realisation of the capital invested in Cuban sugar cane (the turning of commodities into money capital) in the context of an imperialist world economy which is rendering increasingly enormous amounts of sugar cane surplus.

What of Cuba's non-sugar based industries? One of Cuba's biggest industrial success stories today is the manufacture of computer parts, which make up 2% of Cuba's total production of capital goods only a few years after start-up of this line.<sup>81</sup> They are designed to be exported for manufacturing computers in Eastern Europe. This kind of industrial growth within the imperialist "division of labour" assigned by Comecon was to play a major role in Cuba's future industrialisation efforts,<sup>82</sup> although upheaval in Eastern Europe could substantially alter these plans.

Among Cuba's other major industries are wheat processing (using imported wheat); cotton, yam and textile goods (using imported cotton); steel and metal processing (using imported raw materials to make unobtainable spare parts for ancient American machines); motor vehicle assembly, tyres

(using imported oil); and chemicals (also using imported materials). The production of cement is one of the few lines mainly based on domestic materials.<sup>83</sup>

In addition to sugar, Cuba also exports high-quality tobacco products (hand-rolled cigars are its most important manufactured export), seafood, citrus fruits, coffee and nickel. It imports oil, machinery and transportation equipment, food (including rice, wheat, vegetable oil and low-grade coffee and tobacco, to the disgust of the masses), chemicals and inedible raw materials such as wood, pulp, cotton and natural fertilisers.<sup>84</sup> From this list it is clear that what prevents Cuba from developing an independent economy is not principally a lack of natural resources, but the supremacy of commodity relations, since much of what is imported could be produced in Cuba or replaced by something else, and the degree of need for much of the rest is to a large extent determined by these same relations.

Cuba's apparent lack of sufficient oil is a very serious obstacle. It has been argued that Cuba's poverty in hydrocarbons (oil, gas and coal) and hydroelectric potential (damable rivers) leaves it little choice but to rely on sugar cane, which is said to be "solar-powered," if it is to avoid an even greater dependency in consequence of the development of industries that could only run on imported oil.<sup>85</sup> First of all, however, Cuba does produce some oil, and it could not be ruled out that in the future a revolutionary Cuba might repeat China's experience of a country formerly declared "oil-poor" by Western experts that became self-sufficient in oil, thanks to the massive efforts of Chinese workers and technicians to solve problems of oil exploration and production. Current Cuban government policy is to discard this possibility; recently, exploration drilling at Veredero, considered to be a promising site for oil, was abandoned when Castro decided to develop tourism at Veredero instead.<sup>86</sup>

Second, Cuba has made great strides in using bagasse (the dry pulp that remains after the sugar has been ground from the stalks) as fuel. Experience in other countries shows that bagasse and bagasse-derived products (such as alcohol) can power industry and transportation. Brazil's success in this was spectacular, until the falling price of oil internationally made it cheaper than ethanol, and the law of value demanded that this measure of potential economic independence be abandoned. So far, Cuba has used bagasse mostly to power the cane industry, rather than to attack its tyranny. Thirdly, much of Cuba's imported oil is used to fuel the processing of export products, such as nickel, which is one of the biggest single industrial consumers of energy; a

revolutionary Cuba would halt this policy.

A graphic way to grasp Cuba's real status is to correlate the relationship between sugar exports and Cuba's overall economic performance. The relationship is not quite direct, but in general, the value of sugar sales in any given period (as calculated by the price paid and the amount sold) plays a determining role in the economy's overall performance in that period, both because of the central role sugar earnings play in the country's economic indices and because industry depends on the foreign inputs bought to a large extent with sugar earnings.<sup>87</sup> Whatever Castro says or does takes place within that context, on that stage, within those bounds. No less than in slave and colonial times, Cuba's is still a fettered economy.

In revolutionary China, there was also a close correlation between successful harvests and industrial growth in any given year. The difference is that China's agricultural and industrial production served one another's development, while for Cuba, sugar cane is useless without the workings of the international circuits of capital through which this commodity's value can be realised and transformed into more capital.

The overall economic growth rate achieved at the price of such drastically increased dependency has been rather mediocre, only about 4% of GSP from 1959-1989 according to figures given by Castro.<sup>88</sup> Cuba's average GNP growth from 1973-1982 was 4.8% according to a London firm that calculates the neighbouring Dominican Republic's average yearly GNP growth during the same period as 4.5%.<sup>89</sup> South Korea's average yearly GNP growth 1962-1985 was 8.5%.<sup>90</sup> Actually, hidden in what Castro gives as Cuba's 30-year average is its more recent trend: little or no growth throughout the entire second half of the 1980s.<sup>91</sup>

Of course, the average annual growth rate is no indicator at all of a country's liberation, since it reveals little about its relations of production. The point is, however, that Castro chose to follow the path of dependency with the argument that in this way Cuba would achieve the economic growth rate he falsely called a necessary precondition for national liberation. Thirty years later, it has achieved neither.

China, by contrast, sustained an annual average GNP growth rate of 5.6% from 1953-1974, according to U.S. government statistics.<sup>92</sup> This was done with no foreign material aid, few foreign loans before 1957 and none at all afterwards, with absolutely no accumulated debt, foreign investment or any other form of national enslavement. This growth rate was also achieved on the basis of all-around balanced economic development and not the ex-

treme disequilibrium produced by imperialist-sponsored growth everywhere else in the Third World, where a number of countries selected for intensive imperialist capital investments have achieved spectacular growth rates for a while, only to run up against the limits of unbalanced and disarticulated growth.

The qualitative nature of socialist China's growth is far more impressive than its quantitative growth-but even so, the Chinese experience shows that quantitative economic growth can be achieved on the basis of thoroughgoing revolution against imperialism and its domestic allies. If Cuba had burned down the canefields, distributed the land of the latifundia to the former peasants and slaves, allowed those for whom there was no productive employment in the capital to return to the countryside and built up industry based principally on the resources and needs of agriculture, its economy might have grown faster, not slower; and at any rate it would have won national liberation and built socialism and not dug itself deeper into captivity with every hour of toil.

What about the lives of the people? Studies made by scholars of various degrees of pro-Cuban inclinations in recent years have tended to confirm, to one degree or another, some basic facts of dependency, but a persistent argument has been that at least the standard of living of the masses in Cuba is higher than most other countries in Latin America. The literacy rate is very high, as are some indices of health. Cuba's infant mortality rate (11.9 per 1000 live births in 1988) is the lowest in Latin America, and even lower than many minority ghettos in the U.S., as Castro brags with some justice.<sup>93</sup> Critics have pointed out that Cuba had the lowest infant mortality and general mortality statistics in Latin America before Castro's revolution as well.<sup>94</sup> The average life expectancy at birth in Cuba is 73, which compares favourably with imperialist countries.<sup>95</sup> Cuba also resembles the imperialist countries in another way: it has achieved an advanced world-level suicide rate (21.7 per 100,000 deaths), which doubled between 1970 and 1985.<sup>96</sup>

There has been no evidence of widespread hunger in Cuba. But the average diet is nutritionally very poor. The roots and beans that are popular favourites are difficult to obtain, because the government considers them too labour-intensive to grow, although unlike most of Cuba's export crops to which labour is allocated instead, viandas require little foreign fertilisers, pesticides and machinery. Few fresh vegetables are available. Fruit, produced abundantly, is for export. For the same reason, a cup of coffee is a luxury in this coffee-exporting country. Cubans often complain that they can't stand

the inordinately large amounts of dairy products (often imported) and eggs included in the official diet, meant as a protein source to replace the (domestic) pork they enjoy. The sugar ration is four to six pounds of sugar per person per month (depending on the region), for home consumption, without counting the endlessly available free sugar in public eating places. A joke has it that the government introduced yogurt so that people will have something else to pour sugar on.

This diet is determined by the needs of an export-plantation economy. It does not promote independent economic development. It is not healthy (the Cuban government press brags that the country's diet brings about "the diseases of an advanced country"-high incidence of heart attacks, high blood pressure and related illness, obesity, etc.-as though this were a mark of Cuba's progress). And the masses don't even like it.<sup>97</sup>

Havana has avoided the swollen shantytowns full of peasants surrounding many other Latin American capitals mainly because Cuba's population has grown little over the past decades. It has kept its birth rate low and shipped off its "surplus" population to the U.S. About 8% of its 10 million people have leapt from the frying pan into the fire, continuing a trend which began in the 1940s when Cuba's countryside first began pouring its inhabitants into the factories and ghettos of the United States.

The majority of Cuban families live in the same houses their families occupied before Castro.<sup>98</sup> This is a shocking reflection of just how little social transformation there has been. In 1984, Cuba abandoned publicly-owned housing by requiring renters to buy the government-owned houses they lived in. This was meant to reduce the cost to the government of housing maintenance (70% of total housing expenditures-an indicator of how little new housing was being built) and to promote private construction and ownership of new housing.<sup>99</sup> Castro seems to have been taking lessons from Thatcher.

As far as the kind of "human rights" so beloved of the U.S. and its allies, under its 1976 Constitution Cuba has elections for local, provincial and national government which are much less blood-stained than when the U.S. was running Cuba and as democratic as any in the Third World (where the basic masses have no rights anywhere). The percentage of the population in prisons is about the same as the U.S., so neither side has any right to speak on this.<sup>100</sup>

Few serious people today, especially abroad, bother to argue that Cuba is a very revolutionary society. They can't ignore the grim political climate.

They tend to limit their claims to quantitative arguments, for instance, that there is more “equality” in Cuba than Brazil, in terms of the distribution of cash income between the uppermost and lowermost percentiles of the population.”<sup>101</sup> The same kinds of arguments could be made for Sweden versus Germany, without touching the decisive question of what kind of societies they are. Furthermore, if the Soviet Union’s Cuba were to be compared to the U.S.’s Puerto Rico, one could concoct an argument that Cuba chose the wrong imperialist master. There is always some oppressed country that seems better off than another one; that is no argument in favour of imperialism and imperialist domination.

In Cuba today, the various classes play the same role as before, and if there are new faces among today’s government officials and heads of factories and plantations, that is not very important to anyone but them. The Workers Councils, once touted as a key ingredient of Cuban-style “socialism,” are largely inactive and forgotten. There are discussions about how to fulfill the plan formulated for various enterprises, but there is hardly even any pretence of much more. “We do not discuss balance of payments problems with factory workers,” a head of Cuba’s economic planning board told a researcher eager to prove Cuba’s “socialism.”<sup>102</sup> Under current circumstances, any kind of “workers self-management” could only be fake anyway, because without a real revolution what happens in Cuba is not basically determined there. As for what Mao called “labour’s greatest right”<sup>103</sup>-the right to take charge of all society and transform the world-that doesn’t even enter into Cuban rhetoric.

## **7 Soviet “Aid” Is the Export of Capital**

Some people argue that Soviet “aid,” “grants” and payments to Cuba do not constitute capital. But when they are examined, certain unmistakable characteristics appear.

Soviet transfers to Cuba take three forms: aid for particular projects, subsidies in the form of favourable prices for import and export commodities, and balance of payments loans (to cover the difference between what Cuba exports and its voracious import needs). These forms are rather intertwined in practice, for each kind of “aid” is so devastating that it requires a further form of “aid” in its wake.

First, Soviet-bloc direct developmental “aid” is the smallest component of the total, amounting to \$883.5 million in 1986.<sup>104</sup> At the end of the 1980s,

the bulk was concentrated in the building of 11 new sugar mills and the modernisation of 23 of Cuba's 159 mills.<sup>105</sup> Given what has been discussed so far, the odious nature of this "aid" should be clear.

Second, the famous fact that the USSR pays Cuba far above the world market price for its sugar is misleading. Less than 20% of the world's sugar is sold at that price. The rest is purchased on a long-term contract or quota basis or on some other preferential terms. For instance, during 1988, when the "world market price" of sugar averaged around 11 U.S. cents (\$0.11) a pound, the U.S. purchased Philippine sugar at 18.5 cents a pound.<sup>106</sup> It would be difficult to argue that the U.S. did so out of benevolence. Aside from political reasons, such long-term above-market price contract arrangements are advantageous because they secure an assured quantity and quality of sugar at an assured time, which is of great importance for the continuous operation of giant refineries and vast markets. In fact, the U.S. consistently paid Cuba at a preferential price during the period when Cuba was a U.S. dependency.

According to a somewhat pro-Cuban economist, the cumulative price the USSR paid for Cuban sugar from the early 1960s until 1976 was above the world market price but below the average price that the U.S. paid for imported sugar during that same period.<sup>107</sup> After that, Soviet payments were set through a series of complicated and changing arrangements that initially meant somewhat higher sugar prices, but tended to fall in conjunction with the world movement of commodity prices. Soviet prices in the early and late 1980s were above the average price actually paid by the U.S. By 1987, when the world market price for cane sugar was 7.5 U.S. cents, the U.S. was paying its preferred producers 21 cents a pound, and the USSR was paying Cuba 37 cents according to the official rate of exchange for the Cuban peso<sup>108</sup>-perhaps less than the U.S. if the peso were expressed in terms of its real market dollar value.<sup>109</sup>

Further, Soviet purchases are not, for the most part, paid for in hard currency, but rather in Soviet goods. As many studies have indicated, including one by the Cuban Central Bank itself, the average price paid for goods the Soviets send their captive markets is twice as high as world market prices for goods of the same quality.<sup>110</sup> One doesn't have to go this far to see that this form of Soviet "aid" to Cuba conceals Soviet extraction of Cuban surplus value.

Thirdly, there are the USSR's loans to cover Cuba's negative balance of trade (which reached an accumulated total of \$5 billion in 1976).<sup>111</sup> They

have often been considered a further form of Soviet “aid” because they are long-term (10-12 year), at relatively low interest (2-3%), and payable in sugar or other Cuban exports. But long term or short, loans are a common means by which imperialism seeks to “skin the ox twice,” as Lenin put it, once by robbing a country through unequal trade terms and again by compelling it to pay interest on loans used to finance this robbery.<sup>112</sup> The apparently low interest rates are meaningless because of the role these loans play in holding together the overall unequal relationship. If current economic conditions have forced the USSR to hold payments and interest on its loans in abeyance for the last several years, this is similar to the situation faced by Western European and Japanese imperialism in regard to their loans to Cuba, and no different from what the U.S. has been forced to do in its relations with Cuba’s neighbors in Latin America and elsewhere.

That Cuba does not find its arrangements with the USSR advantageous can be inferred from the fact that in years when Cuba harvests more sugar than needed to fulfill long-term contracts with the Soviet bloc, it sells the excess to the West at prices that apparently defy logic, for it would seem Cuba is losing money by passing up Soviet prices.<sup>113</sup> To some extent this is because the Soviets cannot always supply Cuba with the quantity and quality of goods required, but it also implies that Cuba finds its real terms of trade with the West no more unfavourable than those with the East bloc.

After sugar, the most important component of Cuban-Soviet trade is oil. In the high-price years for oil in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Soviets charged Cuba less than the world market price for oil; in the low-price years for oil in the mid-1980s Cuba found itself obliged to pay the Soviets at above the world market price.<sup>114</sup> Cuba imports more oil from the USSR than it needs, paying for this oil with up to three-quarters of its sugar exports to the USSR.<sup>115</sup> Cuba then turns around and re-exports the oil at world market prices. (Little oil actually changes hands. The Soviets trade a certain amount of oil in their refineries in Eastern Europe for a similar amount in Venezuelan refineries. The Soviets then supply Venezuela’s customers in Europe and Venezuela supplies Cuba-which in turn sells the oil to other Latin American countries which get it directly from Venezuela.) In addition, the USSR pays Cuba what it considers a subsidised price for Cuban nickel.

This system of trade is as grotesque as anything in the West and has nothing at all to do with the barter of use-values, as some people would have it. For example, in 1983-1985, when the world market price of sugar fell extremely low, Cuba used its available dollars to buy sugar from the



Dominican Republic, enabling it to cash in on the slave-like conditions for Haitian field workers that make sugar so cheap to produce there, and sold this sugar to the USSR for oil, which Cuba then sold on the international market for more dollars. In both good years and bad for sugar, it seems that Cuba considers dollars more valuable than roubles.

When world oil prices rose tenfold in the decade after 1973, the price the USSR charged Cuba merely doubled. Presumably the production price of oil in the USSR did not change so drastically, so the result is one of the Soviet's accepting a less than maximum profit for one line of trade (whether it be purchases of sugar or sales of oil) in consideration of the overall profitability of these trade arrangements. If one simply considers the relation expressed in how many tons of sugar are needed to buy a ton of Soviet oil, and ignores the question of the possible values of both commodities in other markets, the terms of Cuban-Soviet trade deteriorated by one-half from 1977 to 1982.<sup>116</sup>

On the strength of its present and future oil earnings, Cuba, like many Third World countries, adopted a strategy of "debt-led development" in the latter part of the 1970s. Despite what appeared on paper as massive Soviet "aid," by 1988 Cuba's debt to U.S-bloc countries reached \$5.7 billion. This is roughly comparable, on a per-capita basis, to that of the Dominican Republic.<sup>117</sup> Starting in 1986, Cuba was unable to continue making interest payments. It had proved to be extraordinarily vulnerable to exactly the same actors that unleashed crisis in similar countries in the West bloc, especially the general collapse of most raw material prices on the international market and the rise in interest rates on loans due Western imperialism. At the same time, since Cuba's oil and West-bloc sugar sales are denominated in dollars, as the dollar sank against Western European currencies, the dollar burden of Cuba's debts to European countries became crushing. Cuba has no trade with the U.S. but still the dollar had its revenge.

Cuba publishes no statistics on trade balance and overall indebtedness. Statistics released by the CIA are the most common source of information on this subject. They claim outstanding Soviet loans to Cuba reached \$8.2 billion as of 1986. If true, this plus the \$5.7 billion in unpaid Cuban debts to the West (which continue to pile up despite the lack of new money as unpaid interest payments become capitalised) would give Cuba one of the highest ratios of foreign debt/GNP in the Third World.

The CIA's estimates for how much Cuba has "cost" the Soviet Union maliciously inflate this figure by calculating oil and sugar according to world market values and counting the difference between this and the prices ac-

tually paid as a subsidy. On this basis they claim the USSR transferred to Cuba an average of \$2.5 billion a year from 1976-1982.<sup>118</sup> But in contrast to the CIA's estimates, an academic team writing for the U.S Commerce Department concluded, "what is apparently only a subsidy to Cuba in fact also accrues benefit to the USSR. Who gains the most from this is difficult to determine."<sup>119</sup>

We can't expect the U.S. government to expose the workings of imperialism. But Soviet-Cuban trade and financial relations present a murky picture which has never been thoroughly illuminated in any published analysis because too many factors remain secret or difficult to determine. The question has been posed why the Soviets choose to carry out their transactions like this, and the most reasonable guess is precisely because it conceals things so well. The Soviets and their Cuban compradors have deliberately chosen accounting methods which obscure the real content of their relationship.

We should not imagine that imperialism consists simply in rich countries extracting value from poor countries, through unequal terms of trade or other means, as did Guevara and the "dependency theory" writers who follow him. More than a few people who call themselves Marxists can see no imperialism in the relations between the USSR and Cuba because they presuppose that imperialist domination can only lead to the "development of underdevelopment" and not a certain degree of growth and industrialisation. But imperialist domination does not at all preclude economic growth in a dominated country. An essential feature of imperialism, as Lenin pointed out, is the export of capital.<sup>120</sup> This does not mean that the enterprises and industries, etc., developed in the countries dominated by imperialism must belong to the imperialists juridically, in name. What is developed through the export of capital is a production relation, in which increasingly vast sectors of the oppressed country's economy are integrated into the international circuits of imperialist capital and respond primarily to its needs. The more economic growth occurs under conditions of imperialist domination, the more the country's economy is disarticulated and distorted. The Soviets export their capital to Cuba in the form of petroleum, machinery and chemicals, but it is no less capital just the same. What results is the extended reproduction of dependent relations. Capital accumulates in Cuba only insofar as it is subordinate to imperialist capital and can function only within the bounds of the international circuits of capital, which is to say, only insofar as it is imperialist capital in Cuba and not really Cuban capital.

## 8 Can There Be Such a Thing as “Dependent Socialism”?

“Cuba could have avoided dependency only on pain of having renounced the revolution”—this is a common argument by Cuba’s defenders. A French author, referring to what he considers the “considerable accomplishments of Cuba,” asks rhetorically, “At what price? The alignment with the USSR, despite often tumultuous relations. But what could Havana do in the face of U.S. aggression and its economic blockade? No country can live in economic autarky, especially when its economic exchanges rest on a single crop-sugar-to which all doors were suddenly closed. The only alternative was to renounce the revolution. That Castro and the Cubans would never do. The people of the Third World want to lift themselves out of poverty and national humiliation.”<sup>121</sup>

The assumption in this argument is that “the revolution” exhausted its tasks when Cuba broke with the U.S. (or when the U.S. broke with Cuba). It was indeed a great step, and a revolution, when Batista and the pro-U.S. latifundistas and compradors were overthrown and the U.S kicked in the nose. But imperialism, comprador-bureaucrat capitalism and the remnants of slave society and feudalism had not been kicked out. They remain the basis on which Cuban economic life is organised (and hence ultimately its political life as well). Therefore the revolution failed to accomplish any lasting radical change and its leaders became a new counter-revolutionary ruling class.

“The ownership system,” the Chinese textbook previously cited emphasises, “is a social relationship...” Marx once quoted Aristotle’s remark that ‘the status of the master rests not so much on he who purchases the slave as on he who lords over him.’ Marx continued, ‘the status of the capitalist is established not so much by his ownership of the capital—which provides him the power to purchase labour—as by his power to employ the labourer, that is, the wage earner, in the process of production.’<sup>122</sup> In other words, our criticism is not that Cuba entered into relations with imperialists who own capital, but rather that Cuba’s labouring people remain imprisoned in a social relationship in which they can work only so long as it profits the accumulation of (foreign) capital and in which all the fruits of their labour go to build up a structure of capital which stands over them and against them. The Cuban working people cannot be masters in their own house as long as the house belongs to somebody else.

As if he were determined to find ever more vivid proof of just how little Cuba's people count in Cuba, Castro has announced plans for tourism to bring in \$400 million a year, amounting to 40% of its present export earnings.<sup>123</sup> How can a socialist society be built on such a basis, even in terms of what it implies for the material organisation of resources and society, not to speak of the presence of two million relatively privileged tourists from the imperialist countries, with all the social relations they carry as baggage and all the dollars at their disposal? How can a country that lives off imperialism's tourists support world revolution? And if it doesn't support the advance of the world revolution, how can the unequal development imposed on the world by imperialism be overcome and how can the world become communist?

It is not that communism is harder to build in a tourist colony than on a sugar cane plantation, only that the absurdity of the whole thing is more obvious. No socialist country can be built on the basis of any kind of monoculture, but the problem is deeper than that. As the Chinese political economy textbook explains, under socialism "the nature of social production has changed. The goal of social production and the means to achieve that goal have also changed... [T]he purpose of socialist production is to raise the level of the material and cultural life of the proletariat and the labouring people, consolidate proletarian dictatorship, strengthen national defence, and support the revolutionary struggles of the peoples of the world. Ultimately, it must serve to eliminate classes and realise communism."<sup>124</sup>

The "purpose of production" means the political line leading the economy and society. Under Mao's leadership, China's economic construction followed the strategy of "be prepared for war, be prepared for natural disasters, and do everything for the people."<sup>125</sup> Mao also said that "According to the viewpoint of Leninism, the final victory in one socialist country requires not only the efforts of its own proletariat and its broad masses of people, but must also wait for the victory of world revolution..."<sup>126</sup> This meant a whole series of strategic decisions in terms of how to develop China's economy.

What does it mean not to "renounce the revolution," to truly hold out and continue the fight against imperialism? Internally, it has to include carrying out the greatest possible revolutionary transformation of all production relations, while also carrying out the ceaseless transformation of the superstructure (the realm of politics, ideology, culture, etc.) to clear the way for the further transformation of the relations of production and the development of the productive forces which ultimately define the limits of

the revolution in a given country in a given period. Dependent development would go against the development of the material conditions for the elimination of classes and class distinctions, of the contradictions between manual and mental labour, between town and country and between industry and agriculture, and of the subordination of women by men that arose in association with the various successive modes of exploitation. It is impossible to transform the consciousness of the labouring people and turn society upside down under their dictatorship without relying on the abilities and initiative of the working people themselves in all spheres.

Further, since no country in today's world is "autarkic," in the sense of being isolated from the imperialist system economically, politically or militarily, only by doing everything possible for the advance of the world revolution is it possible to break out of the confines imposed by imperialism's division of the world into oppressor and oppressed nations, and this too must be taken into account in a socialist country's economic construction. The revolutionary proletariat must recognise the continuing existence of the law of value—the exchange of commodities according to the socially necessary labour-time they embody—and its economic planning must take it into account. But if this law determines what gets produced and how, then this means the expanded reproduction of all capitalism's relations of exploitation. Social inequalities, including between oppressor and oppressed nations, will be considered too costly to overcome and not be targets of evolution. The advanced forces of production in the imperialist countries and the cheapness of manufacture and other advantages that come with it are not a reason for revolutionaries in the dependent countries to capitulate to imperialism, but rather part of the reason why they must do everything for the advance of the world revolution until it triumphs everywhere.

There can be no such thing as "socialist dependency," a concept put forward by those whose research has brought to light some powerful facts about Cuba's economic reality but who want to find something good about it anyway.<sup>127</sup> The contradiction Cuba faced was not self-reliance or internationalism, but rather dependency or internationalism, for the more a Third World country builds up its economy in a way that allows it to resist imperialist threats and aggression the more it can do to serve the world revolution. "Dependent socialism" is impossible because a dependent country cannot fulfill socialism's tasks.

Castro's flight of rhetoric about Cuba becoming "the last socialist country in the world" was not a solemn recognition of those tasks but a blatant

expression of the country's most narrowly conceived self-interest, or rather the pathetic self-interest of a comprador clique. After all the crimes committed by Soviet social-imperialism over the last 30 years, including using Cuba as a pawn in the 1962 "Cuban missile crises" and ranging from the invasion of Czechoslovakia to the invasion of Afghanistan-all of which Castro loudly praised; after all the Soviet reactionary ventures in which Cuba took part, including those in Africa for which Castro first supplied troops and then dutifully brought them home when the Soviets were done with them-now, when it seems that the USSR might more strictly reconsider its accounts with Cuba, suddenly Castro begins to doubt Soviet "socialism"!

Castro welcomed the arms the Soviets offered free of charge with the idea of defending Cuba. In thirty years, Cubans have never used them except in pursuit of Soviet foreign policy objectives. With the exception of a very recent automatic rifle production facility, Cuba does not and cannot manufacture its own weapons. Both in terms of who really controls the arms and even in the literal sense, Cuba still has no arms of its own but is only holding Soviet weapons.

Speaking of the difficulties making themselves felt in Cuba lately, Castro complained of the burdens of making a revolution "ninety miles from the most powerful empire in history and 10,000 kilometres from the socialist camp."<sup>128</sup> But the USSR was not too far away to enforce a dependent development on Cuba that in turn has magnified its geographic vulnerability to the U.S. Castro's economic and military policies have led to a situation where its one and only real line of defence is the Soviet Union. He can hardly complain now if it seems that the cheque for which he sold out to the USSR might bounce.

It may be true, as some have argued, that if Cuba had not had Soviet backing initially, the U.S. would have invaded Cuba long ago. But there is evidence that the U.S. was not prepared to accept the consequences of a full-scale invasion and prolonged war in Cuba in the 1960s. Khrushchev's placement of Soviet missiles in Cuba in 1962 had more to do with jostling for advantage vis-a-vis the U.S. than with protecting the island. The subsequent U.S. invasion of Vietnam leaves no room for doubt of the U.S. imperialists' bloodthirstiness, and the 1965 U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic demonstrates that the U.S. was determined to secure its "back yard," but one can wonder just how many wars the U.S. was capable of fighting at once, and with what consequences for U.S. imperialism. After all, the U.S. lost the war it did fight in Vietnam.

It is not written in any Marxist book that if Cuba had followed a more revolutionary path its regime would have been assured of survival. Since socialism was overthrown in huge Soviet Russia and China, there is no certainty that it could have prevailed in this small Caribbean island right under the U.S.'s nose. Cuba's people have many links to the U.S, and it is possible that some strata would not have stood for the loss of the relatively high standard of living they enjoyed through their association with U.S. imperialism or that even broader strata would not have been able to resist the threats and lures held out by the U.S. But even this has two aspects, for if the U.S. certainly had its people in Cuba, Cuba had (or could have had) "its people" abroad too, including the many millions of people in the Caribbean and Latin America and others who looked to Cuba, even in the U.S. Thousands of people gathered to greet Castro at his hotel in New York's Harlem after he spoke at the UN in 1960, amidst mounting official U.S. hostility. It may be that Cuba would have faced and perhaps lost a war against the U.S. It also may be that if Cuba had embarked on a real revolution, and if it had fought for Marxism instead of revisionism, the consequences would have been enormous.

The "dependent socialism" idea holds that the Castro regime's often admittedly unsavory relationship with the USSR was the price for saving and developing "the first liberated territory of the Americas." A recent attempt to praise Castro quotes his speech in favour of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, "Will [the Soviets] send in Warsaw Pact divisions to Cuba if the Yankee imperialists attack our country, or even threaten to attack it?" You see, the author concludes, Castro really didn't like the USSR: "Rather than simply subordinating Cuba to Soviet policy, Castro was clearly attempting to parlay Cuban support for the Czechoslovakian invasion into stauncher Soviet protection for Cuba against U.S. imperialism."<sup>129</sup>

Such may very well have been Castro's intentions, but the Cuban experience shows that while revisionism and nationalism may go together ideologically, in practice the same outlook that led Castro to sell out the world's peoples for the sake of "Cuba" led him to sell out the broader interests of the Cuban people as well. The views of Castro and his circle may have included some nationalist inclinations, but they were not able and really did not seek to carry out the thoroughgoing transformation of Cuban society in conjunction with the world revolution.

As Mao insisted, in today's world, the tasks of the democratic revolution (against feudalism and imperialism) cannot be accomplished by any bourgeoisie in the oppressed countries; the new democratic revolution is a part

of the overall proletarian-socialist world revolution.<sup>130</sup> Although bourgeois forces in such countries will repeatedly clash with the production relations imposed by imperialism and semi-feudalism, their interests and outlook will bring the revolution to defeat if they are allowed to lead it, and they will repeatedly seek to do so. A nationalist outlook which sees the quantitative “development” of an oppressed country’s economy as the supreme good in and of itself cannot guide that country to free itself of imperialist domination. Mao’s statement that “only socialism can save China” holds for Cuba as well.

In 1966, at the Tricontinental Congress, Castro gave a notorious speech attacking Mao, saying that “When by biological law we start to become incapable of running this country, may we know how to leave our place to other men capable of doing it better.”<sup>131</sup> It was no coincidence that this came at the time that Mao, not much older than Castro is today, was waging a life-and-death battle with revisionist leaders in the Chinese party who would take China on the road Cuba had followed, and arousing Chinese youth and in turn the broadest millions of the Chinese masses in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the furthest point yet reached by the world proletarian revolution. The two roads could not stand more starkly opposed. In 1989, the Cuban Party press was to rigourously defend the Tiananmen Square Massacre carried out by Deng Xiaoping, who had led the overthrow of Mao’s successors.<sup>132</sup>

The relations of production and all social relations in Cuba will continue to cry out for revolution until another generation of Cubans, armed with the outlook and method of Marx, Lenin and Mao and basing themselves on the most exploited and oppressed in Cuban society, as part of the international communist movement, lead the future authentically communist revolution that is the only solution to the country’s humiliation and oppression. Until then Cuba must serve the proletariat and the oppressed of the world as a teacher by negative example. Its lessons, because they concern the revolutionary process from beginning to end, particularly in other oppressed countries but even in the imperialist countries, are of both far-reaching and immediate importance.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Part 1: <http://www.bannedthought.net/International/RIM/AWTW/1989-14/AWTW-14-Cuba.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Part 2: <http://www.bannedthought.net/International/RIM/AWTW/1990-15/AWTW-1990-15-Cuba.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>Cristobal Kay, "Economic Reforms and Collectivisation in Cuban Agriculture," *Third World Quarterly* (London), July 1988.

<sup>4</sup>"Cuba Admits the Thin Edge of a Capitalist Wedge," *Guardian Weekly Edition* (London), 19 February 1989.

<sup>5</sup>"Cuba Admits the Thin Edge of a Capitalist Wedge," *Guardian Weekly Edition* (London), 19 February 1989.

<sup>6</sup>*Economist Intelligence Unit Country Report: Cuba, No. 4 1988* (London), p. 13.

<sup>7</sup>Communique of Politbureau meeting cited in *Latin American Weekly Report on the Caribbean* (London), 3 November 1988.

<sup>8</sup>"La Nouvelle Solitude de M. Fidel Castro," *Le Monde Diplomatique* (Paris), April 1989.

<sup>9</sup>*Latin American Regional Reports: Caribbean* (London), 19 January 1989.

<sup>10</sup>Hugh Thomas, *Cuba, or the Pursuit of Freedom* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1971), pp. 169, 1532-1533.

<sup>11</sup>Peter Marshall, *Cuba Libre* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1987), p. 20.

<sup>12</sup>See Castro's "Programme Manifesto of the 26th of July Movement" in Rolando E. Bonachea and Nelson P. Valdes, editors, *Cuba in Revolution* (New York: Anchor, 1972)

<sup>13</sup>Tad Szulc, *Fidel Castro: A Critical Portrait* (Hodder and Stoughten: Hutchison Ltd, 1987), p. 469.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid*, p. 529.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid*, p. 474.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid*, p. 554.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid*, p. 580.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid*, p. 606.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid*, p. 338.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid*, p. 520.

<sup>21</sup>Guevara to Rene Ramos Latour, cited in Carlos Franqui, *Fidel: A Family Portrait* (London: Cape, 1984), Appendix, p. 248.

<sup>22</sup>Szulc, p. 662.

<sup>23</sup>Karl Marx, "The Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850" in Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), Vol. 1, p. 282.

<sup>24</sup>See Lenny Wolf, "Guevara, Debray and Armed Revisionism," *Revolution* (Chicago), Winter/Spring 1985.

<sup>25</sup>Szulc, p. 583.

<sup>26</sup>Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *The Economy of Socialist Cuba* (University of New Mexico Press: 1981), p. 8.

<sup>27</sup>Susan Schroder, *Cuba, A Handbook of Historical Statistics* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1982), p. 243.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid*, p. 257.

- <sup>29</sup>Francisco Lopez Segrera, *Cuba: Capitalismo Dependiente y Subdesarrollo (1510-1959)* (Havana: Casa de las Americas, 1972), p. 366.
- <sup>30</sup>Marcos Winocur, *las Clases Olvidadas de la Revolucion Cubana* (Barcelona: Grijalbo, 1979), p. 74.
- <sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 121. Also see Lopez Segrera, p. 379.
- <sup>32</sup>Brian H. Pollitt, "Towards the Socialist Transformation of Cuban Agriculture," in P.I. Gomes, editor, *Rural Development in the Caribbean* (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1985), p. 163.
- <sup>33</sup>See Pollitt, pp. 156-161. I have adjusted these figures to exclude "unpaid family labour" (*men* who worked for their fathers or other relatives without pay) from the category of "wage labour" and include it under "farmers" instead. As Pollitt notes, these 1953 Cuban census figures do not in most cases count the labour of women or children. On these figures see also Lopez Segrera, p. 365.
- <sup>34</sup>Winocur, pp. 103-110.
- <sup>35</sup>Thomas, p. 1159.
- <sup>36</sup>Adelfo Martin Barrios, "Historia Politica de los Campesinos Cubanos," in Pablo Gonzalez Casanova, coordinator, *Historia Politica de los Campesinos Latinoamericanos* (Mexico, D.F.: 1984), p. 63. Also see Lopez Segrera, pp. 369-370.
- <sup>37</sup>Schroder, p. 166.
- <sup>38</sup>Actually, in some countries the cane fields are commonly burned down every five years or so as a prelude to replanting the cane, but this technique is less used in Cuba.
- <sup>39</sup>Pollitt, p. 164.
- <sup>40</sup>Lee Lockwood, *Castro's Cuba, Cuba's Fidel* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), p. 96.
- <sup>41</sup>Rene Dumont, "De la Critique a la Rupture," in Maurice Lemoine, ed., *Cuba: 30 Ans de Revolution* (Paris: Autrement, 1989), p. 53.
- <sup>42</sup>According to an interview with Carlos Rafael Rodrigues, Cuban Vice-President of the Councils of State and Ministers, citeed in Media Benjamin, Joseph Collins and Michael Scott, *No Free Lunch: Food and Revolution in Cuba Today* (San Francisco Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1984).
- <sup>43</sup>Raymond Lotta, *America in Decline* (Chicago: Banner Press, 1984), p. 107.
- <sup>44</sup>Rene Dumont, *Cuba: es Socialista?* (Venezuela: Tiempo Nuevo, 1970), p. 119.
- <sup>45</sup>Mesa-Lago, p. 8.
- <sup>46</sup>V.I. Lenin, "Capitalism in Agriculture," *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), Vol. 4, pp. 119-131.
- <sup>47</sup>Pollitt, p. 158
- <sup>48</sup>Mao Zedong, "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party," Vol. 2, p. 327.
- <sup>49</sup>Mao Zedong, "On New Democracy," *Selected Works* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), Vol. 2, p. 354.
- <sup>50</sup>Mao Zedong, "Analysis of Class in Chinese Society," Vol. 1, p. 13.
- <sup>51</sup>Mao Zedong, "The Struggle in the Chinkang Mountains," Vol. 1, p. 104 (footnote 22)
- <sup>52</sup>See Jean Stubbs, "Gender Issues in Tobacco Farming," in Andrew Zimbalist, ed., *Cuba's Socialist Economy Towards the 1990s* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1987), p. 43-65. However, this is not Stubb's conclusion.

<sup>53</sup>Susan Eckstein, "Domestic and International Constraints on Private and State Sector Agricultural Production," *Cuban Studies* 23:2, Summer 1983 (Pittsburg).

<sup>54</sup>V.I. Lenin, "The Development of Capitalism in Russia," Vol. 3, p. 32-33. Also see "The Agrarian Programme of Social Democracy," Vol. 13, pp. 238-247 (chapters 5 and 6)

<sup>55</sup>Cited by Brian H. Pollitt, "Sugar, Dependency and the Cuban Revolution" *Development and Change* (The Hague), 2 April 1986.

<sup>56</sup>The term "Sino-Guevarism" was introduced in the 1970s by Carmelo Mesa-Lago, and repeated most recently in a book dedicated in large part to refuting Mesa-Lago and other anti-Castro "Cubanologists": Andrew Zimbalist, ed., *Cuban Political Economy* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1988). Although Mesa-Lago and Zimbalist have represented two poles of a debate about Cuba's economic performance, the former generally negative and the latter generally positive, their basic analytical models have much in common.

<sup>57</sup>K.S. Karol, *Guerrillas in Power* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1970), p. 542.

<sup>58</sup>Mao Zedong, *A Critique of Soviet Economics* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1977), pp. 98-99.

<sup>59</sup>Cited by Kay, 1247. Kay gives a useful summary of the evolution of Cuban economic planning.

<sup>60</sup>For the year 1983, Carl Henry Feuer, "The Performance of the Cuban Sugar Industry, 1981-1985," in Zimbalist (1987), p. 69. Estimates of sugar as a percentage of Cuba's exports in recent years run higher, generally in the upper 80% range. See *Economist Intelligence Unit Country Profile: Cuba, 1988-1989* (London: 1988), p. 23.

<sup>61</sup>Mesa-Lago, p. 82.

<sup>62</sup>In 1986 and 1987. Calculated from Banco Nacional de Cuba figures cited in *EIU Country Profile*, p. 13.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>64</sup>Mesa-Lago, p. 203.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid, pp. 66, 158. Also see Benjamin et al., chapter V. In the late 1980s the rice ration was five pounds (2.3 kilos)/month, which these authors say usually lasted less than three weeks.

<sup>66</sup>Mesa-Lago, p. 37.

<sup>67</sup>Cited in Mesa-Lago, p. 38.

<sup>68</sup>*Granma Resumen Semanal* (Havana), 22 January 1989.

<sup>69</sup>Jose Luiz Rodriguez, "Agricultural Policy and Development in Cuba," in Zimbalist, ed. (1987), p. 32.

<sup>70</sup>Andrew Zimbalist and Susan Eckstein, "Patterns of Cuban Development: The First Twenty-Five Years," in Zimbalist, ed. (1987), p. 7.

<sup>71</sup>Mesa-Lago, p. 39.

<sup>72</sup>Andrew Zimbalist, "Cuban Industrial Growth 1965-1984," in Zimbalist, ed. (1987), p. 88.

<sup>73</sup>Mesa-Lago, p. 72.

<sup>74</sup>*Fundamentals of Political Economy* (Shanghai: 1974, published in English by M.E. Sharpe, White Plains, New York), p. 378.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 377.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 338.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 378.

- <sup>78</sup>Feuer, p. 106.
- <sup>79</sup>Food and tobacco amounted to an average of 17% of Cuba's imports from 1982-1984. *EIU Country Profile*, p. 24. This compares to an average 23% from 1959-1975. Mesa-Lago, p. 86.
- <sup>80</sup>Imports amounted to 35% in 1978, as compared to an average of 25.7% from 1946-1958. The share of the economy devoted to exports in 1978 (33.8%) was higher than the 1946-1958 average (30.6%). Figures before Castro's revolution are given in terms of Gross National Product and afterwards of Gross Material Product, and the changeover in accounting systems produces some distortions, though trend lines remain the same. Mesa-Lago, p. 79.
- <sup>81</sup>Claes Brundenius, "Development and Prospects of Capital Goods Production in Revolutionary Cuba," in Zimbalist, ed. (1987), p. 106.
- <sup>82</sup>*EIU Country Profile*, p. 18.
- <sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.
- <sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 24.
- <sup>85</sup>Pollitt, "Sugar, Dependency and the Cuba Revolution," op. cit.
- <sup>86</sup>*Economist Intelligence Unit Country Report: Cuba No. 1 1989* (London), p. 17.
- <sup>87</sup>Mesa-Lago, p. 84.
- <sup>88</sup>*Granma Resumen Semanal*, 22 January 1989. GSP (Global Social Product) is a peculiarly Cuban measurement that roughly approximates the value of the Gross Domestic Product minus all services not directly related to production.
- <sup>89</sup>*Caribbean Economic Handbook* (London: Euromonitor Publications Ltd., 1985), pp. 82-83.
- <sup>90</sup>*Economist* (London), 4 March 1989, "South Korea's Miracle," p. 83.
- <sup>91</sup>*EIU Country Report*, p. 2.
- <sup>92</sup>Joint Economic Committee, *China: A Reassessment of the Economy* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975)
- <sup>93</sup>*Granma Resumen Semanal*, 22 January 1989.
- <sup>94</sup>Mesa-Lago, 166.
- <sup>95</sup>*EIU Country Report*, p. 12.
- <sup>96</sup>Sarah M. Santana, "The Cuban Health Care System: Responsiveness to Changing Needs and Demands," in Zimbalist, ed. (1987), p. 117.
- <sup>97</sup>See Benjamin et al., chapter XI.
- <sup>98</sup>Mesa-Lago, p. 174.
- <sup>99</sup>Susan Eckstein, "Restratication after the Revolution: The Cuban Experience" in Richard Tardanico, ed., *Crisis in the Caribbean Basin* (Newbury Park, Beverly Hills, London, Delhi: Sage Publications, 1987), pp. 224-225.
- <sup>100</sup>In Cuba, 30,000 out of 10.36 million. (*Latin American Regional Reports: Caribbean* (London), 12 May 1988) In the U.S. 674,000 out of a population of about 240 million (*New York Times*, 11 September 1989.)
- <sup>101</sup>For instance, see Tom Alberts and Claes Brundenius, *Growth with Equity: The Brazilian Case in Light of the Peruvian and Cuban Experiences* (Lund Research Policy INstitute, Sweden: 1979), or any one of Brundenius' similar studies.
- <sup>102</sup>Linda Fuller, "Power at the Workplace: The Resolution of Worker-Management Conflict in Cuba," in Zimbalist, ed. (1987), p. 152.

- <sup>103</sup>Mao Zedong, *A Critique of Soviet Economics*, p. 61.
- <sup>104</sup>*EIU Country Profile*, p. 27.
- <sup>105</sup>Wilhelm Jampel, "Cuba; Pays-Membre du CAEM," *Le courrier des pays de l'Est* (Paris), November 1987, p. 15. Another form of "free" Soviet aid is the current construction of four nuclear power plants, presumably to allow the USSR to put its oil to other uses. A new island Chernobyl would be bad enough, but this is a particularly perilous project for a country sitting under the sights of American bombers.
- <sup>106</sup>*Far Eastern Economic Review* (London), 1 December 1988.
- <sup>107</sup>Study by Willard Radell, cited by Richard Turits, "Trade, Debt and the Cuban Economy," in Zimbalist, ed. (1987), p. 175.
- <sup>108</sup>Andrew Zimbalist and Claes Brundenius, "Cubanology and Cuban Economic Performance," in Zimbalist, ed. (1988), p. 61.
- <sup>109</sup>Turits on peso-dollar exchange, p. 176.
- <sup>110</sup>Cuban Central Bank study cited by Zimbalist and Eckstein, p. 20. Similar figure cited by Mesa-Lago, p. 87.
- <sup>111</sup>Jampel, p. 16.
- <sup>112</sup>V.I. Lenin, "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism," Vol. 22, p. 293.
- <sup>113</sup>Mesa-Lago, 184. Also Turits, p. 171.
- <sup>114</sup>Jampel, p. 22. Also Susan Eckstein, "Why Cuban Internationalism," in Zimbalist, ed. (1988), p. 171.
- <sup>115</sup>Turits, p. 176.
- <sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 175.
- <sup>117</sup>Figures for Cuba from *Latin American Regional Reports: Caribbean*, 21 July 1988. The Dominican Republic, with about six million population, had \$3.8 billion in outstanding foreign debt that year. (*Latin American Weekly Report* [London], 9 February 1989)
- <sup>118</sup>Turits, pp. 176, 178. He points out that this figure would have to be compared with the \$4.8 billion the U.S. government transferred to various agencies and individuals in Puerto Rico in 1985.
- <sup>119</sup>Theriot and Matheson, cited by Turits, p. 175.
- <sup>120</sup>Lenin, *Imperialism*, p. 240. See p. 300 for discussion of imperialism and the growth of the productive forces.
- <sup>121</sup>Maurice Lemoine, "Quelques mots avant l'atterrissage," in Lemoine, ed., *Cuba: 30 Ans de Revolution* (Paris: Autrement, 1989) p. 8.
- <sup>122</sup>*Fundamentals*, pp. 272-273.
- <sup>123</sup>*EIU Country Report: Cuba No.4, 1988*, p. 12.
- <sup>124</sup>*Fundamentals*, pp. 331-324.
- <sup>125</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 324.
- <sup>126</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 502.
- <sup>127</sup>A term used by Turits, p. 178-180.
- <sup>128</sup>*Granma Resumen Semanal*, 7 August 1988.
- <sup>129</sup>Frank Fitzgerald, "The Sovietization of Cuba Thesis Revisited," in Zimbalist, ed. (1988), p. 148.
- <sup>130</sup>Mao Zedong, "On New Democracy," Vol. 2, p. 346.
- <sup>131</sup>Castro speech of 17 March 1966. Cited in Thomas, pp. 1477-78. Also in *The Guardian*, "A Fading Star in His Own Theatre," 15 April 1989.

<sup>132</sup> *The Independent* (London), 17 August 1989.