

Castro's Phony Communism

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Cuba is one of very few countries today to which a significant number of anti-imperialists look for inspiration. This is particularly so among those struggling against the U.S.-dominated fascist regimes in Latin America.

In the mid-1960s, many thought of China as an example of how to build revolutionary communism and stand up to imperialism. But China lost its attractiveness when the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of 1966-69 was crushed with the aid of its original inspirers, Mao Zedong and his "Gang of Four," and the Chinese rulers turned to killing those who rebelled against the restoration of capitalism in China and the building of an alliance with U.S. imperialism.¹

Similarly, after the heroic Vietnamese struggle routed U.S. aggressors, the Vietnamese moved to dominate all of Indochina, in complete alliance with the USSR, and Vietnam's image became tarnished. As to the USSR itself, it has been almost three decades since the Soviets projected even the shadow image of being revolutionary.

To some extent, therefore, admiration for Cuba results from a lack of other examples for revolutionaries to emulate. But it also involves admiration for the kinds of social changes that many see as having occurred in Cuba since the "revolution" in 1959 — and it would be foolish to argue that the material lot of the Cuban working class has not improved substantially. This article will show that these reforms, however, have not created communism, any more than did the reforms in the U.S. during the 1930s under Roosevelt or the material improvement in the lives of Japanese workers in recent decades.

What will be shown here is that the idea of Cuba as a socialist or communist country, free of the yoke of imperialism and anxious to aid the world's liberation movements, is false. Cuba has in fact just replaced domination by U.S. imperialism with domination by the now-imperialist Soviet Union.² Cuban society has copied that of the USSR, including its capitalist economy, wide wage differentials and rule by a small clique of well-off Party bosses. Finally, it will be shown that the Soviet imperialists are using Cuban troops, in Africa and elsewhere, as a strike force to prop up ferociously reactionary, but pro-Soviet, regimes. Hopefully this article will contribute to a break by revolutionaries with the Cuban revisionists and their Soviet mentors, so that real communist revolution, and not a Castro-type phony communism, will be the result of the struggles of workers and their allies the world over.

SOVIET IMPERIALISM AND CUBA

The rulers of the USSR, guided by a desire to expand their burgeoning empire, and not by Marxism-Leninism, altruism or disinterested revolutionary internationalism, have made Cuba into a neo-colony. Cuba was, of course, a colony of the United States in all but name from the U.S. invasion of Cuba in 1898, during the Spanish-American War, until the overthrow of the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship by Fidel Castro's 26th of July Movement in 1959. However, more than twenty years after Castro proclaimed himself a

communist and vowed that he would lead Cuba down the path to real independence through socialism, Cuba is as dependent on the USSR as it was on the U.S.

A careful quantitative study by William LeoGrande has compared Cuban economic dependency before 1959 with Cuba's dependency twenty years later.³ It indicates that there was a marked reduction in dependency in the first couple of years after Castro came to power. This reduction is probably explained by the Cuban leaders' sharp break with the U.S. in 1959-60, before they had forged close ties with the USSR. After these ties were forged, there was no further reduction in dependency.⁴

The LeoGrande study concluded that the Cuban domestic economy depends as much on foreign commodities and on foreign sources of capital formation as it did in 1959, that exports are still greatly concentrated in sugar and still go largely to a few trade partners — the countries of the Soviet-dominated Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon). Moreover, Cuba's foreign debt has grown markedly larger under Soviet domination.

In the post 1959-era, 48.5% of Cuba's trade was with the USSR alone: 43.3% of Cuban exports,



Fidel Castro, at the pinnacle of power in Cuba, presides over a party and state that follow the lead of the Soviet Union in every way — including revisionism and state capitalism.

52% of imports. By the early 1970s, according to Soviet sources, 70% of Cuba's economic ties and more than 80% of its capital investment was dependent on its relations with the Comecon countries.⁵

One reason for this heavy economic dependence on the USSR is that the Cuban economy was deliberately kept as a primarily agricultural export economy, the classic neo-colonized economy. Sugar has continued to be Cuba's principal export — between 70% and 90% of the value of Cuban exports during the years 1963-1974.⁶ Since 1959, the USSR has bought 43.5% of Cuba's sugar exports. Cuban leaders decided after 1963 to rely on sugar revenues for investment capital.⁷ During a January, 1964 visit to Moscow, Fidel Castro agreed to deliver 24 million tons of Cuban sugar to the USSR between 1965 and 1970 at 6¢ a pound and announced that Cuba would henceforth concentrate on sugar production. The world price of sugar at the time was nearly 11¢ a pound.⁸

Since 1959, sugar has provided about one-fourth of Cuba's national income. Next to sugar, nickel is Cuba's most valuable export commodity, and the Soviets and their allies, through Comecon, made a major commitment to develop the Cuban nickel industry during Cuba's 1976-80 Five Year Plan.⁹

This emphasis on sugar and nickel production is a result of the heavy Cuban burden of debt to the USSR. About 85% of Cuba's cumulative trade deficit has been with the USSR. In the mid-1970s this amounted to 3.5 billion pesos out of 4.1 billion¹⁰ — roughly speaking, each Cuban owed the USSR \$350. After the Soviet-Cuban sugar agreement of 1964, Cuba committed itself to produce up to 10 million tons of sugar by 1970. In order to accomplish this goal, the capital accumulated from the sale of sugar to the Soviet bloc, originally earmarked for industrial development, had to go primarily to building the sugar industry. In 1962 all of agriculture, industry, construction and transportation absorbed about 55% of Cuban investment; between 1966 and 1970, 70% went to the sugar industry alone!¹¹

Of course, Cuba did not have the machinery to upgrade its sugar production and the USSR was thus also able to benefit from the sale of this equipment to Cuba. Similarly, the USSR benefited from being the country that, according to a Soviet source,¹² “fully or almost fully fills the needs of Cuba in oil and petroleum products, mineral fertilizers, sulphur, asbestos, cotton, saw-timber, trucks, special automobiles and metal-cutting lathes.” Cuban studies of the mid-1960s are said to have shown that the prices for Soviet and Czech machinery were 11 to 53% higher than those prevailing in Western markets and even Castro complained that some socialist countries “tend to maintain commercial policies with the underdeveloped world which are the same as those used by developed capitalist countries.”¹³

One such “commercial policy” that keeps Cuba tied to the USSR is the Soviet petroleum policy. It provides an excellent example of how economic dependence leads to political subservience. Between 1963 and 1975, Cuban oil production was able to satisfy less than 3% of domestic needs, while petroleum accounted for 63% of Cuba's energy needs in 1973, a percentage that has been steadily increasing. Cuba has relied almost completely on Soviet petroleum imports as the source of energy in almost all electricity generation, transportation and non-sugar industrial activity.¹⁴

Oil is also crucial in sugar production. Former Cuban President Osvaldo Dorticós put it this way:

Without petroleum there is no sugar. Without petroleum the sugar mills cannot operate...without petroleum there is no transportation; without petroleum sugar cannot be transported, because there would not be gasoline for trucks, for agricultural equipment, and sugar cane lifters... Without petroleum there is no economy. There is nothing left.¹⁵

HOW SOVIET IMPERIALISM KEEPS CUBA IN LINE

In the mid-1960's, at the same time it was tying itself to the USSR economically, Cuba was pursuing a somewhat different policy in Latin America than was the USSR. Cuba tried to promote armed rebellion against the regimes of U.S.-backed dictators, while the USSR urged the “left” to build united fronts with the liberal bourgeoisie and work toward a “peaceful” assumption of power. Cuba also had not yet adopted the Soviet system, and was talking of moving rapidly to communism by taking such steps as the abolition of money. The Soviets felt compelled to “reason” with the Cubans:

In 1967, as in previous years, Cuba's need for oil, almost all of which was imported from the USSR, continued to grow rapidly. In 1967, for ex-



Sugar and industry: Cuban plans for industrialization have been shoved aside to expand sugar output for ex-port to the Soviet Union under “international socialist division of labor.”

ample, Cuba’s consumption of oil rose 8%, while supplies increased only 2%. As a result, the nation had to draw down upon its reserves, including those held back for the armed forces. To relieve the adverse effect on military security, Cuba requested some 115 tons of advance oil deliveries, but received only 80 from the USSR. Trucks and cars began to line up at Cuban gas pumps, industrial shutdowns were threatened if tankers arrived late in port, and gas rationing was tightened. Meanwhile, Soviet production of oil continued to rise, thereby making it clear that the Cubans, not the Soviets, were the victims of a squeeze. The USSR was using its control over oil export to Cuba to make Castro more tractable.¹⁶

Making Castro “more tractable” meant Cuba had to retreat from its active support of Latin American guerrilla movements, tone down its criticism of the pro-Soviet “communist” parties that refused to support armed struggle, and endorse the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. It was made obvious to the Cuban leaders that, just as the Soviets demanded that Cuban economic policies conform to the “international socialist division of labor” set by the USSR by being an agricultural and raw materials producer instead of a diversified industrial country, so too the Cubans had to conform their social system and foreign policy to Soviet requirements.

There was an obvious potential for political coercion in continuing to be part of the Soviet’s “world socialist system.” The Cubans had already promised to sell an average of four million tons of sugar per year to the Soviets through 1970 and because they needed to greatly exceed that amount in order to earn convertible currency for purchases outside the Comecon “bloc,” a goal of 10 million tons of sugar in 1970 was set, a goal in keeping with Soviet plans for the Cuban economy.

The 1970 sugar harvest did set a record of 8.5 million tons, 1.3 million more than the previous 1952 record crop. However, in his 1970 July 26th speech, Castro had to admit that the sugar effort had considerably damaged the other sectors of the Cuban economy. Of course, such an effort could not be sustained, and the following year production fell back to 6 million tons. Castro admitted that large-scale food shortages ensued from the 1970 effort, that cement output had dropped to 23% below the 1968 figure, fertilizers were 32% off the planned target and the national farm machinery plan had only reached 8% of its goal by March, 1970, etc.¹⁷

The increased emphasis on sugar production only made Cuba more dependent on the USSR and, of course,

on the world market conditions for that commodity. LeoGrande concluded that when the Cuban sugar crop is relatively good, as in 1961, 1967 and 1970, or the world price is high, as in 1964 and 1974-75, there is a rise in dependency. Conversely, when the crop levels or prices are low, dependency appears to decrease.¹⁸ The basically one-crop system that the Soviets and Castro have continued in Cuba thus presents the Cubans with a losing choice — when the sugar crop is relatively good or the world market price is high, there is greater dependency through increased trade with the Comecon countries; when the crop is bad or world prices low, there is lower national income for Cuba.

The Soviets benefit from Cuba's dependency not just by maintaining Cuba as a market for their machinery and finished products, but also, at times, in the acquisition of the sugar itself. The Soviets paid Cuba 6¢ a pound for sugar from 1963 to 1972. This price was sometimes above and sometimes below the world market price,¹⁹ but the world market price for agricultural commodities has always been subject to unfavorable terms of trade compared to industrial commodities, because of the political control exercised by the industrialized imperialists. The Soviet-Cuban trade agreements of 1972 called for a price 4¢ above the then-world market level of 7¢ a pound. However, by 1974, when half of the Cuban crop was committed for sale to Comecon at 11¢ a pound, sugar hit 30¢ a pound on the market. The Soviets upped their price to 20¢ a pound in August, 1974, while the Eastern Europeans and Chinese paid 17¢ a pound. Nevertheless, the Cubans were obvious losers in that sugar deal.

Only when Cuba began to play the role of a Soviet paladin on a massive scale in the latter half of the 1970s did the Soviets really begin to subsidize the Cuban sugar crop by paying far above world prices.²⁰

This Cuban world role as a Soviet military surrogate coincided with an economic crisis in Cuba. Castro stated in 1976 that Cuba's first priority in this crisis would be to fulfill its economic obligations and maintain its credit, which could only be accomplished through exports to service her large debt to the Comecon countries.²¹ The Soviet subsidy could thus be seen as a mechanism for averting the island's bankruptcy in order to insure Cuba's continuing role as a military stalking horse for the USSR, and to insure an eventual return on the USSR's investment in Cuba.

Of course, a portion of the sugar crop was not committed to the Comecon countries. It had to be sold on the world market. In 1976, for example, sugar again stood at a pound. Although Castro stated that this was below the cost of production and would mean the curtailment of imports and reduction of food rations, he went on to say that Cuba would "stick to sugar."²² Obviously, he wanted to continue to receive the Soviet subsidy. However, like any "gift" from an imperialist country, this subsidy is not only politically tied, but also can be ended at any time, causing serious economic consequences to an economy whose plans have been made in expectation of receiving the "aid." The Soviets have continually expanded their production of sugar from beets; by the mid-70s they were producing enough to satisfy domestic needs and still export some to Comecon countries. By buying Cuban sugar, the Soviets can decrease their own production and use the beet land for higher-yield crops. However, if they chose, for political or economic reasons, to end their Cuban sugar purchases, the dependent Cuban economy would be thrown back onto the depressed and unreliable world sugar market.

Even as it now stands, the Soviet purchase of Cuban sugar at above-market prices should not be viewed as a loss for the USSR, even in economic terms. After all, the Soviets buy the sugar with rubles, a currency that circulates primarily within Comecon. This means that the Cubans must buy Soviet and other East European products with their sugar earnings, because the rubles they receive for sugar must be spent there. However, the Soviets can use the imported Cuban sugar to fulfill the needs of their home market, while exporting their beet sugar or re-exporting the Cuban sugar, all for "hard" convertible Western currencies with which the Soviets can purchase advanced technology from the West.

Meanwhile, the Cubans are tied to buying inferior Soviet goods at prices that an estimate by the National Bank of Cuba places at about 50% above what Cuba would have to pay if it had been able to purchase the

same type and quality of goods outside the “Eastern bloc.”²⁴ For example, after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Castro complained that the latter country had sold Cuba “at good prices many weapons that were war booty captured from the Nazis and we have been paying and are still paying for arms that belonged to the Hitlerian troops who occupied Czechoslovakia.”²⁵

Castro apparently forgot about those inferior Nazi weapons when he visited Czechoslovakia in 1973, after the Cubans became a full member of Comecon, for he said that “it must not be forgotten that our first arms came from Czechoslovakia.” Such political corruption necessarily follows when one sells a country to the imperialists. Another example of it occurred in 1974 when Castro visited Yugoslavia and praised the arch-revisionist Tito and his “League of Communists.” Just five years earlier, Castro had denounced Tito and the “League” as imperialist agents!²⁶ Similarly, in 1962, Castro claimed that Soviet actions played a crucial role in avoiding Cuba’s invasion by U.S. forces, adding “we will never be disloyal or un-grateful to the USSR.” In 1968, Castro, in a speech analyzing the invasion of Czechoslovakia, had denounced the USSR’s “constant, foolish and inexplicable campaign in favor of peace,” but in 1974 he signed a declaration with Brezhnev renouncing the use of force and agreeing that Soviet-U.S. detente was an important step toward world peace! In 1977, Castro attributed all past disagreements with the USSR to “our lack of political maturity” and stated that the Soviets “were extremely patient with us at the time of our differences.”²⁷

The USSR also uses petroleum to control Cuba. While Soviet oil prices for sales to Cuba have been below the world market price, they have followed the world market increases. Prices of Soviet oil sold to Cuba doubled from 1974 to 1975. True, this was a period of huge increases in sugar prices, but the Soviet oil hike, coupled with the fact that about half of the Cuban sugar was already committed to the Comecon countries at prices well below market, went a long way toward preventing a windfall for Cuba from the sugar price boom. Since the Soviets also switched from long-term to annual adjustments of export prices to Comecon countries in 1975, more price hikes followed, while sugar prices plummeted on the world market. Even though the Soviets eventually agreed to pay a higher price for Cuban sugar, this combination of markedly lower-than-world-market prices for sugar shipped to the Soviets, followed by a drop in the world price after 1975, and higher prices for Cuba’s main import, Soviet petroleum, must have contributed greatly to the Cuban economic crisis of 1976 referred to above. Moreover, just as with imports of sugar, Soviet exports of oil to Cuba could be ended if Cuba’s politics were ever to displease the Soviet rulers.

Such are the fruits of the dependency that Cuban leaders have developed with the USSR. The Cuban debt to the Soviets now exceeds \$5 billion. Cuba also owes billions to other Eastern European countries and Western countries. The Cubans will have to start repaying this debt, with interest, in 1986 and will pay until 2011. Of course, during those 35 years, if the revisionist regime in Cuba survives, an additional debt can be expected to pile up.

Like the classical neo-colonies controlled by the U.S. and Western Europe, Cuba has not become a diversified, industrial country; its economy remains agricultural and extractive and since what it extracts is not oil, that means relatively poor. One obvious problem with having a non-diversified economy is that if there is a crop failure, there is a crisis. That is what happened in 1979-80 when plant blights decimated the sugar, tobacco and coffee crops.²⁸ These crops are precisely Cuba’s largest agricultural exports. The proportion of sugar to total exported from 1959 to 1974 has averaged 81%, 3% more than the proportion in 1957-58, just before the “revolution.” Nickel, tobacco, fruits, rum and fish make up almost all of the remainder of Cuba’s exports. Moreover, only 7-8% of the exports are shipped in Cuban vessels. Most of the rest is shipped in Soviet vessels and the Cubans must pay the shipping costs. Cuba must import the machinery needed for the production of

these exports. It also must import food, since one cannot survive on sugar, rum, fish and tobacco. Cuba’s other imports are largely related to maintaining the economy as one of agriculture and light industry. Two of

the biggest items are tractors for sugar planting and harvesting, and trucks for hauling the sugar to collection points for export. Then there are billions of dollars worth of weapons, of which more will be said later. Overall, the proportion of consumer goods out of total imports increased, while that of machinery declined in the 1970s²⁹ showing that Cuba has certainly not tried to go all out to industrialize.

Dependency on the USSR has meant not only that Cuba is an economic neo-colony and that the Soviets can twist Cuba's arm occasionally by applying economic pressure, but also that Cuba has become a political neo-colony as well. Cuba in the 1970's adopted the Soviet system of political, social and economic relations internally. It has become a mouthpiece for Soviet interests around the world. Much to the loss of the Cuban workers and the victims of Cuban intervention on the side of various pseudo-"progressive" forces abroad, Cuba has become the ram with which the Soviets batter down the fortresses of their U.S.-dependent rivals.

CUBA'S CAPITALIST SOCIETY

The First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) was held in December, 1975. This was a full decade after the Party was formed, largely out of remnants of the old pro-Moscow Popular Socialist Party (which had supported the U.S. puppet Batista against Castro) and members of Castro's 26th of July Movement. This congress approved a "new system" of economic management that Castro said was based on the "practical experience of all socialist countries" and "takes into account the operation of economic laws that govern socialist construction and that exist independently of our will and desires."³⁰ This "new system" was to involve greater autonomy for production enterprises and employ strict capitalist accounting practices, market mechanisms and other "success indicators" in economic management.³¹ This system was to be introduced experimentally in 1978, and then applied to the whole economy during 1979 and 1980, the last two years of the Five-Year Plan.³²

Actually, the adoption of the "new system" merely marked the final stage of the "Sovietization" of Cuban society. At the same Congress which adopted it, three of the members of the unswervingly pro-Soviet PSP — Blas Roca, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez and Arnaldo Milian — were named to the thirteen-member Political Bureau of the PCC, the highest organ of power in Cuba.³³

By 1972, Rodriguez, the main Cuban representative for Soviet trade, had been able to announce that "there is not a single sector of our national economy which is to any degree important in which this cooperation [with the USSR] does not already exist or is not planned."³⁴ By early 1974 Soviet and Cuban planning agencies were coordinating their Five-Year Plans for 1976-1980.³⁵ This resulted in the stationing of 6000 Soviet "advisors" in Cuba, 3000 or more of whom held posts in the Cuban planning agencies, ministries and enterprises.³⁶ Cuba had to pay them all in rubles,³⁶ with substantial living allowances in Cuban pesos as well.³⁷

The main feature of the "new system" was the ending of the "egalitarian" wage distribution policies and "moral incentives" for production that had brought Cuba so much admiration in the late 60s. At the 1973 Congress of the Central Organization of Cuban Trade Unions (CTC), these revolutionary policies were declared scrapped, and Castro proclaimed the need, as a matter of principle, for such capitalist practices as wage differentials on skill levels, material incentives to reward higher individual and enterprise work performance, the reintroduction of work quotas to raise productivity and the strengthening of the powers of the managers of state enterprises.³⁸ Later, at the Party Congress, Castro proclaimed:

...money, prices, finances, budget, taxes, interest, and other commodity categories should function as indispensable instruments to allow us to measure the use we make of our productive resources and to determine...to the last centavo, how much we expend on each one of our products; to decide which investment is the most advantageous; to learn which enterprises...perform best, and which perform worst, and so be able to adopt the relevant

measures.³⁹

This approach is, of course, the essence of the Soviet practice of “putting profit in command.” Soviet practice rests on the “theory of productive forces,” which holds that social relations can only be changed from those that exist under capitalism when the material base of society is fully developed.⁴⁰ The Cuban leaders have adopted this spurious theory, too. The upshot of the theory is that as long as capitalist relations of production “must” persist because socialist society is “under developed” economically, capitalist systems of distribution and control will also prevail.

Following these ideas, Castro asserted, for example, that “Marx said that rights can never be more advanced than the economic structure and the cultural development determined by it.”⁴¹ Technicians who were convinced of the “advantages” of capitalism were still given jobs, and the leaders concluded that their earlier policy of placing political cadre over technicians was wrong.⁴² In line with these ideas, the 1975 Party Congress gave managers the power to independently hire labor, get loans, make investment decisions, and to make a profit — in fact, the profit was required.⁴³ These changes made Cuba conform perfectly to the Soviet capitalist mode and drew Soviet approval.⁴⁴

The fact that managers can “rationalize” production has led, in Cuba as in the USSR, to unemployment. This problem was admitted by Castro and Pres. Dorticós as far back as 1972-73⁴⁵ and was dramatically illustrated by the 1980 influx into the U.S. of the “Mariel” Cubans, many of whom had been unemployed in Cuba. Along with unemployment, there is reportedly inflation in Cuba.⁴⁶

The “anti-inflationary” measures taken in Cuba are no different qualitatively than those taken in other capitalist countries — cutbacks in social services for the working class. For example, house rents were to be abolished by 1970, and the minimum wage was to be raised. Both measures were postponed indefinitely, although families earning less than \$25 a month pay no rent.⁴⁷ In 1973 the government ended the policy of granting full salary to workers in vanguard factories who were sick or retired. Also abolished was the guaranteed annual wage for sugar workers, who are generally idled for four or five months per year. In 1976, free telephone calls from public phones were also ended.⁴⁸



The private capitalist sector of Cuba economy has grown constantly as Cuba has moved further and further from revolution. Farmers above sell their produce at a private market.

Wages are basically piece rate in Cuba: a quota is fixed and reduced or increased in direct proportion to a worker’s over- or under fulfillment. The system of voluntary unpaid overtime that had been a feature in Cuba as in the Soviet Union in the days after the revolution was abolished in 1973, as was the “historical wage,” a form of compensation for older workers who had been employed prior to the introduction of the wage scales in 1963-65.⁴⁹

Aside from wages, “material incentives” are provided by a system of allocating TVs, refrigerators, washing machines, watches and the like to enterprises, where a factory committee allocates these “prizes” to workers on the basis of productivity and, to a lesser extent, by need.⁵⁰ Houses are also distributed mainly according to productivity, and the enterprises rent these out at 6% of wages.⁵¹ This is precisely the Soviet system, as is the maintenance by enterprises of an “economic incentive fund” to reward individual workers.⁵²

Not as much is known about income distribution in Cuba as about the Soviet Union, but from what is known, the differentials are not narrow. Given the introduction of the Soviet system of material incentives, these differentials must be widening continuously. One study of income comparing pre- and post-“revolutionary” income distribution concluded that in the mid-70s the poorest forty percent of the population received 20% of the income, compared to about 6% before 1959.⁵³ Thus, as far back as 1973, well before the full introduction of the anti-egalitarian Soviet system, the wealthiest” ten percent of Cubans earned almost seven times as much as the poorest ten percent. While this is obviously not the same as the extremes of wealth and poverty found elsewhere in Latin America, the “egalitarian” income distribution that Cuba was once famous for has been completely reversed.

Another study of Cuban income distribution⁵⁴ brought out the following significant facts:

- Average wages in 1975 were higher than in 1962 only in agriculture, construction and commerce, which comprise about 45% of the labor force.
- The wage share of gross product fell in the years 1970-75: “Labor is receiving a progressively smaller proportion of the product of its work, at least in the form of wages.”
- The share of national income accruing to the poorest 40% of the population barely increased between 1962 and 1973. The poorest 40% “apparently gained relative to other income groups only during the first three years of Castro’s rule. Since 1962, their earnings advancements have been meagre compared to other income groups...Middle income groups which the revolution initially passed by seem to be the main financial beneficiaries of wealth distributed through wages since 1962...”
- The price of goods, except basic foods and clothing, which were regulated in the 1960s, have been deregulated. The capacity to consume now varies with earnings.⁵⁵

The post-1959 income data excludes the private sector, which is chiefly in agriculture. Before the late 1960s “it was not uncommon for independent farmers to earn 10-20,000 pesos a year. This compares with a cabinet minister’s income of 8400 pesos a year and a high for technicians and other specialists of around 10,000 pesos a year. In the late 1960s, these independent farmers were prohibited from hiring workers. Their control over production and marketing were restricted and their commercial outlets were nationalized. But in the 70s, the government again permitted private sales, decontrolled the prices of certain commodities and allowed again the exploitation of hired labor. Once again, private farming became the main source of important commodities. Three-quarters of the country’s produce is now privately grown. Even one-fifth of sugar is privately grown. Farms can be as large as 160 acres, and since 1979 “free” retail markets have been encouraged. The income differential between these “farmers” has thereby increased; the income difference between the richest and poorest Cubans may be considerably more than 11 to 1. Private business services, such as hairdressers, gardeners, taxi drivers, auto mechanics and other craftsmen, laundresses, seamstresses, dentists and doctors are also permitted.⁵⁶

In a prospering economy, such inequalities might be more or less tolerated by the working class, since even if the few received much more than the many, the many might steadily receive a bit more. However, because of its dependency on the Soviet Union, its un-diversified economy, the blights that have hit the agricultural sector, the drain caused by military expeditions abroad and other factors, the Cuban economy is far from prospering. One writer, using Cuban statistics, adjusted for inflation and population growth, calcu-



Cuba's growing role as a hired gun for Soviet imperialism will be discussed in detail in next month's PL.

lates that with the exception of 1978, the Cuban economy registered zero real growth of aggregate product per capita during the 1970s.⁵⁷

This zero growth is reflected in everyday Cuban life by such things as continued rationing. Each month, a Cuban may buy 12 ounces of meat, two pounds of chicken, five pounds of rice, ten ounces of beans, ten ounces of peas, a four-ounce can of tomato concentrate and 4 ounces of coffee. Oil, salt, bread, sugar and cigarettes are also rationed. It is interesting to note that in 1972, Cubans could get three pounds of meat, three pounds of beans and six pounds of rice per month.⁵⁸ Since Cuba's economy is tied to long-term export contracts with Comecon, there is little hope that the economy will improve during the 1980s, despite rising world sugar prices, which quadrupled in 1980, compared to 1979.⁵⁹ The economy's depressed state explains to a large extent the exodus of many thousands of Cubans in 1980, of whom many were skilled workers.⁶⁰

THE CONCENTRATION OF POLITICAL POWER

Cuba is not only stratified economically: there is also an obvious stratification of political power as well. As in the USSR and other pseudo-socialist countries, it is the bureaucrats and managers — the state capitalists — who hold power, while the working class is deprived of any say over the affairs of the country.

At the pinnacle of power, of course, is Fidel Castro. He is not only the Prime Minister and President of the Council of State and Council of Ministers, First Secretary of the Communist Party and Commander-in-Chief of the Army, but he is also in charge of the Ministry of the Interior (police and intelligence units), the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA), the Ministry of Public Health, JUCEPLAN (the central planning agency), the Secretariat of the Presidency and Council of Ministers and even the Children's Institute!⁶¹ His brother, Raúl, is First Vice-President of the Council of State and Council of Ministers, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party and the Party's Second Secretary, and the Minister of the Armed Forces.⁶² Vilma Espin, Raúl's wife, is head of the Federation of Cuban Women and a member of the Party's Central Committee.⁶³ Astoundingly, at the First Party Congress and at the inauguration of the National Assembly, Castro attacked the concentration of political power in one person, family favoritism and revolutionary cliques —in China!⁶⁴

Outside the Castro family, the most powerful official is undoubtedly the Soviet Union's longtime friend, Carlos Rafael Rodríguez. He is Vice-President of the Council of State and Council of Ministers, a member of the Political Bureau, the Fourth Secretary of the Party and head of the Foreign Relations Sector, which co-

ordinates all of Cuba's foreign policy. Other old PSP members with important offices are Blas Roca, head of the commission that oversees the "Organs of Political Power" and President of the National Assembly⁶⁵ and Arnaldo Milián, Vice-President of the Council of State. Roca and Milián are both members of the Party's Political Bureau and Secretariat.

The December 1980 Second Party Congress basically re-affirmed the power of those who had been elected by the First Congress; although the Central Committee was expanded somewhat and the Political Bureau gained three new members, there was no shift in power. The 1979-80 leadership "shakeup" resulted in the dismissal of 11 people of ministerial rank, but their posts were simply divided among even more senior officials. The one notable result of the shuffle was that all of the few women ministers, and possibly all of the black ministers, were dismissed.⁶⁶

There is a strong military influence among the leadership. Of the eighteen top leaders in the late 70s, twelve originally held military posts. All of these had risen in power without interruption; the other six had at one time or another been demoted and then re-acquired power.⁶⁷ While bourgeois analysts disagree whether the Cuban leadership came more or less under the control of military officers in the 1970s,⁶⁸ it is certainly true that the path to a leadership position has been through the officer corps rather than through the working class. Of the 112 full members of the 1975 Central Committee, 36 were active-duty officers, 35 had been officers some time after 1960. Thus 63% of the Central Committee had past experience as officers in 1975.⁶⁹

(The concluding part of this article, which will appear next month, examines the non-working class composition of the Cuban Communist Party, and Cuba's role as a hired gun for Soviet imperialism in Africa, as well as recent further developments of state capitalism in Cuba.)

TO OUR READERS: Beginning with this issue, *PL Magazine* is being published monthly with *Challenge-Desafío*, in order to ensure a wider readership and guarantee bilingual publication of these important articles. Subscribers to *PL* and *C-D* will have their *C-D* subscriptions extended; those who receive *PL* will now receive *C-D* instead.



Cuba under Castro has traded one imperialist master for another. Above, Castro at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, and with Nikita Khrushchev in the USSR.

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Cuba and Imperialism

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(The first part of this article, which appeared in the previous issue of PL Magazine, described how Cuba, under the leadership of Fidel Castro and the Cuban “Communist” Party, has shaped its economy and society to fit the Soviet mold, complete with state capitalism, material incentives for production, the abandonment of serious industrialization in favor of increasing sugar production for export to the Soviet-dominated Comecon, and a foreign policy tailored to match Soviet imperialism.)

This retreat from the revolutionary goals put forward in the early years of the Castro regime, which won Cuba many admirers among anti-imperialists and revolutionaries, is reflected in the Party and state apparatuses in Cuba, with power concentrated in the hands of an increasingly non-proletarian elite, with a strong military flavor, and in the increasing exclusion of workers and workers’ organizations from even a semblance of power or decision-making.)

THE SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF THE PARTY

The class composition of the Party is, of course, a key indicator of which class has political power in an ostensibly socialist state. One writer says that:

Membership is now more independent of exemplary worker status than it once was. Although a majority of party members may possibly come from working-class or peasant backgrounds, most are not employed as workers and are not even directly linked to production; they tend to be military people, party officials and bureaucrats.⁷⁰

A somewhat more precise breakdown is found in a chart in the *Theses and Resolutions of the First Party Congress*, comparing the social structure of Cuba with that of the Party.⁷¹ Although the chart is by share of annual production rather than population, it can be assumed to correspond roughly to population figures.

	Portion of Cuban annual production	Percent of Party's members
Workers in industry, fishing construction and services	65.0%	35.9%
Professional & technical workers	11.7%	9.2%
Workers exercising political or administrative direction functions	7.7%	42.1% (Administrative: 33.4%) (Political: 8.7%)
Administrative workers	4.7%	4.1%

Small farmers	9.7%	1.8%
Others	1.2%	6.9%

The table indicates that in 1975 there were about 5.5 times as many leading economic and political bureaucrats in the Party as in the general population, while workers were underrepresented in the Party by a 1:1.7 ratio. It is not known whether the Cuban Party follows the Soviet practice of considering the social class of a Party member to be that which he or she had on joining the Party. If so, workers would be even more underrepresented, especially if they are counting foremen and supervisors as workers. It is very probable that the Party is far less proletarian today than in 1975, when a majority of members were higher-paid functionaries, technicians and professionals, not workers. In late 1972, 12% of Party members were said to be industrial workers and 28% agricultural workers. The figure given at the 1975 Party Congress for all workers in the Party was about 36%, a substantial drop over a three-year period.⁷²

It is interesting to note also that Party disciplinary actions are taken disproportionately



Castro with Brezhnev. Cuba has become USSR's main military surrogate in Africa.

against worker-members of the Party, as compared to political functionaries. For example, in 1974, about 55% of disciplinary actions were taken against workers, who were about 36% of the Party. In contrast, less than 4% of the Party disciplinary actions were taken against political functionaries, who were 8.7% of the Party.⁷³ Incidentally, the President, Prime Minister and other ministers and members of the PCC Political Bureau are exempted from the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts and can only be tried by a special Party Court.⁷⁴ These facts certainly cut against any argument that the PCC, or Cuba, is run by workers.

Returning to the question of the composition of the Party, it is notable that the percentage of Party members is very high not only among military officers (90% or more), but also among other middle or ruling class elements. In 1972, 50% of the Academy of Sciences were in the Party; in 1974, 41.7% of journalists were in the Party or the Communist Youth Union; in 1976, 70% of the officials at the Interior Ministry were Party or CYU members — yet only 4% of the population, and less among workers, were in the Party. At the First Party Congress, Castro mentioned that the Party was weak in the sugar industry, basic industry, construction, transportation, education and agriculture. That just about covers the whole working class! And he was speaking to Congress delegates 46% of whom were in political and administrative jobs and 19% of whom

were from the Armed Forces or Ministry of the Interior, so it is doubtful that there were many workers there to hear Castro bemoan the Party's lack of a base among the workers.⁷⁵

Had Castro been speaking to the National Assembly instead, he would have been speaking to a body whose members, in 1976, included 41.5% functionaries, 8% technicians, 7% military officers 12% "others" — and only 3% "production, teaching or service workers." Women constituted 22%, and those without higher or intermediate education only 12%.⁷⁶ The Central Committee was even more elite — 29% Party officials, 28.8% government officials, 28.8% military or police officials, 4.8% cultural or scientific figures, 6.5% officials of mass organizations and 1.6% "others" or of unknown connections.⁷⁷

Agricultural or industrial blue-collar workers are also conspicuously underrepresented in the Communist Youth Union. In 1977, 31% of its members were students, the rest apparently being professionals, scientists, schoolteachers and white collar workers generally.⁷⁸

WHERE ARE THE WOMEN? WHERE ARE THE BLACKS?

Women, too, are notable by their absence from the top ranks. In 1975, not quite 15% of Party members were women; only 6% of Party officials were women, and even less on the Central Committee. Castro claimed in 1975 that 17% of Party cell leaders were women as were 13% of provincial Party executive committee leaders;⁷⁹ another study counts women as 5.5% of national Party leaders, 6.3% of provincial Party leaders, 4.1% of regional Party leaders, and 2.9% of municipal Party leaders, as well as 15.3% of leaders in the economy.⁸⁰

There is evidence of continued racism in Cuba. For example, one "socialist" professor who had left Cuba in 1958 and returned for a visit in 1979 noted that

...Cuban policy is that of "color blindness" rather than what North Americans call "affirmative action." I never saw a black or mulatto man or woman as a supervisor or manager of any place I visited in Cuba. This is consistent with what we know to be the disproportionately low number of blacks and mulattos on the Cuban Communist Party's Central Committee...While I didn't witness any racist conduct in ordinary social intercourse, I did hear many racist opinions among supporters and opponents of the regime.⁸¹

The same writer pointed out that only 22.7% of Cuban women were employed in 1977. This indicates a perpetuation of the extreme male chauvinism that has been historically fostered by capitalism and especially by Latin American capitalist rulers. It is reflected in the remark of one woman Cuban leader, the late Haydee Santamaria, that women are the "weaker sex";⁸² in the exclusion of women from the regular military —

they can only be reservists⁸³ — and in the attitudes shown in a survey of 30 union leaders and 27 rank-and-filers: only one said that working for pay was a “valid feminine objective”!⁸⁴

WORKERS’ ROLE IN PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT — LISTEN AND FOLLOW

Despite the existence of various forms for workers to exercise power in government and industry, Cuba’s governors and managers give short shrift to the voices of Cuba’s workers.

In 1974, Cuba began to implement ‘Poder Popular,’ or People’s Power, a system that would supposedly give the masses significant decision-making power on provincial and municipal levels. However the Organs of Popular Power (OPP) are very limited because:

- (1) The party decides in practice who is eligible to sit on and chair the OPP Executive Committees which are the decision-making and managerial bodies of *poder popular*.
- (2) The OPP manage the least important sectors of the economy (basically services), while the central state agencies administer the key industries, all agriculture, mining and finance.
- (3) The size and distribution of resources allocated to the services administered by the OPP are centrally decided.
- (4) The Council of State supervises the OPP and the Council of Ministers (through the state central agencies) exert direction and supervision over the OPP administrative departments.
- (5) The OPP decisions can be annulled, modified or revoked by other organs of the state and government.⁸⁵

The *Poder Popular* is thus no more indicative of a proletarian democracy in Cuba than are the other much-vaunted elements of “political participation” in Cuba. For example, a survey by *Bohemia*, the Cuban equivalent of *Time Magazine*, revealed that 34% of enterprises did not discuss their plans with their workers and 58% of the enterprises did discuss their plans but did not take into account any of the suggestions workers made. In other words, only 8% of enterprise “leaders” did anything at all with regard to the plans suggested by workers!⁸⁶ When elections for trade union leadership posts were held, there was generally only one candidate for each post in small enterprises, and an overall ratio of 114 candidates for each post. Only about half the workers participated in assemblies to elect candidates and even fewer voted.⁸⁷ Few but those favored by the government are put forward as candidates. Moreover, it matters little if only those picked by the Party leaders are to become trade union leaders, since neither they nor rank-and-file workers have any say in Cuban enterprises. As Minister of Labor Jorge Riquet put it:

The decision and responsibility [in the enterprise] fall to the management, whose job is to take the daily, necessary measures required by the process of production...One thing that is perfectly clear is that the management should have — and does have — all the authority to act. It is charged with a responsibility and it has the authority to make the decisions.⁸⁸



Cuban soldiers in the Ogaden, where thousands of Cuban troops have been fighting for the Soviet-backed Dirgue.

A First Party Congress resolution also stated that “managers are the highest authority” in state enterprises and “have maximum responsibility.” Managers were to be advised by a board on which unions would be represented, but union participation would be limited to discussing the plan and analyses of its fulfillment, use of the incentive fund and the organization of “socialist emulation.” In November 1976, even this token participation was dropped, and two councils were set up for each enterprise — a “Leadership Council” of “administrative leaders” to decide administrative matters and a “Technical Advisory Council” of “outstanding specialists, highly-qualified technicians and administrative heads.” Neither council would include any workers.⁸⁹

The goal of the unions in Cuba is supposed to be that of management: “always producing more and better,”⁹⁰ which could, of course, be the slogan of any U.S. labor faker or boss. The “production assemblies” envisaged by the 13th CTC Congress were to work toward increasing production, tightening “labor discipline,” “rationalising resource use,” etc. The managers could accept or reject any suggestion from the assemblies, with no sanctions for breaking promises made to the assembly. The “management councils” were to have some unspecified union participation, probably also just making suggestions.⁹¹

Cuban enterprises enforce severe penalties for absenteeism. The “crime of loafing” can bring house arrest or imprisonment of up to two years at forced labor. The imposition of the law that is the basis for this discipline was one of those ideas proposed to and discussed by “hundreds of thousands of workers,” only to be passed with virtually no changes.⁹² It is the managers, and not the workers who have the power at the enterprise level.

Party officials and managers in command, holding all the decision-making power; workers who are mere appendages of production; power coupled with privilege; powerlessness coupled with a bare existence. This is the Cuban version of “socialism.”

CUBA: HIRED GUN FOR SOVIET IMPERIALISM

Cuba has long been portrayed as a socialist country ever willing to aid anti-imperialist movements throughout the world — and, indeed, in its first years the Cuban leadership did actively aid many struggles in Latin America. This aid, which won “Castroism” many adherents, was probably well-intentioned and was certainly opposed to the Soviet line of collaboration with many of the “gorilla” (fascist) regimes of that region. Even so, the aid was coupled with the promotion of an erroneous theory of the conduct of people’s war, the so-called guerrilla *foco* theory. This theory made the military, as opposed to the political struggle of the armed masses, the primary basis of fighting imperialism and fascism. It relied on “exemplary actions” by the guerrillas to move the rural masses to revolutionary action.

The *foco* theory was elaborated by Regis Debray, later a high official in the “socialist” government of French imperialism, in his book *Revolution in the Revolution?* in the late 1960s. His theory, taken up by the Cuban leadership, led to one disaster after another among militant anti-imperialists, including the physical liquidation of Che Guevara’s group in Bolivia in 1967. The theory was also taken up by such elitist, anti-working class ex-student terrorists as the Weather Underground in the U.S., with the same predictable, disastrous results.⁹³

Later, as they became more closely tied to the Soviet imperialists, the Cuban leaders renounced even this misplaced militancy. Since the end of the 60s, the main aspect of Cuban foreign policy has been servile adherence to the Soviet line — when the Soviets were pushing “detente” with the U.S., Castro & Co. were for developing “correct relations” with the mass murderers in Washington, even though “detente” was designed principally to serve the very specific needs of Soviet imperialism.

The Cubans first aligned themselves with Soviet foreign policy by supporting the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Gradually they began to support the Soviet line completely, including the line of calling for negotiations between the U.S. and Vietnam, not people’s war to defeat the U.S. aggression. They vociferously attacked China, at a time when China stood squarely against both U.S. and Soviet imperialism. By 1970, Soviet-Cuban relations were very close.⁹⁴ This support for the Soviets was partly a result of Cuban expectations of a better deal from the Soviets economically. After all, in large measure, the purpose of Soviet “detente” proposals was to secure access to western high technology, which was supposed to improve the Soviet economy; this improvement might have been thought of as beneficial to the USSR’s client states in the long run. Indeed, the “critical support” Cuba gave the Soviets over Czechoslovakia was followed, in February 1969, by a trade treaty “more favorable” to Cuba. Castro, in turn, launched a “Soviet-Cuban Friendship Society in April, 1969, and Cuba took part in the Soviet-dominated June, 1969 International Conference of Communist and Workers’ Parties, a conference boycotted by China, Albania, Vietnam and North Korea — the countries widely considered still militant at the time. At the conference, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez intoned that “...in the people’s struggle against imperialism, the main bulwark is the Soviet Union.”⁹⁶

For the Soviets, Castro’s desire for a new Soviet “umbrella” — the first Soviet “defense umbrella” had proven leaky during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 — provided an opportunity to make Cuba a military as well as an economic colony. In particular, it allowed the Soviets to establish Caribbean ports for their navy. By 1972, when Castro visited the USSR, Brezhnev was able to call “Socialist Cuba...a stable component of the world socialist system.”⁹⁶

Becoming part of the Soviet camp meant that Cuba had to abandon support for communist-led revolution in Latin America. Thus, in November, 1969, Castro announced support for the Peruvian military regime, supposedly “revolutionary” because it had nationalized the U.S.-controlled International Petroleum Company. Of course, the Peruvian officers were not out to create communism; they only wanted to get themselves a bigger share of the pie, and their partnership with U.S. imperialism was not severed. They ferociously attacked revolutionaries and the working class in general, eventually knuckling under to an International Monetary Fund demand that they drastically lower the workers’ standard of living in exchange for loans. This regime has now come full circle and vociferously attacks Cuba. Yet Castro, in a speech for Lenin’s centenary in 1970, said that “Any Latin American government which sincerely and consistently undertakes the economic and social development of its country and emancipation from the imperialist yoke, may count on the support of our people and our Revolution.”⁹⁷

In October, 1970, this policy translated into support for the ill-fated “peaceful transition” government of Salvador Allende in Chile. Its anti-popular character and disastrously revisionist policies have been analyzed by our Party elsewhere.⁹⁸ Yet, when Castro visited Allende in the fall of 1971, he stated that there was a “revolutionary process” going on in Chile. What was actually going on was a fierce class struggle that the *Unidad Popular* government of the Socialists and “Communists” was trying desperately to contain,

70. Jorge I. Dominguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978, p. 306.
71. Reproduced in Andre and Francine DeMichel. *Cuba*. Paris: Librairie Generale de Droit et de Jurisprudence, 1979, p. 129.
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82. Herbert L. Matthews, *Revolution in Cuba: an essay in understanding*. N.Y.: Scribners, 1975, p. 331.
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90. Mesa-Largo, p. 90.
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92. *Ibid.*, p. 95, n. 80.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
94. *Granma*, May 3, 1970.
95. Radio Moscow, May 8, 1970, quoted in Gouré and Weinkle, p. 185.
96. *Pravda*, Jan. 31, 1974, quoted in Levesque, p. 182.
97. *Castro, Cuba and the U.S.A.: A Special Report*, CBS News, Oct 22, 1974, quoted in *La Genta*, (UCLA), Feb. 16, 1975, p. 15.

98. See *Mucha Debris from Regis Debray*, in *PL*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Nov. 1967); *Guevara's Great Adventure*, in *PL*, Vol. 7, No 11 (May 1969).

99. See, for example, Castro's speech at the Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in Algiers in 1973.

100. Reproduced in *La Gente*, February 1975.

101. *Ang Katipunan*, Volume 2, No. 7 (Oct. 10, 1975).

102. *Christian Monitor Science Monitor*, Dec. 12, 1975.

103. *Ibid.*, Oct. 12, 1976.

104. *Angolan Marxist-Leninists on the MPLA*, reproduced in *Ikwezi*, (London) No. 5 (Apr. 1977), pp.

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so as not to "aggravate" the bourgeoisie. When Castro visited Chile, Allende even trotted out Gen. Pinochet, the future butcher of the Chilean workers, to greet him. The army, Allende believed, would never intervene in Chilean politics as long as things did not go "too far."

The Soviets, of course, were pushing hard for the "Chilean road." This was the height of detente: an opportunity for the Soviet rulers to cut arms expenditures, import needed technology and food supplies, and enter new markets. Although the blockade of Cuba continued, the Castro leadership fronted for the Soviets, arguing that despite "detente" the USSR was still revolutionary and anti-imperialist.⁹⁹ To defend "detente," Castro had to do everything possible to prettify U.S. imperialism. For example, this is what Castro said about Henry Kissinger — one of the greatest mass murderers since Hitler — in an interview with CBS correspondent Dan Rather on October 22, 1974:

...Kissinger has shown himself to be a realistic politician who undoubtedly has fought for international detente...international public opinion always regarded Kissinger as a man of peace

...I believe he is no doubt the most realistic politician and the one who has made the greatest efforts to find a solution to the Cold War problems in the United States.¹⁰⁰

While Castro never had the opportunity to meet with this "realistic" butcher of the Vietnamese and Chilean peoples, he nevertheless could be seen developing friendly relations with many of U.S. imperialism's friends around the world, such as Forbes Burnham, the CIA-installed president of Guyana; Imelda Marcos, the powerful wife of the Philippine fascist dictator;¹⁰¹ and, of course, Luis Echeverría, the Mexican president who had, as Minister of the Interior in 1968, presided over the massacre of hundreds of students. Castro also tried to improve relations with the U.S. directly, inviting Congressmen, Ford Foundation representatives, etc. Castro even let it be known that he had been "morose" over the assassination of John Kennedy in 1963¹⁰² — the same John Kennedy Who orchestrated the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961!

Of course, the bubble burst. The U.S. imperialists, recognizing that it was mainly the Soviets who stood to benefit from detente, ended this phony process as soon it became clear that the Soviets still intended to get formerly U.S.-controlled areas into the Soviet imperialist orbit.

INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA

In November, 1975, the Cubans dispatched about 12,000 troops to fight alongside the MPLA,¹⁰³ principally against UNITA and the South Africans. About half of the Cuban soldiers were black, twice the proportion of blacks in the Cuban population. The Cubans also played a considerable role in beating back the FNLA forces

as the latter tried to approach the Angolan capital of Luanda, which had been turned over to the MPLA by the departing Portuguese. The MPLA regime, as soon as it felt reasonably secure, began a fierce repression of all organizations not under its direct control, particularly the dock workers' committee in Luanda, which wanted to "continue the revolution," according to a document of the suppressed Organization of Angolan Communists.¹⁰⁴

Cuban troop strength in Angola probably reached 20,000 and is still about 15,000. Soviet and other East European military and technical advisors flocked into the country. By 1980 they totaled about 5,000. The impoverished Angolan government had to pay for the Russians' housing, which is segregated and includes a private beach! Cuban teachers had to be paid \$600 a month each. The East Germans took command of the secret police. The Soviets were allowed to fish in Angolan waters and keep 75% of the catch. Weapons acquired from the USSR had to be paid for in coffee and oil, even though coffee production was down from 240,000 tones in 1974 to 30,000 in 1980 and agricultural production had fallen 75% in the 1975-1980 period; industrial production was down 80%.¹⁰⁵

By 1980, the Angolan government's financial commitments to the USSR, and its military spending — also going mainly to Soviet-bloc countries — accounted for 60¢ of every dollar Angola earned.¹⁰⁶ The Angolans are said to pay twice as much for East European equipment as they would pay for comparable equipment on the world market¹⁰⁷ and the Russians are said to pay less for Angolan coffee than the world market price.¹⁰⁸

The Angolan government, which reportedly has about 2000 political prisoners, is run Sovietstyle by well-paid officials — cabinet ministers reportedly earn about \$800 a month, low by U.S. standards, but probably forty times what the average rural Angolan earns. In addition, these officials "have access to whiskey, cars and food not available to most Angolans."¹⁰⁹ Thus, Cuba supports a regime that is dedicated to the preservation of capitalism, including Western imperialist penetration, but has also allowed the country to become mortgaged to and ultimately controlled by Soviet imperialism.

CUBA'S ROLE IN ETHIOPIA

Even more striking has been the close relationship with the fascist Ethiopian military regime. Like the Angolan regime, the Ethiopian rulers (the "Dergue," or junta), parade themselves as adherents of Marxism-Leninism and "Ethiopian socialism." However, the Dergue has carried out fierce repression against Ethiopians who criticized the regime from the left, such as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party, slaughtering thousands, and has waged an all-out campaign against the labor movement.¹¹⁰ The Dergue came to power by overthrowing the corruption-ridden regime of Emperor Haile Selassie, a long-standing client of the U.S. and Israel. Selassie's regime of aristocrats and merchant capitalists had bled the peasants and suppressed the workers and students.

The Dergue at first proclaimed itself both anti-capitalist and anti-Marxist, and "took unto itself the task of destroying what it called the "feudal-bourgeois' order only *after* the two civilian Premiers it had given the task of instituting a bourgeois government had failed. Even as late as March, 1975, the Dergue was still toying with the idea of a constitutional monarchy and the preservation of church estates."¹¹¹ In 1975, the Dergue "turned left," proclaimed itself "Marxist-Leninist" and began the "nationalization" of industry and land. The "nationalization" of industry seems to have consisted mainly of military participation in management, while the "profound accent of the 1975 land reform proclamation lay in its emphasis on expanded peasant production to serve as a basis for industrialization."¹¹²

In September, 1975, the Confederation of Ethiopian Labor Unions protested against the "denial of democratic rights, wage freezes, continuing inflation and exhortations to support Dergue-ap-pointed managements..." The Dergue responded with arrests and assassinations, not just of CELU leaders, but also of rank-and-file workers. For example, in Sept. 1975, when Ethiopian Airlines workers were protesting the

detention of their union leaders for distributing anti-Dirgue literature, the military shot and killed 7, wounding 43 others. The Dirgue continued the heavy attacks, attempting to turn the CELU into an instrument of the regime.¹¹³ Around May Day, 1977 the Dirgue massacred an estimated 600 to 1000 workers and students.¹¹⁴

The Dirgue's attacks against the EPRP were particularly harsh. This group, which calls for an alliance of workers, peasants and the "progressive petty bourgeoisie," and for "the preparation of the necessary political foundation for the future socialist society." While this is hardly a program for communism, its call for democratic rights, freedom of political organization, release of political prisoners, and a national assembly to prepare for elections¹¹⁵ were enough to cause the Dirgue to declare "total war" on them. They responded with guerrilla warfare. By March, 1978, after the Dirgue's thug-led "urban associations," or *kebeles*, had done their work, a *Times* of London correspondent reported, the streets of Addis Ababa were littered with bodies. It is estimated that the Dirgue killed about 5,000 leftist youth in this period.¹¹⁶ A number of writers have reported that it was Soviet and Cuban support of the Dirgue that tipped the balance against the EPRP and other "radical" forces in the war with the military.¹¹⁷

Both the USSR and Cuba began to be friendly with the Dirgue in 1975, but their influence really grew when Somalia turned against the USSR during the Ethiopian-Somali war in Ethiopia's Ogaden region in 1977. The Dirgue, which had previously been getting arms from the U.S., turned to Moscow. Even after Soviet, Cuban and "Eastern bloc" troops drove the Somalis out of Ogaden, these armies maintained an overpowering presence: 2500 Soviet military and technical personnel, 3000 East Germans and 11,000 Cuban soldiers.¹¹⁸ As in Angola, the East Germans run the secret police, while the Cubans do duty in the Ogaden and the Soviets lend a hand in the fight against the independence movement of another "national minority," the Eritreans.¹¹⁹

The Dirgue has continued the genocidal war against the Eritreans that Haile Selassie began two decades ago. Eritrea is an area which the Italian colonialists occupied in 1889 and then "incorporated" into Ethiopia when Mussolini's fascists conquered Ethiopia in 1936. In 1950, the United Nations passed a U.S.-sponsored resolution "federating" the two. Armed with this resolution, Selassie brutally crushed worker opposition to this forced merger, and, in 1962, proclaimed Eritrea a province of Ethiopia. In 1961, armed resistance began under the Eritrean Liberation Front. In 1970, the ELF was split by leftists who formed the Eritrean People's Liberation Front. It is primarily against this group, which has wide support, that the Soviet pilots and "advisors" have been used.

While it is not certain whether the Cubans are directly involved in combat in Eritrea, their presence in the Ogaden certainly frees Ethiopian troops to fight in Eritrea, which in the late 1970s had been 99% cleared of Dirgue-led occupiers. In addition, the Cubans provide a "revolutionary" cover for the Dirgue butchers. Fidel Castro has called Dirgue head Lt. Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam "the man who could advance the Ethiopian revolution on the only path a revolution could take: socialism."¹²⁰ When some members of the Dirgue who were more apt to conciliate the Eritreans were wiped out gangster-style by Mengistu's forces, "the first foreigner to congratulate Mengistu was Ambassador Anatoly Ratanov of the USSR."¹²¹ What is especially ironic is that when Ethiopia was tied to Washington, the Soviets and Cubans praised the Eritrean struggle and perhaps supported it with arms. Now, since Moscow has "captured" Ethiopia, the USSR and its Cuban sidekicks help exterminate the EPLF.

Of course, Soviet-Cuban influence in Ethiopia has meant more than just military "assistance" that includes a massive troop and police presence. It has also meant the Ethiopian adoption of the "Soviet model":

Military rule has stifled the mass spontaneity released by the popular movement. The PMAC (Dirgue) has dismantled existing popular organizations and crushed every attempt to form new ones. The regime shows a distinct preference for mammoth corporate structures of the Soviet

model, such as the All-Ethiopia Trade Union, and the All-Ethiopia Peasant Union — unwieldy, bureaucrat-ridden organizations designed to foil meaningful popular participation...¹²²

In addition, the Soviets have implemented their familiar pattern of supplying arms and oil in exchange for agricultural commodities in order to create dependency:

There have been reports of disagreements between the Ethiopians and the Russians over repayment terms involving the \$2.8 billion worth of weapons acquired by Ethiopia since 1977. Ethiopia was to have started making payments three years ago, but it did not have the cash and instead bartered an undisclosed amount of its coffee crop. But Ethiopia, which produces about 100,000 tons a year, is now said to want to retain more of its crop for export. Coffee exports bring Ethiopia 70% of its foreign revenues, or about \$200 million in 1981.

The Ethiopians are apparently annoyed about Moscow's reluctance to agree to a new long-term oil contract and preferential terms. The Soviet Union, currently the only supplier of oil to this nation of 33 million, sells \$220 million worth of oil each year to Ethiopia, at about \$28 a barrel, or about \$8 a barrel below the general world price. The oil contracts are negotiated yearly, and the Soviet Union reportedly does not want to give up that leverage. Moreover, Moscow is believed to be asking for a higher price next year, something the Ethiopians say they cannot afford.

Moscow is also said to be insisting that heavy military and technical equipment purchased by Ethiopia be transported back to the Soviet Union when major repairs are necessary, and it wants the Ethiopians to pay the transportation cost. Senior Arab and Asian military attachés here say top Ethiopian military officials have complained

56-70.

105. *Los Angeles Times*, May 21, 1960.

106. *Ibid.*, May 27, 1980.

107. *Ibid.*, May 21, 1980.

108. *Ikwezi*, p. 60.

109. *Los Angeles Times*, May 19, 1980.

110. See Paul Henze, *Communism and Ethiopia* in *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (May-June 1981) p. 58; Donald Katz, *Children's Revolution: a bloodbath in Ethiopia*, in *Horn of Africa*, (Summit, N.J.) Vol. 1, No. 3 (1978); and John Markakis and Nega Ayele, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia*. Nottingham, U.K.: Spokesman, 1978, pp. 142-145, 162-164.

111. Michael Chege, *The Revolution Betrayed: Ethiopia. 1974-79* in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (1979), p. 369.

112. *Ibid.*, p. 370.

113. *Ibid.*, p. 370-371. Also, John Markakis. *Garrison Socialism in Ethiopia*, in *MERIP Reports*, No. 79 (s.d.), p. 11.

114. Markakis and Ayele, p. 108.

115. Markakis. p. 12.

116. Han Ecrik, *The Times* (London), March 28, 1978. p. 1. See also Bereket Habte Selassie, *The Dergue's Dilemma: the legacies a feudal empire*, in *Monthly Review*, Vol. 32, No 3 (July-August, 1980), p. 15.

117. Chege, p. 373; Markakis, p. 15.

118. *New York Times*, Dec 21, 1981. *Ibid.*, July 28, 1981, gives the figures as 1700 Cubans, 4000 Russians and 2000 East Germans.

119. *Le Monde*, Apr. 25, 1978, quoted in Markakis, p. 15.

120. Markakis, p. 16.

121. *Ibid.*, p 15.

122. *New York Times*, Dec. 21, 1981.

123. *Ibid.*, Aug. 24, 1981.

124. *The Standard*, Apr. 1979, cited in Chege, p. 379.

125. For a deceitful Cuban paean to the Dergue, see Raul Veldes Vivo, *Ethiopia's Revolution*, N.Y.: International Publishers, 1978.

126. Henze, pp. 68(?) -70.

127. *New York Times*, July 19, 1980.

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Castro and leaders of Nicaragua and Grenada. In recent years the Cuban regime has become an ally not only of Soviet imperialism but also of every sort of social democratic and nationalist regime.

about the poor durability of some Soviet military equipment.¹²³

The Soviets have also loaned Ethiopia the equivalent of \$60 billion, with which to purchase Soviet equipment and expertise for agricultural mechanization.¹²⁴ In short, the Cubans are supporting a regime in Ethiopia¹²⁵ that is anti-working class, anti-leftist and is thoroughly penetrated by Soviet imperialism, economically, politically and militarily. On top of this, the Ethiopians actually have to pay the local expenses, of the thousands of Cuban troops occupying the country, while 70% of foreign exchange earnings go to pay for Soviet petroleum.¹²⁶

CLOSER TO HOME: CUBA AND THE SANDINISTAS

While Cuba is militarily preoccupied in Angola and Ethiopia, it has also seen its first opening in years in Latin America, with the arrival of the Sandinista “revolution” in Nicaragua. Castro has developed friendly ties with the Nicaraguan leaders, whom he praises¹²⁷ as he has praised Burnham of Guyana and Manly of Jamaica (these two were given Cuban medals!) and Echeverría and López Portillo of Mexico. Like these figures, the Sandinistas do not even claim to be for socialism, but are trying to conciliate U.S. imperialism, and build a “pluralist, capitalist” society:

‘Even if we were Marxist-Leninists, we’d have to be mad to think that socialism is possible here,’ said Tomas Borge Martinez, the Interior Minister and one of the nine top Sandinist commanders.

‘Nothing will work unless it is economically and politically pluralistic.’¹²⁸

“Economic pluralism” has meant that even after the confiscation of the huge holdings of the Somoza family, which ruled Nicaragua for forty years, 60% of the economy and 80% of production remain in private hands. Eighty percent of credit and foreign exchange has also been “channeled into the private sector.”¹²⁹ “Political pluralism” has meant a policy of “neither excluding private sector representatives from government, nor allowing them to acquire control of key political institutions...”¹³⁰ In other words, private capitalists are represented in the top decision-making bodies of Nicaragua, but it is the Sandinista leaders, who are advocates of state capitalism, who are predominant. Foreign capitalists are not directly represented in the government, but have certainly been allowed to continue to make profits in Nicaragua. One U.S. capitalist with a factory in Nicaragua who was interviewed in the summer of 1981 was reportedly optimistic about his prospects there, citing a “new conciliatory attitude” on the part of Nicaragua’s government, reflected in the appointment of a former president of the central bank as Nicaragua’s ambassador to the U.S. This ambassador “himself agrees that Nicaragua, in dire need of outside aid, is being more pragmatic in its dealings with capitalist business partners.”¹³¹ Indeed, the Sandinistas virtually begged the U.S. for a \$75 million aid package.¹³² The Sandinista leaders and their supporters have also repeatedly denied that they give any material aid to the rebels fighting the U.S.-backed fascist junta in El Salvador.

The Sandinistas’ attitude has been less friendly toward the working class than toward the U.S. In September, 1981, a one-year economic emergency was proclaimed in which public expenditures were slashed and strikes and factory seizures by the workers were banned. There were reports of disenchantment with the Sandinista regime among the urban poor because of inflation, food shortages and inadequate public transportation. The pro-Russian Communist Party, which is said to have accused the government of following the path of state capitalism, was sharply attacked by the Sandinistas when it began to “mobilize industrial workers to protest against wage controls and the ban on strikes.”¹³³ About 100 Communist Party members were arrested in October, 1981, including the Party’s Secretary General, Elí Altamirano.

Despite the pro-Russian Communists’ continued pledge of loyalty to the regime, the Sandinistas apparently considered the agitation among the trade unions to be more dangerous than capitalist protests that the government was restricting their operational ability. The Cubans apparently did not care that their “comrades” were being locked up by their Sandinista friends, for “the detention of the Communists was largely ignored outside of Nicaragua,” despite the fact that “the Communist leaders are facing three years’ imprisonment for complaining that the regime has surrendered to capitalism.”¹³⁴

FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN CUBA — CASTRO LIFTS THE LID

Meanwhile, back home in Cuba, the Castro regime has made new moves in the development of state capitalism and in opening opportunities for foreign investment. A key step in this direction is Decree Law 50, an act that basically lifts all controls on foreign investment in Cuba, allowing future investors in joint ventures with the state to own up to 49%, and in some cases more; to take all their profits home; to pay no taxes on profits, gross income and executive salaries; to hire and fire freely and to import supplies if local

sources are not competitive.¹³⁵

This maneuver, which might appear on the surface to open Cuba to new ties with the U.S. and other western imperialists, actually works to the advantage of the USSR. Without loosening the military ties that bind Cuba to the Soviets, and without lessening the dependence of the Cuban infrastructure on Soviet technology and expertise, the Soviets will be able to invest their capital more profitably elsewhere.

What does this mean for the Cuban working class? First, it affirms what has been true all along: Cuban workers are still wage slaves, forced (in this case by the state) to sell their labor power as a commodity to the owners and controllers of the means of production. And since the new sources of investment capital would not have been sought unless the current balance of payments situation were in critical shape (in Sept., 1982 Cuba asked European and Japanese banks to renegotiate the payments of the billions it owes them, showing that Cuba has not escaped from the worldwide crisis of capitalism), it undoubtedly means increased exploitation of a proletariat which is supposed to be enjoying the benefits of “socialism.”¹³⁶

Will there be any takers? Absolutely! A recent delegation from a British Chamber of Commerce had more applications than it could handle, including from British subsidiaries of U.S. companies. Most of these companies were less interested in direct investment in Cuba than in another Cuban imperialist scheme — joint ventures in Ethiopia, Angola and Libya, with Cuba providing political contacts and its present economic links and the British putting up capital and technology.¹³⁷

CASTRO WHITEWASHES ARGENTINE FASCISTS

During the reactionary war for the Falklands/Malvinas islands Castro “forgot” the thousands massacred by the Argentine Junta and supported it against British colonialism. Castro Fidel “forgot” that the Argentine butchers invaded the islands a couple of days after thousands of workers were arrested for demonstrating against the Junta austerity plan. He also “forgot” that the Junta’s newly-minted nationalism was conveniently used to turn working people from fighting against the Junta. And he “forgot” that the Argentine Army had and still has military advisers training Nicaraguan fascists and the Honduran army to fight against the Sandinistas and against the Salvadoran insurgents. (The Sandinistas also “forgot” this and supported the Argentine fascists). Cuba and the Soviets, who also supported the Junta, forgot about the Leninist principle of calling upon workers from Britain and Argentina to turn this reactionary war into a revolutionary war against their oppressors.

But Cuba’s stand on this war between two reactionary governments was not based on “Third World solidarity” or “Latin American brotherhood;” it was based on the fact that Russia is the main trading partner of Argentina, and the Russians saw this war as a golden opportunity to turn the Latin bosses away from U.S. imperialism, which supported Britain, and increase Russian imperialist penetration in the area.

With policies like this, and with the various capitalist financial schemes in progress, the days are certainly over when serious revolutionaries could look to Cuba as a model for revolutionary society. Many now realize that something is wrong with a system that can boast only of some reforms in education and health care, after more than two decades of “revolution.” Many now realize that the capitalist division of labor, commodity production and sharp social stratification continue in Cuba and that this is the result of Cuba’s adoption of the Soviet model in economics, politics, social structure and foreign policy.

Cuba’s role in the world is less clear to many who do not understand that Cuba’s interventions do not grow out of proletarian internationalism, but only to fulfill Cuba’s role as a partner in the Soviet-controlled “socialist international division of labor.” Cuba now sends as many troops abroad proportionately as the U.S. did at the height of the Vietnam War. It cannot do otherwise as long as it is so heavily indebted to the USSR. This is not to say that the Cuban leaders are mere puppets of the USSR; rather, their dependence and their fears for the future tend to give them the same broad policy outlook as their imperialist “protector.”

The fears of the Cuban leadership are not fantasies, whether of the CIA-backed Cuban exile groups, or, more seriously, of the Cuban masses, who could go the way of Polish workers and support an anti-Soviet, pro-U.S. movement, or could someday make a real revolution and establish a truly egalitarian society, independent of any imperialism.

Genuine Marxist-Leninists must work to win away those fooled by Castro's rhetoric. Revolutionaries should reject the "aid" of this Cuban stalking horse for Soviet imperialism. They should build a movement to turn any military confrontation between U.S. and Soviet imperialism, including in Cuba itself, into a civil war for communist revolution. Communists should expose every puffed-up claim of Castro's phony "communism." As a new communist movement emerges on all continents, there will be every opportunity for avoiding the disaster for the working class that Cuba has become.

128. *New York Times*, Nov. 30, 1981.

129. *New York Times*, Nov. 30, 1981 and Nov. 17, 1981.

130. Stephen M. Gorman, *Power and Consolidation in the Nicaraguan Revolution*. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 133-149 131. *New York Times*, Aug. 1, 1981. See also *Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 13, 1981 on continued production by the imperialist Castle and Cook banana company.

132. Castro praised the United States for aiding Nicaragua in 1980. *New York Times*, July 19. 133. *New York Times*, Feb. 15 and 18, 1982.

134. *Ibid.*, Nov. 17 and 30, 1981.

135. *Latin America World Report*, May 28, 1982.

136. A fuller discussion of Decree Law 50 and its implications is in *Challenge-Desafío*, Vol. 19, No. 7 (July 7, 1982).

137. *Latin America World Report*, May 28, 1982.

Next Month: The History of Racism and Capitalism

How capitalists, from the earliest days to today, found a need for an ideology to divide the working class and justify oppression, and met that need by inventing and spreading racism.

PL

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Cuba is one of very few countries today to which a significant number of anti-imperialists look for inspiration. This is particularly so among those struggling against the U.S.-dominated fascist regimes in Latin America.

In the mid-1960s, many thought of China as an example of how to build revolutionary communism and stand up to imperialism. But China lost its attractiveness when the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of 1966-69 was crushed with the aid of its original inspirers, Mao Zedong and his "Gang of Four," and the Chinese rulers turned to killing those who rebelled against the restoration of capitalism in China and the building of an alliance with U.S. imperialism.¹

Similarly, after the heroic Vietnamese struggle routed U.S. aggressors, the Vietnamese moved to dominate all of Indochina, in complete alliance with the USSR, and Vietnam's image became tarnished. As to the USSR itself, it has been almost three decades since the Soviets projected even the shadow image of being revolutionary.

To some extent, therefore, admiration for Cuba results from a lack of other examples for

revolutionaries to emulate. But it also involves admiration for the kinds of social changes that many see as having occurred in Cuba since the "revolution" in 1959 – and it would be foolish to argue that the material lot of the Cuban working class has not improved substantially. This article will show that these reforms, however, have not created communism, any more than did the reforms in the U.S. during the 1930s under Roosevelt or the material improvement in the lives of Japanese workers in recent decades.

What will be shown here is that the idea of Cuba as a socialist or communist country, free of the yoke of imperialism and anxious to aid the world's liberation movements, is false. Cuba has in fact just replaced domination by U.S. imperialism with domination by the now-imperialist Soviet Union.² Cuban society has copied that of the USSR, including its capitalist economy, wide wage differentials and rule by a small clique of well-off Party bosses. Finally, it will be shown that the Soviet imperialists are using Cuban troops, in Africa and elsewhere, as a strike force to prop up ferociously reactionary, but pro-Soviet, regimes. Hopefully this article will contribute to a break by revolutionaries with the Cuban revisionists and their Soviet mentors, so that real communist revo-

lution, and not a Castro-type phony communism, will be the result of the struggles of workers and their allies the world over.

SOVIET IMPERIALISM AND CUBA

The rulers of the USSR, guided by a desire to expand their burgeoning empire, and not by Marxism-Leninism, altruism or disinterested revolutionary internationalism, have made Cuba into a neo-colony. Cuba was, of course, a colony of the United States in all but name from the U.S. invasion of Cuba in 1898, during the Spanish-American War, until the overthrow of the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship by Fidel Castro's 26th of July Movement in 1959. However, more than twenty years after Castro proclaimed himself a communist and vowed that he would lead Cuba down the path to real independence through socialism, Cuba is as dependent on the USSR as it was on the U.S.

A careful quantitative study by William LeoGrande has compared Cuban economic dependency before 1959 with Cuba's dependency twenty years later.³ It indicates that there was a marked reduction in dependency in the first couple of years after Castro came to power. This reduction is probably explained by the Cuban leaders' sharp break with the U.S. in 1959-60, before they had forged close ties with the USSR. After these ties were forged, there was no further reduction in dependency.⁴

The LeoGrande study concluded that the Cuban domestic economy depends as much on foreign commodities and on foreign sources of capital formation as it did in 1959, that exports are still greatly concentrated in sugar and still go largely to a few trade partners – the countries of the Soviet-dominated Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon). Moreover, Cuba's foreign debt has grown markedly larger under Soviet domination.

In the post 1959-era, 48.5% of Cuba's trade was with the USSR alone; 43.3% of Cuban exports,

Cuba's State Capitalist Society

Castro's Phony Communism

52% of imports. By the early 1970s, according to Soviet sources, 70% of Cuba's economic ties and more than 80% of its capital investment was dependent on its relations with the Comecon countries.⁵

One reason for this heavy economic dependence on the USSR is that the Cuban economy was deliberately kept as a primarily agricultural export economy, the classic neo-colonized economy. Sugar has continued to be Cuba's principal export – between 70% and 90% of the value of Cuban exports during the year's 1963-1974.⁶ Since 1959, the USSR has bought 43.5% of Cuba's sugar exports. Cuban leaders decided after 1963 to rely on sugar revenues for investment capital.⁷ During a January, 1964 visit to Moscow, Fidel Castro agreed to deliver 24 million tons of Cuban sugar to the USSR between 1965 and 1970 at 6¢ a pound and announced that Cuba would henceforth concentrate on sugar production. The world price of sugar at the time was nearly 11¢ a pound.⁸

Since 1959, sugar has provided about one-fourth of Cuba's national income. Next to sugar, nickel is Cuba's most valuable export commodity, and the Soviets and their allies, through Comecon, made a major commitment to develop the Cuban nickel industry during Cuba's 1976-80 Five Year Plan.⁹

This emphasis on sugar and nickel production is a result of the heavy Cuban burden of debt to the USSR. About 85% of Cuba's cumulative trade deficit has been with the USSR. In the mid-1970s this amounted to 3.5 billion pesos out of 4.1 billion¹⁰ – roughly speaking, each Cuban owed the USSR \$350. After the Soviet-Cuban sugar agreement of 1964, Cuba committed itself to produce up to 10 million tons of sugar by 1970. In order to accomplish this goal, the capital accumulated from the sale of sugar to the Soviet bloc, originally earmarked for industrial development, had to go primarily to building the sugar industry. In 1962 all of agriculture, industry, construction and transportation absorbed about 55% of Cuban investment; between 1966 and 1970, 70% went to the sugar industry alone!¹¹

Of course, Cuba did not have the machinery to upgrade its sugar production and the USSR was thus also able to benefit from the sale of this equipment to Cuba. Similarly, the USSR benefited from being the country that, according to a Soviet source,¹² "fully or almost fully fills the needs of Cuba in oil and petroleum products, mineral fertil-



Fidel Castro, at the pinnacle of power in Cuba, presides over a party and state that follow the lead of the Soviet Union in every way – including revisionism and state capitalism.

zers, sulphur, asbestos, cotton, saw-timber, trucks, special automobiles and metal-cutting lathes." Cuban studies of the mid-1960s are said to have shown that the prices for Soviet and Czech machinery were 11 to 53% higher than those prevailing in Western markets and even Castro complained that some socialist countries "tend to maintain commercial policies with the underdeveloped world which are the same as those used by developed capitalist countries."¹³

One such "commercial policy" that keeps Cuba tied to the USSR is the Soviet petroleum policy. It provides an excellent example of how economic dependence leads to political subservience. Between 1963 and 1975, Cuban oil production was able to satisfy less than 3% of domestic needs, while petroleum accounted for 63% of Cuba's energy needs in 1973, a percentage that has been steadily increasing. Cuba has relied almost completely on Soviet petroleum imports as the source of energy in almost all electricity generation, transportation and non-sugar industrial activity.¹⁴

Oil is also crucial in sugar production. Former Cuban President Osvaldo Dorticos put it this way:

Without petroleum there is no sugar. Without petroleum the sugar mills cannot operate...without petroleum there is no transportation; without petroleum sugar cannot be transported, because there would not be gasoline for trucks, for agricultural equipment, and sugar cane lifters...Without petroleum there is no economy. There is nothing left.¹⁵

HOW SOVIET IMPERIALISM KEEPS CUBA IN LINE

In the mid-1960's, at the same time it was tying itself to the USSR economically, Cuba was pursuing a somewhat different policy in Latin America than was the USSR. Cuba tried to promote armed rebellion against the regimes of U.S.-backed dictators, while the USSR urged the "left" to build united fronts with the liberal bourgeoisie and work toward a "peaceful" assumption of power. Cuba also had not yet adopted the Soviet system, and was talking of moving rapidly to communism by taking such steps as the abolition of money. The Soviets felt compelled to "reason" with the Cubans:

In 1967, as in previous years, Cuba's need for oil, almost all of which was imported from the USSR, continued to grow rapidly. In 1967, for ex-



Sugar and industry: Cuban plans for industrialization have been shoved aside to expand sugar output for export to the Soviet Union under "international socialist division of labor."

ample, Cuba's consumption of oil rose 8%, while supplies increased only 2%. As a result, the nation had to draw down upon its reserves, including those held back for the armed forces. To relieve the adverse effect on military security, Cuba requested some 115 tons of advance oil deliveries, but received only 80 from the USSR. Trucks and cars began to line up at Cuban gas pumps, industrial shutdowns were threatened if tankers arrived late in port, and gas rationing was tightened. Meanwhile, Soviet production of oil continued to rise, thereby making it clear that the Cubans, not the Soviets, were the victims of a squeeze. The USSR was using its control over oil export to Cuba to make Castro more tractable."

Making Castro "more tractable" meant Cuba had to retreat from its active support of Latin American guerrilla movements, tone down its criticism of the pro-Soviet "communist" parties that refused to support armed struggle, and endorse the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. It was made obvious to the Cuban leaders that, just as the Soviets demanded that Cuban

economic policies conform to the "international socialist division of labor" set by the USSR by being an agricultural and raw materials producer instead of a diversified industrial country, so too the Cubans had to conform their social system and foreign policy to Soviet requirements.

There was an obvious potential for political coercion in continuing to be part of the Soviet's "world socialist system." The Cubans had already promised to sell an average of four million tons of sugar per year to the Soviets through 1970 and because they needed to greatly exceed that amount in order to earn convertible currency for purchases outside the Comecon "bloc," a goal of 10 million tons of sugar in 1970 was set, a goal in keeping with Soviet plans for the Cuban economy.

The 1970 sugar harvest did set a record of 8.5 million tons, 1.3 million more than the previous 1952 record crop. However, in his 1970 July 26th speech, Castro had to admit that the sugar effort had considerably damaged the other sectors of the Cuban economy. Of course, such an effort could not be sustained, and the following year production

fell back to 6 million tons. Castro admitted that large-scale food shortages ensued from the 1970 effort, that cement output had dropped to 23% below the 1968 figure, fertilizers were 32% off the planned target and the national farm machinery plan had only reached 8% of its goal by March, 1970, etc."

The increased emphasis on sugar production only made Cuba more dependent on the USSR and, of course, on the world market conditions for that commodity. LeoGrande concluded that when the Cuban sugar crop is relatively good, as in 1961, 1967 and 1970, or the world price is high, as in 1964 and 1974-75, there is a rise in dependency. Conversely, when the crop levels or prices are low, dependency appears to decrease.¹⁴ The basically one-crop system that the Soviets and Castro have continued in Cuba thus presents the Cubans with a losing choice - when the sugar crop is relatively good or the world market price is high, there is greater dependency through increased trade with the Comecon countries; when the crop is bad or world prices low, there is lower national income for Cuba.

The Soviets benefit from Cuba's dependency not just by maintaining Cuba as a market for their machinery and finished products, but also, at times, in the acquisition of the sugar itself. The Soviets paid Cuba 6¢ a pound for sugar from 1963 to 1972. This price was sometimes above and sometimes below the world market price,¹⁵ but the world market price for agricultural commodities has always been subject to unfavorable terms of trade compared to industrial commodities, because of the political control exercised by the industrialized imperialists. The Soviet-Cuban trade agreements of 1972 called for a price 4¢ above the then-world market level of 7¢ a pound. However, by 1974, when half of the Cuban crop was committed for sale to Comecon at 11¢ a pound, sugar hit 30¢ a pound on the market. The Soviets upped their price to 20¢ a pound in August, 1974, while the Eastern Europeans and Chinese paid 17¢ a pound. Nevertheless, the Cubans were obvious losers in that sugar deal.

Only when Cuba began to play the role of a Soviet paladin on a massive scale in the latter half of the 1970s did the Soviets really begin to subsidize the Cuban sugar crop by paying far above world prices.²⁰

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This Cuban world role as a Soviet military surrogate coincided with an economic crisis in Cuba. Castro stated in 1976 that Cuba's first priority in this crisis would be to fulfill its economic obligations and maintain its credit, which could only be accomplished through exports to service her large debt to the Comecon countries.²¹ The Soviet subsidy could thus be seen as a mechanism for averting the island's bankruptcy in order to insure Cuba's continuing role as a military stalking horse for the USSR, and to insure an eventual return on the USSR's investment in Cuba.

Of course, a portion of the sugar crop was not committed to the Comecon countries. It had to be sold on the world market. In 1976, for example, sugar again stood at 7¢ a pound. Although Castro stated that this was below the cost of production and would mean the curtailment of imports and reduction of food rations, he went on to say that Cuba would "stick to sugar."²² Obviously, he wanted to continue to receive the Soviet subsidy. However, like any "gift" from an imperialist country, this subsidy is not only politically tied, but also can be ended at any time, causing serious economic consequences to an economy whose plans have been made in expectation of receiving the "aid." The Soviets have continually expanded their production of sugar from beets; by the mid-70s they were producing enough to satisfy domestic needs and still export some to Comecon countries. By buying Cuban sugar, the Soviets can decrease their own production and use the beet land for higher-yield crops. However, if they chose, for political or economic reasons, to end their Cuban sugar purchases, the dependent Cuban economy would be thrown back onto the depressed and unreliable world sugar market.

Even as it now stands, the Soviet purchase of Cuban sugar at above-market prices would not be viewed as a loss for the USSR, even in economic terms. After all, the Soviets buy the sugar with rubles, a currency that circulates primarily within Comecon. This means that the Cubans must buy Soviet and other East European products with their sugar earnings, because the rubles they receive for sugar must be spent there. However, the Soviets can use the imported Cuban sugar to fulfill the needs of their home market, while exporting their beet sugar or re-exporting the Cuban sugar,

all for "hard" convertible Western currencies with which the Soviets can purchase advanced technology from the West.

Meanwhile, the Cubans are tied to buying inferior Soviet goods at prices that an estimate by the National Bank of Cuba places at about 50% above what Cuba would have to pay if it had been able to purchase the same type and quality of goods outside the "Eastern bloc."²³ For example, after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Castro complained that the latter country had sold Cuba "at good prices many weapons that were war booty captured from the Nazis and we have been paying and are still paying for arms that belonged to the Hitlerian troops who occupied Czechoslovakia."²⁴

Castro apparently forgot about those inferior Nazi weapons when he visited Czechoslovakia in 1973, after the Cubans became a full member of Comecon, for he said that "it must not be forgotten that our first arms came from Czechoslovakia." Such political corruption necessarily follows when one sells a country to the imperialists. Another example of it occurred in 1974 when Castro visited Yugoslavia and praised the arch-revisionist Tito and his "League of Communists." Just five years earlier, Castro had denounced Tito and the "League" as imperialist agents!²⁵ Similarly, in 1962, Castro claimed that Soviet actions played a crucial role in avoiding Cuba's invasion by U.S. forces, adding "we will never be disloyal or ungrateful to the USSR." In 1968, Castro, in a speech analyzing the invasion of Czechoslovakia, had denounced the USSR's "constant, foolish and inexplicable campaign in favor of peace," but in 1974 he signed a declaration with Brezhnev renouncing the use of force and agreeing that Soviet-U.S. détente was an important step toward world peace! In 1977, Castro attributed all past disagreements with the USSR to "our lack of political maturity" and stated that the Soviets "were extremely patient with us at the time of our differences."²⁷

The USSR also uses petroleum to control Cuba. While Soviet oil prices for sales to Cuba have been below the world market price, they have followed the world market increases. Prices of Soviet oil sold to Cuba doubled from 1974 to 1975. True, this was a period of huge increases in sugar prices, but the Soviet oil hike, coupled with the fact

that about half of the Cuban sugar was already committed to the Comecon countries at prices well below market, went a long way toward preventing a windfall for Cuba from the sugar price boom. Since the Soviets also switched from long-term to annual adjustments of export prices to Comecon countries in 1975, more price hikes followed, while sugar prices plummeted on the world market. Even though the Soviets eventually agreed to pay a higher price for Cuban sugar, this combination of markedly lower-than-world-market prices for sugar shipped to the Soviets, followed by a drop in the world price after 1975, and higher prices for Cuba's main import, Soviet petroleum, must have contributed greatly to the Cuban economic crisis of 1976 referred to above. Moreover, just as with imports of sugar, Soviet exports of oil to Cuba could be ended if Cuba's politics were ever to displease the Soviet rulers.

Such are the fruits of the dependency that Cuban leaders have developed with the USSR. The Cuban debt to the Soviets now exceeds \$5 billion. Cuba also owes billions to other Eastern European countries and Western countries. The Cubans will have to start repaying this debt, with interest, in 1986 and will pay until 2011. Of course, during those 35 years, if the revisionist regime in Cuba survives, an additional debt can be expected to pile up.

Like the classical neo-colonies controlled by the U.S. and Western Europe, Cuba has not become a diversified, industrial country; its economy remains agricultural and extractive and since what it extracts is not oil, that means relatively poor. One obvious problem with having a non-diversified economy is that if there is a crop failure, there is a crisis. That is what happened in 1979-80 when plant blights decimated the sugar, tobacco and coffee crops.²⁸ These crops are precisely Cuba's largest agricultural exports. The proportion of sugar to total exported from 1959 to 1974 has averaged 81%, 3% more than the proportion in 1957-58, just before the "revolution." Nickel, tobacco, fruits, rum and fish make up almost all of the remainder of Cuba's exports. Moreover, only 7-8% of the exports are shipped in Cuban vessels. Most of the rest is shipped in Soviet vessels and the Cubans must pay the shipping costs. Cuba must import the machinery needed for the production of

these exports. It also must import food, since one cannot survive on sugar, rum, fish and tobacco. Cuba's other imports are largely related to maintaining the economy as one of agriculture and light industry. Two of the biggest items are tractors for sugar planting and harvesting, and trucks for hauling the sugar to collection points for export. Then there are billions of dollars worth of weapons, of which more will be said later. Overall, the proportion of consumer goods out of total imports increased, while that of machinery declined in the 1970s²⁷ showing that Cuba has certainly not tried to go all out to industrialize.

Dependency on the USSR has meant not only that Cuba is an economic neo-colony and that the Soviets can twist Cuba's arm occasionally by applying economic pressure, but also that Cuba has become a political neo-colony as well. Cuba in the 1970's adopted the Soviet system of political, social and economic relations internally. It has become a mouthpiece for Soviet interests around the world. Much to the loss of the Cuban workers and the victims of Cuban intervention on the side of various pseudo-"progressive" forces abroad, Cuba has become the ram with which the Soviets batter down the fortresses of their U.S.-dependent rivals.

CUBA'S CAPITALIST SOCIETY

The First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) was held in December, 1975. This was a full decade after the Party was formed, largely out of remnants of the old pro-Moscow Popular Socialist Party (which had supported the U.S. puppet Batista against Castro) and members of Castro's 26th of July Movement. This congress approved a "new system" of economic management that Castro said was based on the "practical experience of all socialist countries" and "takes into account the operation of economic laws that govern socialist construction and that exist independently of our will and desires."²⁸ This "new system" was to involve greater autonomy for production enterprises and employ strict capitalist accounting practices, market mechanisms and other "success indicators" in economic management.²¹ This system was to be introduced experimentally in 1978, and then applied to the whole economy during 1979 and 1980, the last two years of the Five-Year Plan.²²

Actually, the adoption of the "new system" merely marked the final stage of the "Sovietization" of Cuban society. At the same Congress which adopted it, three of the members of the unswervingly pro-Soviet PSP - Blas Roca, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez and Arnaldo Milián - were named to the thirteen-member Political Bureau of the PCC, the highest organ of power in Cuba.²³

By 1972, Rodriguez, the main Cuban representative for Soviet trade, had been able to announce that "there is not a single sector of our national economy which is to any degree important in which this cooperation [with the USSR] does not already exist or is not planned."²⁴ By early 1974 Soviet and Cuban planning agencies were coordinating their Five-Year Plans for 1976-1980.²⁵ This resulted in the stationing of 6000 Soviet "advisors" in Cuba, 3000 or more of whom held posts in the Cuban planning agencies, ministries and enterprises.²⁶ Cuba had to pay them all in rubles, with substantial living allowances in Cuban pesos as well.²⁷

The main feature of the "new system" was the ending of the "egalitarian" wage distribution policies and "moral incentives" for production that had brought Cuba so much admiration in the late 60s. At the 1973 Congress of the Central Organization of Cuban Trade Unions (CTC), these revolutionary policies were declared scrapped, and Castro proclaimed the need, as a matter of principle, for such capitalist practices as wage differentials on skill levels, material incentives to reward higher individual and enterprise work performance, the reintroduction of work quotas to raise productivity and the strengthening of the powers of the managers of state enterprises.²⁸ Later, at the Party Congress, Castro proclaimed:

...money, prices, finances, budget, taxes, interest, and other commodity categories should function as indispensable instruments to allow us to measure the use we make of our productive resources and to determine...to the last centavo, how much we expend on each one of our products; to decide which investment is the most advantageous; to learn which enterprises...perform best, and which perform worst, and so be able to adopt the relevant measures.²⁹

This approach is, of course, the essence of the Soviet practice of "putting profit in command." Soviet practice rests on the "theory of productive

forces," which holds that social relations can only be changed from those that exist under capitalism when the material base of society is fully developed.³⁰ The Cuban leaders have adopted this spurious theory, too. The upshot of the theory is that as long as capitalist relations of production "must" persist because socialist society is "under developed" economically, capitalist systems of distribution and control will also prevail.

Following these ideas, Castro asserted, for example, that "Marx said that rights can never be more advanced than the economic structure and the cultural development determined by it."³¹ Technicians who were convinced of the "advantages" of capitalism were still given jobs, and the leaders concluded that their earlier policy of placing political cadre over technicians was wrong.³² In line with these ideas, the 1975 Party Congress gave managers the power to independently hire labor, get loans, make investment decisions, and to make a profit - in fact, the profit was required.³³ These changes made Cuba conform perfectly to the Soviet capitalist mode and drew Soviet approval.³⁴

The fact that managers can "rationalize" production has led, in Cuba as in the USSR, to unemployment. This problem was admitted by Castro and Pres. Dorticos as far back as 1972-73³⁵ and was dramatically illustrated by the 1980 influx into the U.S. of the "Mariel" Cubans, many of whom had been unemployed in Cuba. Along with unemployment, there is reportedly inflation in Cuba.³⁶

The "anti-inflationary" measures taken in Cuba are no different qualitatively than those taken in other capitalist countries - cutbacks in social services for the working class. For example, house rents were to be abolished by 1970, and the minimum wage was to be raised. Both measures were postponed indefinitely, although families earning less than \$25 a month pay no rent.³⁷ In 1973 the government ended the policy of granting full salary to workers in vanguard factories who were sick or retired. Also abolished was the guaranteed annual wage for sugar workers, who are generally idled for four or five months per year. In 1976, free telephone

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calls from public phones were also ended.³⁸

Wages are basically piece rate in Cuba: a quota is fixed and reduced or increased in direct proportion to a worker's over- or under fulfillment. The system of voluntary unpaid overtime that had been a feature in Cuba as in the Soviet Union in the days after the revolution was abolished in 1973, as was the "historical wage," a form of compensation for older workers who had been employed prior to the introduction of the wage scales in 1963-65.³⁹

Aside from wages, "material incentives" are provided by a system of allocating TVs, refrigerators, washing machines, watches and the like to enterprises, where a factory committee allocates these "prizes" to workers on the basis of productivity and, to a lesser extent, by need.⁴⁰ Houses are also distributed mainly according to productivity, and the enterprises rent these out at 6% of wages.⁴¹ This is precisely the Soviet system, as is the maintenance by enterprises of an "economic incentive fund" to reward individual workers.⁴²

Not as much is known about income distribution in Cuba as about the Soviet Union, but from what is known, the differentials are not narrow. Given the introduction of the Soviet system of material incentives, these differentials must be widening continuously. One study of income comparing pre- and post-"revolutionary" income distribution concluded that in the mid-70s the poorest forty percent of the population received 20% of the income, compared to about 6% before 1959.⁴³ Thus, as far back as 1973, well before the full introduction of the anti-egalitarian Soviet system, the wealthiest ten percent of Cubans earned almost seven times as much as the poorest ten percent. While this is obviously not the same as the extremes of wealth and poverty found elsewhere in Latin America, the "egalitarian" income distribution that Cuba was once famous for has been completely reversed.

Another study of Cuban income distribution⁴⁴ brought out the following significant facts:

•Average wages in 1975 were higher than in 1962 only in agriculture, construction and commerce, which comprise about 45% of the labor force.

•The wage share of gross product fell in the years 1970-75: "Labor is receiving a progressively smaller proportion of the product of its work, at least in



The private capitalist sector of Cuba's economy has grown constantly as Cuba has moved further and further from revolution. Farmers above sell their produce at a private market.

the form of wages."

•The share of national income accruing to the poorest 40% of the population barely increased between 1962 and 1973. The poorest 40% "apparently gained relative to other income groups only during the first three years of Castro's rule. Since 1962, their earnings advancements have been meagre compared to other income groups...Middle income groups which the revolution initially passed by seem to be the main financial beneficiaries of wealth distributed through wages since 1962..."

•The price of goods, except basic foods and clothing, which were regulated in the 1960s, have been deregulated. The capacity to consume now varies with earnings.⁴⁵

The post-1959 income data excludes the private sector, which is chiefly in agriculture. Before the late 1960s "it was not uncommon for independent farmers to earn 10-20,000 pesos a year. This compares with a cabinet minister's income of 8400 pesos a year and a high for technicians and other specialists of around 10,000 pesos a year. In the late 1960s, these independent farmers were prohibited from hiring workers. Their control over production and marketing were restricted and their commercial outlets were nationalized. But in the 70s, the government again permitted private

sales, decontrolled the prices of certain commodities and allowed again the exploitation of hired labor. Once again, private farming became the main source of important commodities. Three-quarters of the country's produce is now privately grown. Even one-fifth of sugar is privately grown. Farms can be as large as 160 acres, and since 1979 "free" retail markets have been encouraged. The income differential between these "farmers" has thereby increased; the income difference between the richest and poorest Cubans may be considerably more than 11 to 1. Private business services, such as hairdressers, gardeners, taxi drivers, auto mechanics and other craftsmen, laundresses, seamstresses, dentists and doctors are also permitted.⁴⁶

In a prospering economy, such inequalities might be more or less tolerated by the working class, since even if the few received much more than the many, the many might steadily receive a bit more. However, because of its dependency on the Soviet Union, its un-diversified economy, the blights that have hit the agricultural sector, the drain caused by military expeditions abroad and other factors, the Cuban economy is far from prospering. One writer, using Cuban statistics, adjusted for inflation and population growth, calcu-



Cuba's growing role as a hired gun for Soviet imperialism will be discussed in detail in next month's PL.

lates that with the exception of 1978, the Cuban economy registered zero real growth of aggregate product per capita during the 1970s.¹⁷

This zero growth is reflected in everyday Cuban life by such things as continued rationing. Each month, a Cuban may buy 12 ounces of meat, two pounds of chicken, five pounds of rice, ten ounces of beans, ten ounces of peas, a four-ounce can of tomato concentrate and 4 ounces of coffee. Oil, salt, bread, sugar and cigarettes are also rationed. It is interesting to note that in 1972, Cubans could get three pounds of meat, three pounds of beans and six pounds of rice per month.¹⁸ Since Cuba's economy is tied to long-term export contracts with Comecon, there is little hope that the economy will improve during the 1980s, despite rising world sugar prices, which quadrupled in 1980, compared to 1979.¹⁹ The economy's depressed state explains to a large extent the exodus of many thousands of Cubans in 1980, of whom many were skilled workers.²⁰

THE CONCENTRATION OF POLITICAL POWER

Cuba is not only stratified economically; there is also an obvious stratification of political power

as well. As in the USSR and other pseudo-socialist countries, it is the bureaucrats and managers – the state capitalists – who hold power, while the working class is deprived of any say over the affairs of the country.

At the pinnacle of power, of course, is Fidel Castro. He is not only the Prime Minister and President of the Council of State and Council of Ministers, First Secretary of the Communist Party and Commander-in-Chief of the Army, but he is also in charge of the Ministry of the Interior (police and intelligence units), the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA), the Ministry of Public Health, JUCEPLAN (the central planning agency), the Secretariat of the Presidency and Council of Ministers and even the Children's Institute.²¹ His brother, Raúl, is First Vice-President of the Council of State and Council of Ministers, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party and the Party's Second Secretary, and the Minister of the Armed Forces.²² Vilma Espín, Raúl's wife, is head of the Federation of Cuban Women and a member of the Party's Central Committee.²³ Astoundingly, at the First Party Congress and at the inauguration of the National Assembly, Castro attacked the concentration of polit-

ical power in one person, family favoritism and revolutionary cliques – in China!²⁴

Outside the Castro family, the most powerful official is undoubtedly the Soviet Union's long-time friend, Carlos Rafael Rodríguez. He is Vice-President of the Council of State and Council of Ministers, a member of the Political Bureau, the Fourth Secretary of the Party and head of the Foreign Relations Sector, which co-ordinates all of Cuba's foreign policy. Other old PSP members with important offices are Blas Roca, head of the commission that oversees the "Organs of Political Power" and President of the National Assembly²⁵ and Arnaldo Milián, Vice-President of the Council of State. Roca and Milián are both members of the Party's Political Bureau and Secretariat.

The December 1980 Second Party Congress basically re-affirmed the power of those who had been elected by the First Congress; although the Central Committee was expanded somewhat and the Political Bureau gained three new members, there was no shift in power. The 1979-80 leadership "shakeup" resulted in the dismissal of 11 people of ministerial rank, but their posts were simply divided among even more senior officials. The one notable result of the shuffle was that all of the few women ministers, and possibly all of the black ministers, were dismissed.²⁶

There is a strong military influence among the leadership. Of the eighteen top leaders in the late 70s, twelve originally held military posts. All of these had risen in power without interruption; the other six had at one time or another been demoted and then re-acquired power.²⁷ While bourgeois analysts disagree whether the Cuban leadership came more or less under the control of military officers in the 1970s,²⁸ it is certainly true that the path to a leadership position has been through the officer corps rather than through the working class. Of the 112 full members of the 1975 Central Committee, 36 were active-duty officers, 35 had been officers some time after 1960. Thus 63% of the Central Committee had past experience as officers in 1975.²⁹

(The concluding part of this article, which will appear next month, examines the non-working class composition of the Cuban Communist Party, and Cuba's role as a hired gun for Soviet imperialism in Africa, as well as recent further developments of state capitalism in Cuba.)

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Cuba under Castro has traded one imperialist master for another. Above, Castro at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, and with Nikita Khrushchev in the USSR.

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GPO Box 808 Brooklyn, NY 11202

Cuba and Imperialism

(The first part of this article, which appeared in the previous issue of PL Magazine, described how Cuba, under the leadership of Fidel Castro and the Cuban "Communist" Party, has shaped its economy and society to fit the Soviet mold, complete with state capitalism, material incentives for production, the abandonment of serious industrialization in favor of increasing sugar production for export to the Soviet-dominated Comecon, and a foreign policy tailored to match Soviet imperialism.

This retreat from the revolutionary goals put forward in the early years of the Castro regime, which won Cuba many admirers among anti-imperialists and revolutionaries, is reflected in the Party and state apparatuses in Cuba, with power concentrated in the hands of an increasingly non-proletarian elite, with a strong military flavor, and in the increasing exclusion of workers and workers' organizations from even a semblance of power or decision-making.)

THE SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF THE PARTY

The class composition of the Party is, of course, a key indicator of which class has political power in an ostensibly socialist state. One writer says that:

Membership is now more independent of exemplary worker status than it once was. Although a majority of party members may possibly come from working-class or peasant backgrounds, most are not employed as workers and are not even directly linked to production; they tend to be military people, party officials and bureaucrats.⁷⁰

A somewhat more precise breakdown is found in a chart in the *Theses and Resolutions of the First Party Congress*, comparing the social structure of Cuba with that of the Party.⁷¹ Although the chart is by share of annual production rather than population, but it can be assumed to correspond roughly to population figures.

	Portion of Cuban annual production	Percent of Party's members
Workers in industry, fishing construction and services	65.0%	35.9%
Professional & technical workers	11.7%	9.2%
Workers exercising political or administrative direction functions	7.7%	42.1%
Administrative workers	4.7%	4.1%
Small farmers	9.7%	1.8%
Others	1.2%	6.9%

(Administrative: 33.4%)
(Political: 8.7%)

The table indicates that in 1975 there were about 5.5 times as many leading economic and political bureaucrats in the Party as in the general population, while workers were underrepresented in the Party by a 1:1.7 ratio. It is not known whether the Cuban Party follows the Soviet practice of considering the social class of a Party member to be that which he or she had on joining the Party. If so, workers would be even more underrepresented, especially if they are counting foremen and supervisors as workers. It is very probable that the Party is far less proletarian today than in 1975, when a majority of members were higher-paid functionaries, technicians and professionals, not workers. In late 1972, 12% of Party members were said to be industrial workers and 28% agricultural workers. The figure given at the 1975 Party Congress for all workers in the Party was about 36%, a substantial drop over a three-year period.⁷²

It is interesting to note also that Party disciplinary actions are taken disproportionately



Castro with Brezhnev. Cuba has become USSR's main military surrogate in Africa.

against worker-members of the Party, as compared to political functionaries. For example, in 1974, about 55% of disciplinary actions were taken against workers, who were about 36% of the Party. In contrast, less than 4% of the Party disciplinary actions were taken against political functionaries, who were 8.7% of the Party.⁷³ Incidentally, the President, Prime Minister and other ministers and members of the PCC Political Bureau are exempted from the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts and can only be tried by a special Party Court.⁷⁴ These facts certainly cut against any argument that the PCC, or Cuba, is run by workers.

Returning to the question of the composition of the Party, it is notable that the percentage of Party members is very high not only among military officers (90% or more), but also among other middle or ruling class elements. In 1972, 50% of the Academy of Sciences were in the Party; in 1974, 41.7% of journalists were in the Party or the Communist Youth Union; in 1976, 70% of the officials at the Interior Ministry were Party or CYU members - yet only 4% of the population, and less among workers, were in the Party. At the First Party Congress, Castro mentioned that the Party was weak in the sugar industry, basic industry, construction, transportation, education and agriculture. That just about covers the whole working class! And he was speaking to Congress delegates 46% of whom were in political and administrative jobs and 19% of whom were from the Armed Forces or Ministry of the Interior, so it is doubtful that there were many workers there to hear Castro bemoan the Party's lack of a base among the workers.⁷⁵

Had Castro been speaking to the National Assembly instead, he would have been speaking to a body whose members, in 1976, included 41.5% functionaries, 8% technicians, 7% military officers 12% "others" - and only 3% "production, teaching or service workers." Women constituted 22%, and those without higher or intermediate education only 12%.⁷⁶ The Central Committee was even more elite - 29% Party officials, 28.8% government officials, 28.8% military or police officials, 4.8% cultural or scientific figures, 6.5% officials of mass organizations and 1.6% "others" or of unknown con-

nections.⁷⁷

gricultural or industrial blue-collar workers are also conspicuously underrepresented in the Communist Youth Union. In 1977, 31% of its members were students, the rest apparently being professionals, scientists, schoolteachers and white collar workers generally.⁷⁸

WHERE ARE THE WOMEN? WHERE ARE THE BLACKS?

Women, too, are notable by their absence from the top ranks. In 1975, not quite 15% of Party members were women; only 6% of Party officials were women, and even less on the Central Committee. Castro claimed in 1975 that 17% of Party cell leaders were women as were 13% of provincial Party executive committee leaders;⁷⁹ another study counts women as 5.5% of national Party leaders, 6.3% of provincial Party leaders, 4.1% of regional Party leaders, and 2.9% of municipal Party leaders, as well as 15.3% of leaders in the economy.⁸⁰

There is evidence of continued racism in Cuba. For example, one "socialist" professor who had left Cuba in 1958 and returned for a visit in 1979 noted that

...Cuban policy is that of "color blindness" rather than what North Americans call "affirmative action." I never saw a black or mulatto man or woman as a supervisor or manager of any place I visited in Cuba. This is consistent with what we know to be the disproportionately low number of blacks and mulattos on the Cuban Communist Party's Central Committee...While I didn't witness any racist conduct in ordinary social intercourse, I did hear many racist opinions among supporters and opponents of the regime.⁸¹

The same writer pointed out that only 22.7% of Cuban women were employed in 1977. This indicates a perpetuation of the extreme male chauvinism that has been historically fostered by capitalism and especially by Latin American capitalist rulers. It is reflected in the remark of one woman Cuban leader, the late Haydee Santamaria, that women are the "weaker sex";⁸² in the exclusion of women from the regular military -



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they can only be reservists⁷⁰ — and in the attitudes shown in a survey of 30 union leaders and 27 rank-and-filers: only one said that working for pay was a "valid feminine objective!"⁷¹

WORKERS' ROLE IN PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT — LISTEN AND FOLLOW

Despite the existence of various forms for workers to exercise power in government and industry, Cuba's governors and managers give short shrift to the voices of Cuba's workers.

In 1974, Cuba began to implement 'Poder Popular,' of People's Power, a system that would supposedly give the masses significant decision-making power on provincial and municipal levels. However the Organs of Popular Power (OPP) are very limited because:

- (1) The party decides in practice who is eligible to sit on and chair the OPP Executive Committees which are the decision-making and managerial bodies of *poder popular*.
- (2) The OPP manage the least important sectors of the economy (basically services), while the central state agencies administer the key industries, all agriculture, mining and finance.
- (3) The size and distribution of resources allocated to the services administered by the OPP are centrally decided.
- (4) The Council of State supervises the OPP and the Council of Ministers (through the state central agencies) exert direction and supervision over the OPP administrative departments.
- (5) The OPP decisions can be annulled, modified or revoked by other organs of the state and government.⁷²

A First Party Congress resolution also stated that "managers are the highest authority" in state enterprises and "have maximum responsibility." Managers were to be advised by a board on which unions would be represented, but union participation would be limited to discussing the plan and analyses of its fulfillment, use of the incentive fund and the organization of "socialist emulation." In November 1976, even this token participation was dropped, and two councils were set up for each enterprise — a "Leadership Council" of "administrative leaders" to decide administrative matters and a "Technical Advisory Council" of "outstanding specialists, highly-qualified technicians and administrative heads." Neither council would include any workers.⁷³

The goal of the unions in Cuba is supposed to be that of management: "always producing more and better,"⁷⁴ which could, of course, be the slogan of any U.S. labor faker or boss. The "production assemblies" envisaged by the 13th CTC Congress were to work toward increasing production, tightening "labor discipline," "rationalizing resource use," etc. The managers could accept or reject any suggestion from the assemblies, with no sanctions for breaking promises made to the assembly. The "management councils" were to have some unspecified union participation, probably also just making suggestions.⁷⁵

Cuban enterprises enforce severe penalties for absenteeism. The "crime of loafing" can bring house arrest or imprisonment of up to two years at forced labor. The imposition of the law that is the

The *foco* theory was elaborated by Regis Debray, later a high official in the "socialist" government of French imperialism, in his book *Revolution in the Revolution?* in the late 1960s. His theory, taken up by the Cuban leadership, led to one disaster after another among militant anti-imperialists, including the physical liquidation of Che Guevara's group in Bolivia in 1967. The theory was also taken up by such elitist, anti-working class ex-student terrorists as the Weather Underground in the U.S., with the same predictable, disastrous results.⁷⁶

Later, as they became more closely tied to the Soviet imperialists, the Cuban leaders renounced even this misplaced militancy. Since the end of the 60s, the main aspect of Cuban foreign policy has been servile adherence to the Soviet line — when the Soviets were pushing "detente" with the U.S., Castro & Co. were for developing "correct relations" with the mass murderers in Washington, even though "detente" was designed principally to serve the very specific needs of Soviet imperialism.

The Cubans first aligned themselves with Soviet foreign policy by supporting the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Gradually they began to support the Soviet line completely, including the line of calling for negotiations between the U.S. and Vietnam, not people's war to defeat the U.S. aggression. They vociferously attacked China, at a time when China stood squarely against both U.S. and Soviet imperialism. By 1970, Soviet-Cuban relations were very close.⁷⁷ This support for the Soviets was partly a result of Cuban expectations of a better deal from the Soviets economically. After all, in large measure, the purpose of Soviet "detente" proposals was to secure access to western high technology, which was supposed to improve the Soviet economy; this improvement might have been thought of as beneficial to the USSR's client states in the long run. Indeed, the "critical support" Cuba gave the Soviets over Czechoslovakia was followed, in February 1969, by a trade treaty "more favorable" to Cuba. Castro, in turn, launched a "Soviet-Cuban Friendship Society" in April, 1969, and Cuba took part in the Soviet-dominated June, 1969 International Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties, a conference boycotted by China, Albania, Vietnam and North Korea — the countries widely considered still militant at the time. At the conference, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez intoned that "...in the people's struggle against imperialism, the main bulwark is the Soviet Union."⁷⁸

For the Soviets, Castro's desire for a new Soviet "umbrella" — the first Soviet "defense umbrella" had proven leaky during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 — provided an opportunity to make Cuba a military as well as an economic colony. In particular, it allowed the Soviets to establish Caribbean ports for their navy. By 1972, when Castro visited the USSR, Brezhnev was able to call "Socialist Cuba... a stable component of the world socialist system."⁷⁹

Becoming part of the Soviet camp meant that Cuba had to abandon support for communist-led revolution in Latin America. Thus, in November, 1969, Castro announced support for the Peruvian military regime, supposedly "revolutionary" because it had nationalized the U.S.-controlled International Petroleum Company. Of course, the Peruvian officers were not out to create communism; they only wanted to get themselves a bigger share of the pie, and their partnership with U.S. imperialism was not severed. They ferociously attacked revolutionaries and the working class in general, eventually knuckling under to an International Monetary Fund demand that they drastically lower the workers' standard of living in exchange for loans. This regime has now come full circle and vociferously attacks Cuba. Yet Castro, in a speech for Lenin's centenary in 1970, said that "Any Latin American government which sincerely and consistently undertakes the economic and social development of its country and emancipation from the imperialist yoke, may count on the support of our people and our Revolution."⁸⁰

In October, 1970, this policy translated into support for the ill-fated "peaceful transition" government of Salvador Allende in Chile. Its anti-popular character and disastrously revisionist policies have been analyzed by our Party elsewhere.⁸¹ Yet, when Castro visited Allende in the fall of 1971, he stated that there was a "revolutionary process" going on in Chile. What was actually going on was a fierce class struggle that the *Unidad Popular* government of the Socialists and "Communists" was trying desperately to contain,



Cuban soldiers in the Ogaden, where thousands of Cuban troops have been fighting for the Soviet-backed Dargue

The *Poder Popular* is thus no more indicative of a proletarian democracy in Cuba than are the other much-vaunted elements of "political participation" in Cuba. For example, a survey by *Bohemia*, the Cuban equivalent of *Time Magazine*, revealed that 34% of enterprises did not discuss their plans with their workers and 58% of the enterprises did discuss their plans but did not take into account any of the suggestions workers made. In other words, only 8% of enterprise "leaders" did anything at all with regard to the plans suggested by workers!⁸² When elections for trade union leadership posts were held, there was generally only one candidate for each post in small enterprises, and an overall ratio of 1½ candidates for each post. Only about half the workers participated in assemblies to elect candidates and even fewer voted.⁸³ Few but those favored by the government are put forward as candidates. Moreover, it matters little if only those picked by the Party leaders are to become trade union leaders, since neither they nor rank-and-file workers have any say in Cuban enterprises. As Minister of Labor Jorge Riquet put it:

The decision and responsibility [in the enterprise] fall to the management, whose job is to take the daily, necessary measures required by the process of production... One thing that is perfectly clear is that the management should have — and does have — all the authority to act. It is charged with a responsibility and it has the authority to make the decisions.⁸⁴

basis for this discipline was one of those ideas proposed to and discussed by "hundreds of thousands of workers," only to be passed with virtually no changes.⁸⁵ It is the managers, and not the workers who have the power at the enterprise level.

Party officials and managers in command, holding all the decision-making power; workers who are mere appendages of production; power coupled with privilege; powerlessness coupled with a bare existence. This is the Cuban version of "socialism."

CUBA: HIRED GUN FOR SOVIET IMPERIALISM

Cuba has long been portrayed as a socialist country ever willing to aid anti-imperialist movements throughout the world — and, indeed, in its first years the Cuban leadership did actively aid many struggles in Latin America. This aid, which won "Castroism" many adherents, was probably well-intentioned and was certainly opposed to the Soviet line of collaboration with many of the "gorilla" (fascist) regimes of that region. Even so, the aid was coupled with the promotion of an erroneous theory of the conduct of people's war, the so-called *guerrilla foco* theory. This theory made the military, as opposed to the political struggle of the armed masses, the primary basis of fighting imperialism and fascism. It relied on "exemplary actions" by the guerrillas to move the rural masses to revolutionary action.

70. Jorge I. Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978, p. 306.
71. Reproduced in Andre and Francine DeMichel, *Cuba*, Paris: Librairie Generale de Droit et de Jurisprudence, 1979, p. 129.
72. Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution*, p. 320.
73. *Theses and Resolutions*, p. 25, reproduced in DeMichel, p. 124.
74. Cole Blasier and Carmelo Mesa-Lago, eds., *Cuba in the World*, Pittsburgh: University of

Pittsburgh Press, 1979, p. 70.
75. Domínguez, pp. 318-319.
76. DeMichel, p. 311; Mesa-Lago, p. 80.
77. W. L. LeGrande, *The Development of the Party System in Revolutionary Cuba*, Erie, PA: Northwest Pennsylvania Institute for Latin American Studies (Latin American Monograph No. 4), July, 1978, p. 24.
78. DeMichel, p. 322.
79. Domínguez, p. 324.
80. DeMichel, p. 358.
81. Samuel Farber, *Going Home to Cuba, Critiques*,

No. 13 (1981), pp. 144-145. See also f. 75.
82. Herbert L. Matthews, *Revolution in Cuba: an essay in understanding*, N.Y.: Scribners, 1975, p. 331.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 337.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
85. Mesa-Lago, p. 82.
86. *Bohemia*, July 6, 1979, pp. 36-37.
87. Mesa-Lago, p. 84.
88. Quoted in Mesa-Lago, p. 88.
89. *Law on the Central State Administration*, p. 9, cited in Mesa-Lago.

90. Mesa-Lago, p. 90.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 95, n. 80.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
94. *Granma*, May 3, 1970.
95. Radio Moscow, May 8, 1970, quoted in Gour and Weinkle, p. 185.
96. *Pravda*, Jan. 31, 1974, quoted in Levesque, p. 182.
97. Castro, *Cuba and the U.S.A.: A Special Report*, CBS News, Oct. 22, 1974, quoted in *La Gaceta*, (UCLA), Feb. 15, 1975, p. 15.

98. See *Mucho Debris From Regis Debray*, in *PL*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Nov. 1967); *Guevara's Great Adventure*, in *PL*, Vol. 7, No. 11 (May 1969).
99. See, for example, Castro's speech at the Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in Algiers in 1973.
100. Reproduced in *La Gaceta*, February 1975.
101. *Ang Katsipanan*, Volume 2, No. 7 (Oct. 10, 1975).
102. *Christian Science Monitor*, Dec. 12, 1975.
103. *Ibid.*, Oct. 12, 1976.
104. *Angolan Marxist-Leninists on the MPLA*, reproduced in *Erwasi*, (London) No. 5 (Apr. 1977), pp.

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so as not to "aggravate" the bourgeoisie. When Castro visited Chile, Allende even trotted out Gen. Pinochet, the future butcher of the Chilean workers, to greet him. The army, Allende believed, would never intervene in Chilean politics as long as things did not go "too far."

The Soviets, of course, were pushing hard for the "Chilean road." This was the height of detente: an opportunity for the Soviet rulers to cut arms expenditures, import needed technology and food supplies, and enter new markets. Although the blockade of Cuba continued, the Castro leadership fronted for the Soviets, arguing that despite "detente" the USSR was still revolutionary and anti-imperialist.¹⁰⁵ To defend "detente," Castro had to do everything possible to prettify U.S. imperialism. For example, this is what Castro said about Henry Kissinger — one of the greatest mass murderers since Hitler — in an interview with CBS correspondent Dan Rather on October 22, 1974:

...Kissinger has shown himself to be a realistic politician who undoubtedly has fought for international detente...international public opinion always regarded Kissinger as a man of peace
...I believe he is no doubt the most realistic politician and the one who has made the greatest efforts to find a solution to the Cold War problems in the United States.¹⁰⁶

While Castro never had the opportunity to meet with this "realistic" butcher of the Vietnamese and Chilean peoples, he nevertheless could be seen developing friendly relations with many of U.S. imperialism's friends around the world, such as Forbes Burnham, the CIA-installed president of Guyana; Imelda Marcos, the powerful wife of the Philippine fascist dictator;¹⁰⁷ and, of course, Luis Echeverria, the Mexican president who had, as Minister of the Interior in 1968, presided over the massacre of hundreds of students. Castro also tried to improve relations with the U.S. directly, inviting Congressmen, Ford Foundation representatives, etc. Castro even let it be known that he had been "morose" over the assassination of John Kennedy in 1963¹⁰⁸ — the same John Kennedy who orchestrated the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961!

Of course, the bubble burst. The U.S. imperialists, recognizing that it was mainly the Soviets who stood to benefit from detente, ended this phony process as soon as it became clear that the Soviets still intended to get formerly U.S.-controlled areas into the Soviet imperialist orbit.

INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA

In November, 1975, the Cubans dispatched about 12,000 troops to fight alongside the MPLA,¹⁰⁹ principally against UNITA and the South Africans. About half of the Cuban soldiers were black, twice the proportion of blacks in the Cuban population. The Cubans also played a considerable role in beating back the FNLA forces as the latter tried to approach the Angolan capital of Luanda, which had been turned over to the MPLA by the departing Portuguese. The MPLA regime, as soon as it felt reasonably secure, began a fierce repression of all organizations not under its direct control, particularly the dock workers' committee in Luanda, which wanted to "continue the revolution," according to a document of the suppressed Organization of Angolan Communists.¹⁰⁴

Cuban troop strength in Angola probably reached 20,000 and is still about 15,000. Soviet and other East European military and technical advisors flocked into the country. By 1980 they totaled about 5,000. The impoverished Angolan government had to pay for the Russians' housing, which is segregated and includes a private beach! Cuban teachers had to be paid \$600 a month each. The East Germans took command of the secret police. The Soviets were allowed to fish in Angolan waters and keep 75% of the catch. Weapons acquired from the USSR had to be paid for in coffee and oil, even though coffee production was down from 240,000 tons in 1974 to 30,000 in 1980 and agricultural production had fallen 75% in the 1975-1980 period; industrial production was down 80%.¹⁰⁵

By 1980, the Angolan government's financial commitments to the USSR, and its military spending — also going mainly to Soviet-bloc countries — accounted for 60% of every dollar Angola earned.¹⁰⁶ The Angolans are said to pay twice as much for East European equipment as they would pay for comparable equipment on the world market¹⁰⁷ and the Russians are said to pay less for Angolan coffee than the world market price.¹⁰⁸

The Angolan government, which reportedly has about 2000 political prisoners, is run Soviet-style by well-paid officials — cabinet ministers re-

portedly earn about \$800 a month, low by U.S. standards, but probably forty times what the average rural Angolan earns. In addition, these officials "have access to whiskey, cars and food not available to most Angolans."¹⁰⁹ Thus, Cuba supports a regime that is dedicated to the preservation of capitalism, including Western imperialist penetration, but has also allowed the country to become mortgaged to and ultimately controlled by Soviet imperialism.

CUBA'S ROLE IN ETHIOPIA

Even more striking has been the close relationship with the fascist Ethiopian military regime. Like the Angolan regime, the Ethiopian rulers (the "Dergue," or junta), parade themselves as adherents of Marxism-Leninism and "Ethiopian socialism." However, the Dergue has carried out fierce repression against Ethiopians who criticized the regime from the left, such as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party, slaughtering thousands, and has waged an all-out campaign against the labor movement.¹¹⁰ The Dergue came to power by overthrowing the corruption-ridden regime of Emperor Haile Selassie, a long-standing client of the U.S. and Israel. Selassie's regime of aristocrats and merchant capitalists had bled the peasants and suppressed the workers and students.

The Dergue at first proclaimed itself both anti-capitalist and anti-Marxist, and "took unto itself the task of destroying what it called the 'feudal-bourgeois' order only after the two civilian Premiers it had given the task of instituting a bourgeois government had failed. Even as late as March, 1975, the Dergue was still toying with the idea of a constitutional monarchy and the preservation of church estates."¹¹¹ In 1975, the Dergue "turned left," proclaimed itself "Marxist-Leninist" and began the "nationalization" of industry and land. The "nationalization" of industry seems to have consisted mainly of military participation in management, while the "profound accent of the 1975 land reform proclamation lay in its emphasis on expanded peasant production to serve as a basis for industrialization."¹¹²

In September, 1975, the Confederation of Ethiopian Labor Unions protested against the "denial of democratic rights, wage freezes, continuing inflation and exhortations to support Dergue-appointed managements..." The Dergue responded with arrests and assassinations, not just of CELU leaders, but also of rank-and-file workers. For example, in Sept. 1975, when Ethiopian Airlines workers were protesting the detention of their union leaders for distributing anti-Dergue literature, the military shot and killed 7, wounding 43 others. The Dergue continued the heavy attacks, attempting to turn the CELU into an instrument of the regime.¹¹³ Around May Day, 1977 the Dergue massacred an estimated 600 to 1000 workers and students.¹¹⁴

The Dergue's attacks against the EPRP were particularly harsh. This group, which calls for an alliance of workers, peasants and the "progressive petty bourgeoisie," and for "the preparation of the necessary political foundation for the future socialist society." While this is hardly a program for communism, its call for democratic rights, freedom of political organization, release of political prisoners, and a national assembly to prepare for elections¹¹⁵ were enough to cause the Dergue to declare "total war" on them. They responded with guerrilla warfare. By March, 1978, after the Dergue's thug-led "urban associations," or *kebeles*, had done their work, a *Times* of London correspondent reported, the streets of Addis Ababa were littered with bodies. It is estimated that the Dergue killed about 5,000 leftist youth in this period.¹¹⁶ A number of writers have reported that it was Soviet and Cuban support of the Dergue that tipped the balance against the EPRP and other "radical" forces in the war with the military.¹¹⁷

Both the USSR and Cuba began to be friendly with the Dergue in 1975, but their influence really grew when Somalia turned against the USSR during the Ethiopian-Somali war in Ethiopia's Ogaden region in 1977. The Dergue, which had previously been getting arms from the U.S., turned to Moscow. Even after Soviet, Cuban and "Eastern bloc" troops drove the Somalis out of Ogaden, these

armies maintained an overpowering presence: 2500 Soviet military and technical personnel, 3000 East Germans and 11,000 Cuban soldiers.¹¹⁸ As in Angola, the East Germans run the secret police, while the Cubans do duty in the Ogaden and the Soviets lend a hand in the fight against the independence movement of another "national minority," the Eritreans.¹¹⁹

The Dergue has continued the genocidal war against the Eritreans that Haile Selassie began two decades ago. Eritrea is an area which the Italian colonialists occupied in 1889 and then "incorporated" into Ethiopia when Mussolini's fascists conquered Ethiopia in 1936. In 1950, the United Nations passed a U.S.-sponsored resolution "federating" the two. Armed with this resolution, Selassie brutally crushed worker opposition to this forced merger, and, in 1962, proclaimed Eritrea a province of Ethiopia. In 1961, armed resistance began under the Eritrean Liberation Front. In 1970, the ELF was split by leftists who formed the Eritrean People's Liberation Front. It is primarily against this group, which has wide support, that the Soviet pilots and "advisors" have been used.

While it is not certain whether the Cubans are directly involved in combat in Eritrea, their presence in the Ogaden certainly frees Ethiopian troops to fight in Eritrea, which in the late 1970s had been 99% cleared of Dergue-led occupiers. In addition, the Cubans provide a "revolutionary" cover for the Dergue butchers. Fidel Castro has called Dergue head Lt. Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam "the man who could advance the Ethiopian revolution on the only path a revolution could take: socialism."¹²⁰ When some members of the Dergue who were more apt to conciliate the Eritreans were wiped out gangster-style by Mengistu's forces, "the first foreigner to congratulate Mengistu was Ambassador Anatoly Ratanov of the USSR."¹²¹ What is especially ironic is that when Ethiopia was tied to Washington, the Soviets and Cubans praised the Eritrean struggle and perhaps supported it with arms. Now, since Moscow has "captured" Ethiopia, the USSR and its Cuban sidekicks help exterminate the EPLF.

Of course, Soviet-Cuban influence in Ethiopia has meant more than just military "assistance" that includes a massive troop and police presence. It has also meant the Ethiopian adoption of the "Soviet model":

Military rule has stifled the mass spontaneity released by the popular movement. The PMAC (Dergue) has dismantled existing popular organizations and crushed every attempt to form new ones. The regime shows a distinct preference for mammoth corporate structures of the Soviet model, such as the All-Ethiopia Trade Union, and the All-Ethiopia Peasant Union — unwieldy, bureaucrat-ridden organizations designed to foil meaningful popular participation...¹²²

In addition, the Soviets have implemented their familiar pattern of supplying arms and oil in exchange for agricultural commodities in order to create dependency:

There have been reports of disagreements between the Ethiopians and the Russians over repayment terms involving the \$2.8 billion worth of weapons acquired by Ethiopia since 1977. Ethiopia was to have started making payments three years ago, but it did not have the cash and instead bartered an undisclosed amount of its coffee crop. But Ethiopia, which produces about 100,000 tons a year, is now said to want to retain more of its crop for export. Coffee exports bring Ethiopia 70% of its foreign revenues, or about \$200 million in 1981.

The Ethiopians are apparently annoyed about Moscow's reluctance to agree to a new long-term oil contract and preferential terms. The Soviet Union, currently the only supplier of oil to this nation of 33 million, sells \$220 million worth of oil each year to Ethiopia, at about \$28 a barrel, or about \$8 a barrel below the general world price. The oil contracts are negotiated yearly, and the Soviet Union reportedly does not want to give up that leverage. Moreover, Moscow is believed to be asking for a higher price next year, something the Ethiopians say they cannot afford.

Moscow is also said to be insisting that heavy military and technical equipment purchased by Ethiopia be transported back to the Soviet Union when major repairs are necessary, and it wants the Ethiopians to pay the transportation cost. Senior Arab and Asian military attaches here say top Ethiopian military officials have complained

56-70.
105. *Los Angeles Times*, May 21, 1960.
106. *Ibid.*, May 27, 1960.
107. *Ibid.*, May 21, 1960.
108. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
109. *Los Angeles Times*, May 19, 1960.
110. See Paul Herman, *Communism and Ethiopia in Problems of Communism*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (May-June 1981) p. 58; Donald Katz, *Children's Revolu-*

tion: a bloodbath in Ethiopia, in Horn of Africa, (Summit, N.J., Vol. 1, No. 3 (1978); and John Markakis and Nege Ayete, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia*, Newington, N.H.: Copobooks, 1978, pp. 142-146, 162-164.
111. Michael Chege, *The Revolution Betrayed: Ethiopia, 1974-79 in Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (1979), p. 363.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 370.

113. *Ibid.*, p. 370, 371. Also, John Markakis, *Communism in Ethiopia*, in *MERIP Reports*, No. 79 (a.d.), p. 11.
114. Markakis and Ayete, p. 108.
115. Markakis, p. 12.
116. Han Erik, *The Times*, (London), March 28, 1978, p. 1. See also Berket Habte Selam, *The Dergue's Dilemma: the Inevitability of a Soviet Empire*, in *Monthly Review*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (July-August

1980), p. 15.
117. Chege, p. 373; Markakis, p. 15.
118. *New York Times*, Dec. 21, 1981. *Ibid.*, July 28, 1981, gives the figures as 1700 Cubans, 4000 Russians and 2000 East Germans.
119. *Le Monde*, Apr. 25, 1978, quoted in Markakis, p. 15.
120. Markakis, p. 16.
121. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

122. *New York Times*, Dec. 21, 1981.
123. *Ibid.*, Aug. 24, 1981.
124. *The Standard*, Apr. 18, 1979, cited in Chege, p. 379.
125. For a detailed Cuban paeon to the Dergue, see Raul Valdes Vives, *Ethiopia's Revolution*, N.Y.: International Publishers, 1978.
126. Herman, pp. 60-70.
127. *New York Times*, July 19, 1980.



Cuba and Imperialism



Castro and leaders of Nicaragua and Grenada. In recent years the Cuban regime has become an ally not only of Soviet imperialism but also of every sort of social democratic and nationalist regime.

about the poor durability of some Soviet military equipment.¹²²

The Soviets have also loaned Ethiopia the equivalent of \$60 billion, with which to purchase Soviet equipment and expertise for agricultural mechanization¹²⁴. In short, the Cubans are supporting a regime in Ethiopia¹²⁵ that is anti-working class, anti-leftist and is thoroughly penetrated by Soviet imperialism, economically, politically and militarily. On top of this, the Ethiopians actually have to pay the local expenses of the thousands of Cuban troops occupying the country, while 70% of foreign exchange earnings go to pay for Soviet petroleum¹²⁶.

CLOSER TO HOME: CUBA AND THE SANDINISTAS

While Cuba is militarily preoccupied in Angola and Ethiopia, it has also seen its first opening in years in Latin America, with the arrival of the Sandinista "revolution" in Nicaragua. Castro has developed friendly ties with the Nicaraguan leaders, whom he praises¹²⁷ as he has praised Burnham of Guyana and Manly of Jamaica (these two were given Cuban medals!) and Echeverría and Lopez Portillo of Mexico. Like these figures, the Sandinistas do not even claim to be for socialism, but are trying to conciliate U.S. imperialism, and build a "pluralist, capitalist" society:

'Even if we were Marxist-Leninists, we'd have to be mad to think that socialism is possible here,' said Tomas Borge Martinez, the Interior Minister and one of the nine top Sandinist commanders. 'Nothing will work unless it is economically and politically pluralistic.'¹²⁸

"Economic pluralism" has meant that even after the confiscation of the huge holdings of the Somoza family, which ruled Nicaragua for forty years, 60% of the economy and 80% of production remain in private hands. Eighty percent of credit and foreign exchange has also been "channeled into the private sector."¹²⁹ "Political pluralism" has meant a policy of "neither excluding private sector representatives from government, nor allowing them to acquire control of key political institutions..."¹³⁰ In other words, private capitalists are represented in the top decision-making bodies of Nicaragua, but it is the Sandinista leaders, who are advocates of state capitalism, who are predominant. Foreign capitalists are not directly represented in the government, but have certainly been allowed to continue to make profits in Nicaragua. One U.S. capitalist with a factory in Nicaragua who was interviewed in the summer of 1981 was reportedly optimistic about his prospects there, citing a "new conciliatory attitude" on the part of Nicaragua's government, reflected in the appointment of a former president of the central bank as Nicaragua's ambassador to the U.S. This ambassador "hinsself agrees that Nicaragua, in dire need of outside aid, is being more pragmatic in its dealings with capitalist business partners."¹³¹ Indeed, the Sandinistas virtually begged the U.S. for a \$75 million aid package.¹³² The Sandinista leaders and

their supporters have also repeatedly denied that they give any material aid to the rebels fighting the U.S.-backed fascist junta in El Salvador.

The Sandinistas' attitude has been less friendly toward the working class than toward the U.S. In September, 1981, a one-year economic emergency was proclaimed in which public expenditures were slashed and strikes and factory seizures by the workers were banned. There were reports of disenchantment with the Sandinista regime among the urban poor because of inflation, food shortages and inadequate public transportation. The pro-Russian Communist Party, which is said to have accused the government of following the path of state capitalism, was sharply attacked by the Sandinistas when it began to "mobilize industrial workers to protest against wage controls and the ban on strikes."¹³³ About 100 Communist Party members were arrested in October, 1981, including the Party's Secretary General, Eli Altamirano.

Despite the pro-Russian Communists' continued pledge of loyalty to the regime, the Sandinistas apparently considered the agitation among the trade unions to be more dangerous than capitalist protests that the government was restricting their operational ability. The Cubans apparently did not care that their "comrades" were being locked up by their Sandinista friends, for "the detention of the Communists was largely ignored outside of Nicaragua," despite the fact that "the Communist leaders are facing three years' imprisonment for complaining that the regime has surrendered to capitalism."¹³⁴

FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN CUBA - CASTRO LIFTS THE LID

Meanwhile, back home in Cuba, the Castro regime has made new moves in the development of state capitalism and in opening opportunities for foreign investment. A key step in this direction is Decree Law 50, an act that basically lifts all controls on foreign investment in Cuba, allowing future investors in joint ventures with the state to own up to 49%, and in some cases more; to take all their profits home; to pay no taxes on profits, gross income and executive salaries; to hire and fire freely and to import supplies if local sources are not competitive.¹³⁵

This maneuver, which might appear on the surface to open Cuba to new ties with the U.S. and other western imperialists, actually works to the advantage of the USSR. Without loosening the military ties that bind Cuba to the Soviets, and without lessening the dependence of the Cuban infrastructure on Soviet technology and expertise, the Soviets will be able to invest their capital more profitably elsewhere.

What does this mean for the Cuban working class? First, it affirms what has been true all along: Cuban workers are still wage slaves, forced (in this case by the state) to sell their labor power as a commodity to the owners and controllers of the means of production. And since the new sources of investment capital would not have been sought

unless the current balance of payments situation were in critical shape (in Sept., 1982 Cuba asked European and Japanese banks to renegotiate the payments of the billions it owes them, showing that Cuba has not escaped from the worldwide crisis of capitalism), it undoubtedly means increased exploitation of a proletariat which is supposed to be enjoying the benefits of "socialism."¹³⁶

Will there be any takers? Absolutely! A recent delegation from a British Chamber of Commerce had more applications than it could handle, including from British subsidiaries of U.S. companies. Most of these companies were less interested in direct investment in Cuba than in another Cuban imperialist scheme - joint ventures in Ethiopia, Angola and Libya, with Cuba providing political contacts and its present economic links and the British putting up capital and technology.¹³⁷

CASTRO WHITEWASHES ARGENTINE FASCISTS

During the reactionary war for the Falklands/Malvinas islands Castro "forgot" the thousands massacred by the Argentine Junta and supported it against British colonialism. Castro Fidel "forgot" that the Argentine butchers invaded the islands a couple of days after thousands of workers were arrested for demonstrating against the Junta austerity plan. He also "forgot" that the Junta's newly-minted nationalism was conveniently used to turn working people from fighting against the Junta. And he "forgot" that the Argentine Army had and still has military advisers training Nicaraguan fascists and the Honduran army to fight against the Sandinistas and against the Salvadoran insurgents. (The Sandinistas also "forgot" this and supported the Argentine fascists). Cuba and the Soviets, who also supported the Junta, forgot about the Leninist principle of calling upon workers from Britain and Argentina to turn this reactionary war into a revolutionary war against their oppressors.

But Cuba's stand on this war between two reactionary governments was not based on "Third World solidarity" or "Latin American brotherhood," it was based on the fact that Russia is the main trading partner of Argentina, and the Russians saw this war as a golden opportunity to turn the Latin bosses away from U.S. imperialism, which supported Britain, and increase Russian imperialist penetration in the area.

With policies like this, and with the various capitalist financial schemes in progress, the days are certainly over when serious revolutionaries could look to Cuba as a model for revolutionary society. Many now realize that something is wrong with a system that can boast only of some reforms in education and health care, after more than two decades of "revolution." Many now realize that the capitalist division of labor, commodity production and sharp social stratification continue in Cuba and that this is the result of Cuba's adoption of the Soviet model in economics, politics, social structure and foreign policy.

Cuba's role in the world is less clear to many who do not understand that Cuba's interventions do not grow out of proletarian internationalism, but only to fulfill Cuba's role as a partner in the Soviet-controlled "socialist international division of labor." Cuba now sends as many troops abroad proportionately as the U.S. did at the height of the Vietnam War. It cannot do otherwise as long as it is so heavily indebted to the USSR. This is not to say that the Cuban leaders are mere puppets of the USSR; rather, their dependence and their fears for the future tend to give them the same broad policy outlook as their imperialist "protector."

The fears of the Cuban leadership are not fantasies, whether of the CIA-backed Cuban exile groups, or, more seriously, of the Cuban masses, who could go the way of Polish workers and support an anti-Soviet, pro-U.S. movement, or could someday make a real revolution and establish a truly egalitarian society, independent of any imperialism.

Genuine Marxist-Leninists must work to win away those fooled by Castro's rhetoric. Revolutionaries should reject the "aid" of this Cuban stalking horse for Soviet imperialism. They should build a movement to turn any military confrontation between U.S. and Soviet imperialism, including in Cuba itself, into a civil war for communist revolution. Communists should expose every puffed-up claim of Castro's phony "communism." As a new communist movement emerges on all continents, there will be every opportunity for avoiding the disaster for the working class that Cuba has become.

122. *New York Times*, Nov. 30, 1981.

123. *New York Times*, Nov. 30 and Nov. 17, 1981.

124. Stephen M. Gardner, *Power and Consolidation*

in the Nicaraguan Revolution, *Journal of Latin*

American Studies, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 133-149.

125. *New York Times*, Aug. 1, 1981. See also *Wall*

Street Journal, Jan. 13, 1981 on continued produc-

tion by the imperialist Cattle and Cook banana

company.

126. Castro praised the United States for aiding

Nicaragua in 1980. *New York Times*, July 19

1981. *New York Times*, Feb. 15 and 18, 1982.

127. *Ibid.*, Nov. 17 and 30, 1981.

128. *Latin America World Report*, May 28, 1982.

129. A fuller discussion of Decree Law 50 and its im-

plications is in *Challenge-Desafío*, Vol. 19, No. 7

July 7, 1982.

130. *Latin America World Report*, May 28, 1982.

Next Month: The History of Racism and Capitalism

How capitalists, from the earliest days to today, found a need for an ideology to divide the working class and justify oppression, and met that need by inventing and spreading racism.