

## man and socialism, in cuba

(ed. note: *MAN AND SOCIALISM IN CUBA* is a well written account of modern Cuba, as seen through the eyes of the late Che Guevara, one of Cuba's finest revolutionaries.)

### dear comrade:

Am finishing these notes while traveling through Africa, moved by the desire to keep my promise, although after some delay. I should like to do so by dealing with the topic that appears in the title. I believe it might be of interest to Uruguayan readers.

It is common to hear how capitalist spokesmen use as an argument in the ideological struggle against socialism the assertion that such a social system or the period of building socialism upon which we have embarked, is characterized by the extinction of the individual for the sake of the State. I will make no attempt to refute this assertion on a merely theoretical basis, but will instead establish the facts of the Cuban experience and add commentaries of a general nature. I shall first broadly sketch the history of our revolutionary struggle both before and after taking of power.

As we know, the exact date of the beginning of the revolutionary actions which were to culminate on January 1, 1959, was July 26, 1953. A group of men led by Fidel Castro attacked the Moncada military garrison in the province of Oriente, in the early hours of the morning of that day. The attack was a failure, the failure became a disaster and the survivors were imprisoned, only to begin the revolutionary struggle all over again, once they were amnestied.

During this process, which contained only the first seeds of socialism, man was a basic factor. Man-individualized, specific, named—was trusted and the triumph or failure of the task entrusted to him depended on his capacity for action.

Then came the stage of guerrilla warfare. It was carried out in two different environments: the people, as yet unawakened mass that had to be mobilized, and its vanguard, the guerrilla, the thrusting engine of mobilization, the generator of revolutionary awareness and militant enthusiasm. This vanguard was the catalyst which created the subjective condition necessary for victory. The individual was also the basic factor in the guerrilla, in the framework of the gradual proletarianization of our thinking, in the revolution taking place in our habits and in our minds.

It was the first heroic period in which man strove to earn posts of greater responsibility, of greater danger, with the fulfillment of their duty as the only satisfaction. In our revolutionary educational work, we often return to this instructive topic. The man of the future could be glimpsed in the attitude of our fighters.

The Revolutionary Government was established in 1959 with the participation of several members of the "sell-out" bourgeoisie. The presence of the Rebel Army constituted the guarantee of power as the fundamental factor of strength.

Serious contradictions arose which were solved in the first instance in February, 1959, when Fidel Castro assumed the leadership of the government in the post of prime minister. This process culminated in July of the same year with the resignation of President Urrutia in the face of mass pressure.

With clearly defined features, there now appeared in the history of the Cuban Revolution a personage which will systematically repeat itself: the masses.

### full and accurate interpretation

This multifaceted being is not, as it is claimed, the sum total of elements of the same category (and moreover, reduced to the same category by the system imposed upon them) and which acts as a tame herd. It is true that the mass follows its leaders, especially Fidel Castro, without hesitation, but the degree to which he has earned such confidence is due precisely to the consummate interpretation of the people's desires and aspirations, and to the sincere struggle to keep the promises made.

The mass participated in the Agrarian Reform and in the difficult undertaking of the management of the state enterprises; it underwent the heroic experience of Playa Giron; it was tempered in the struggle against the groups of bandits armed by the CIA; during the October Crisis it lived one of the most important definitions of modern times and today it continues the work to build socialism.

Looking at things from a superficial standpoint, it might seem that those who speak of the submission of the individual to the State are right; with incomparable enthusiasm and discipline, the mass carries out the tasks set by the

government whatever their nature: economic, cultural, defense, sports, etc.

However, the State at times makes mistakes. When this occurs, the collective enthusiasm diminishes palpably as a result of a quantitative diminishing that takes place in each of the elements that make up the collective, and work becomes paralyzed until it finally shrinks to insignificant proportions; this is the time to rectify.

This was what happened in March 1962, in the presence of the sectarian policy imposed on the Party by Anibal Escalante.

This mechanism is obviously not sufficient to ensure a sequence of sensible measures; what is missing is a more structured relationship with the mass. We must improve this connection in the years to come, but for now, in the case of the initiatives arising on the top levels of government, we are using the almost intuitive method of keeping our ears open to the general reactions in the face of the problems that are posed.

**What is hard to understand for anyone who has not lived the revolutionary experience is that close dialectical unity which exists between the individual and the mass, in which both are interrelated, and the mass, as a whole composed of individuals, is in turn interrelated with the leaders.**

Under capitalism, certain phenomena of this nature can be observed with the appearance on the scene of politicians capable of mobilizing the public, but if it is not an authentic social movement, in which case it is not completely accurate to speak of capitalism, the movement will have the same life span as its promoter or until the rigors of capitalist society put an end to popular illusions. Under capitalism, man is guided by a cold ordinance which is usually beyond his comprehension. The alienated human individual is bound to a society as a whole by an invisible umbilical cord: the law of value. It acts upon all facets of his life, shaping his road and his destiny.

### the invisible laws of capitalism

**The laws of capitalism, invisible and blind for most people, act upon the individual without his awareness. He sees only the broadness of an horizon that appears infinite. Capitalist propaganda**

presents it in just this way, and attempts to use the Rockefeller case (true or not) as a lesson in the prospects for success. The misery that must be accumulated for such an example to arise and the sum total of baseness contributing to the formation of a fortune of such magnitude do not appear in the picture, and the popular forces are not always able to make these concepts clear. (It would be fitting at this point to study how the workers of the imperialist countries gradually lose their international class spirit under the influence of a certain complicity in the exploitation of the dependent countries and how this fact at the same time wears away the militant spirit of the masses within their own national context, but this topic is outside the framework of the present note).

I shall now attempt to define the individual, the actor in this strange and moving drama that is the building of socialism, in his two-fold existence as a unique being and a member of the community.

I believe that the simplest approach is to recognize his un-made quality: he is an unfinished product. **The flaws of the past are translated into the present in the individual consciousness and constant efforts must be made to eradicate them.** The process is two-fold: on the one hand society acts upon the individual by means of direct and indirect education, while on the other hand, the individual undergoes a conscious phase of self-education.

The new society in the process of formation has to compete very hard with the past. This makes itself felt not only in the individual consciousness, weighed down by residues of an education and an upbringing systematically oriented towards the isolation of the individual, but also by the very nature of this transition period, with the persistence of commodity relations. The commodity is the economic cell of capitalist society: as long as it exists, its effects will make themselves felt in the organizations of production and therefore in man's consciousness.

Marx's scheme conceived of the transition period as the result of the explosive transformation of the capitalist system torn apart by its inner contradictions; subsequent reality has shown how some countries, the weak limbs, detach themselves from the imperialist tree, a phenomenon foreseen by Lenin. In those countries, capitalism has developed sufficiently to make its effects felt upon the people in one way or another, but it is not its own inner contradictions that explode the system after exhausting all of its possibilities. **The struggle for liberation against an external oppressor, the misery which has its origin in foreign causes, such as war whose consequences make thy privileged classes fall upon the exploited, the liberation movements aimed at overthrowing neo-colonial regimes, are the customary factors in this process. Conscious action does the rest.**

### a rapid change without sacrifice

In these countries there still has not been achieved a complete education for the work of society, and wealth is far from being within the reach of the masses through the simple process of appropriation. Underdevelopment and the customary flight of capital to "civilized" countries make impossible a rapid change without sacrifices. There still remains a long stretch to be covered in the building of the economic base and the temptation to follow the beaten paths of material interest as the lever of speedy development, is very great.

There is a danger of not seeing the forest because of the trees. Pursuing the chimera of achieving socialism with the

aid, of the blunted weapons left to us by capitalism (the commodity as the economic cell, profitability and individual material interest as levers, etc.), it is possible to come to a blind alley. And the arrival there comes about after covering a long distance where there are many crossroads and where it is difficult to realize just when the wrong turn was taken. Meanwhile, the adapted economic base has undermined the development of consciousness. To build communism, a new man must be created simultaneously with the material base.

**That is why it is so important to choose correctly the instrument of mass mobilization.** That instrument must be fundamentally of a moral character, without forgetting the correct use of material incentives, especially those of a social nature.

### society must be a huge school

As I already said, in moments of extreme danger it is easy to activate moral incentives; to maintain their effectiveness, it is necessary to develop a consciousness in which values acquire new categories. Society as a whole must become a huge school.

The broad characteristics of the phenomenon are similar to the process of formation of capitalist consciousness in the system's first stage. Capitalism resorts to force but it also educates people in the system. Direct propaganda is carried out by those who are entrusted with the task of explaining the inevitability of a class regime, whether it be of divine origin or due to the imposition of nature as a mechanical entity. **This placates the masses, who see themselves oppressed by an evil against which it is not possible to struggle.**

This is followed by hope, which differentiates capitalism from the previous caste regimes that offered no way out. For some, the caste formula continues in force: the obedient are rewarded by the POST MORTEM arrival in other wonderful worlds where the good are required, and the old tradition is continued. For others, innovation: the division in classes is a matter of fate, but individuals can leave the class to which they belong through work, initiative, etc. This process, and that of self-education for success, must be deeply hypocritical; it is the interested demonstration that a lie is true.

In our case, direct education acquires much greater importance. Explanations are convenient because they are genuine; subterfuges are not needed. It is carried

out through the State's educational apparatus in the form of general, technical and ideological culture, by means of bodies such as the Ministry of Education and the Party's information apparatus. Education takes among the masses and the new attitude that is praised tends to become habit; the mass gradually takes it over and exerts pressure on those who have still not become educated. This is the indirect way of educating the masses, as powerful as the other structured, one.

But the process is a conscious one; the individual receives the impact of the new social power and perceives that he is not completely adequate to it. Under the influence of the pressure implied in indirect education, he tries to adjust to a situation that he feels to be just and whose lack of development has kept him from doing so thus far. He is educating himself.

We can see the new man who begins to emerge in this period of the building of socialism. His image is as yet unfinished; in fact it will never be finished, since the process advances parallel to the development of new economic forms.

(Continued on page 9)