

CubaTimes

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- **New Housing Law**
- **Update: Cuban Woman**
- **Immigration Pact: Miami Reacts**
- **The Havana Diet**

Cuba's New Housing Law

by Jill Hamberg

On December 1984 Cuba's National Assembly enacted a new sweeping housing law after citizens first discussed a draft law released in early November. Proposed amendments were the object of spirited debate in the National Assembly's year-end session, which was broadcast live to the entire country.

The new law converts tenants in government-owned housing into homeowners, permits limited short-term private rentals, fosters self-built housing construction by individuals and cooperatives and updates existing legislation regulating housing management, maintenance and repair, evictions, and buying and selling of land and housing.

The new law brings Cuba's housing legislation into line with existing realities and provides a legal framework for tackling the country's housing problems in the future.

Earlier Reforms and Existing Realities

Cuba's 1960 Urban Reform Law also converted tenants into homeowners. In that case, however, the owners were private landlords who were compensated by the government which, in turn, collected payments from the former tenants to amortize the price of their dwellings. Private rental housing was outlawed and no one was permitted to own more than one permanent dwelling and one vacation home. The Urban Reform Law specified that future government-built housing would be leased at no more than 10 percent of household income.



The Urban Reform Law abolished housing for profit and virtually guaranteed security from eviction. But the law itself could not end Cuba's housing shortage, something only development could do. Over the next two decades, Cuba devoted massive resources to building housing but, nevertheless, had to give even higher priority to investments in industry, agriculture, infrastructure, schools and health care facilities. By 1981, nearly half the homes in Cuba had been built since the revolution — about one-third by the government and two-thirds by individual families — but the housing shortage persisted and even accelerated as a consequence of a growing population and a deteriorating housing stock.

The early 1960's baby boom generation reached adulthood in the '80s, producing a sudden spurt in housing demand.

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TO OUR READERS

A new sweeping housing law was passed by Cuba's National Assembly in December. Citizens across the island discussed a draft of the law and the discussion in the Assembly was heated. In this issue, Jill Hamberg, a specialist on Cuban housing, provides an exclusive analysis of the problems - supply, fairness of distribution, and private ownership vs. government regulation.

This issue also contains two articles about Cuban women written by United States women who recently visited the island on a CUBATIMES sponsored study trip. Their positive descriptions are peppered with some critical observations about the treatment of homosexuality, the shows at the Tropicana nightclub and the persistence of prostitution.

An update on the newly signed immigration agreement between Cuba and the United States focuses on the reaction of Cuban Americans in Miami to the new pact. The article is re-

printed from an excellent monthly publication, *The Hispanic Monitor*, (250 W. 57th Street, Room 232, New York NY 10107).

Finally, the editorial committee of CUBATIMES is proud to announce the birth of Jesse on March 1st to Karen Smith, a member of our committee. Both mother and son are doing fine. Two other births: the recent publication of **No Free Lunch**, a book about food and nutrition in Cuba. This new publication, co-authored by Medea Benjamin, a writer for this magazine, will be reviewed in our next issue. The other "birth" is a photographic exhibition on Cuban Jews by Marc Asnin at The Latin American Workshop in Manhattan. Marc recently travelled to Cuba with a journalist to gather first-hand material on this neglected topic. A photo essay on the subject will appear in a future issue of CUBATIMES.

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Beatrice Boyer is an active member of the Women's Strike for Peace and other organizations concerned with peace and justice. Jill Hamberg is an urban planner. Karen Smith is a labor and civil rights lawyer who recently returned from a year in Cuba. Judith Wishnia is an assistant professor of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences for SUNY at Stony Brook and teaches women's studies and women's history. This was her first trip to Cuba.

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City Braces for New Cuban Influx

The recently concluded immigration agreement between the governments of Cuba and the United States has rekindled old fears and preoccupations among media and inhabitants of the areas of Florida which are due to receive the larger part of the expected Cuban influx. In 1965, on the eve of what the U.S. government and media labeled "Freedom Flights," a *Miami Herald* headline read: "Influx Brings New Miami Tensions." Similar concerns are being voiced today over thousands of Cubans that are expected to reach Florida's Dade county in the next few years.

The number of Cubans that will eventually come to the U.S. is difficult to predict. Early estimates in December, from sources in Miami, predicted that changes in the legal status of the refugees who came to the U.S. via the Cuban port of Mariel in 1980 would allow them to bring in approximately 300,000 relatives over a 20-year period. Nevertheless, by the latter part of that month the estimate had been scaled down to 225,000, according to Immigration and Naturalization Service officials.

But that lower figure is also subject to debate. Miami INS District Director Perry Rivkind was skeptical of the new estimate by immigration officials in Washington. He said they had scaled the figures down. "Perhaps they were reacting to tension down here," he said.

Whoever is right in terms of the actual number of Cuban exiles who will eventually reach the Florida shores, what is obvious is that there would be a considerable social and political impact.

The refugees who came from the port of Mariel began a process, early in December 1984, that will bring them U.S. residency and make them eligible for citizenship. Residency status will allow the 100,000 Mariel refugees to bring their spouses and unmarried children. Citizenship will allow the immigration of married children and families, of the parents and brothers and sisters of the original refugees — that is, of course, providing those people would want to leave Cuba and come to the United States.

But the new residency and citizenship regulations could mean that by the 1986 elections there would be 100,000 additional voters in the heavily Cubanized Dade county. That would be if, as is expected, the INS allows the Mariel Cubans to apply for citizenship five years after they arrived in the United States.

The advent of so many people to the status of citizens and the expected arrival of an even larger number in the next few years has triggered several responses. On the one hand, those who make a living out of being in public office are already courting the votes of the new influx of expected citizens.

"I figure most of them will become Republicans. They are Republicans like most Cubans are nowadays," said lawyer Victor De Yurre, a Reagan-Bush fund raiser who is considering running for public office.

Fear of More Cubans

On the other hand, there is the attitude of the ones who fear the growing Cuban influence. "It's getting ugly again," said Eduardo Padron, ex-chairman of the Spanish-American League Against Discrimination, as quoted in the *Miami Herald* of December 9. "The thing to be concerned about is the people who are afraid of the Cuban influence in this community . . . they just don't want any more Cubans." Dade County is already 39 percent Hispanic, the overwhelming number of whom are Cubans. A little over half of the nation's million Cubans live in Dade. Of that county's 1.75 million residents, 505,000 are Cubans.

According to the *Herald's* main article on page one of December 9, the Nell Rogers radio talk show, for example, was inundated for days with protesting calls against the expected new citizens and new arrivals.

"A bad dream," one listener said. "A double nightmare," said another, concerning the projected new arrivals. "I'm sick to my stomach," said another. "I don't want to see this place become a sewer," emphasized another.

According to the *Herald*, Rogers himself said: "The federal government has just written off South Florida. It's almost as if they took scissors and just below Orlando, cut us out of



NATHAN BENN

Sunday domino players on S.W. 8th Street in Little Havana.

the map and let us float off into the Caribbean . . . We're the dumping grounds for refugees."

Mark Benson, vice-president of Citizens of Dade United, a group organized, according to them, to save the English language, says that a backlash is under way among the non-Latin whites in Dade County. "We see absolute rage . . . We think it will bring thinking Cubans together with thinking Americans to work together . . . This could get to be a habit, and we can't afford it . . . We're talking about another 300,000 people flushing the toilet three or four times a day and half a bag of garbage for each of them each day," he was quoted in the *Herald* as saying.

On the other hand, some Cubans have pointed out that parts of Dade County were totally underdeveloped before the arrival of the Cubans in the 1960's. The *herald* reported that Salvador Lew, general manager of radio station WRHC, which broadcasts in Spanish, told non-Latin whites and blacks that Hialeah "was a pastureland for roaming cattle before massive numbers of Cubans began arriving in 1959," and that Calle Ocho was a "dirt road." This view of the role of Cubans in Florida, however, ignores the issue that the Cubans who arrived on U.S. shores for many years were the middle class, educated, trained Cubans, a tiny minority of the Cuban population, and that they had arrived in a highly developed capitalist country.

The fear for some is that the relatives of the people who came through Mariel, like the Mariel refugees themselves, come from a very different social stratum than the Cubans who came in the 1960's. There is also a fear that the recent agreements might open the doors to an even heavier influx of refugees from Haiti and some Central American countries.

Miami's Mayor Maurice Ferre has pointed out that in the U.S. there has always been a fear of new arrivals if they came in large numbers. "At the turn of the century everyone was horrified about getting southern Italians. In 1920 the big thing was Jews . . . Now people are saying we don't want those little brown people from Cuba. In a generation or two, all these people, they'll just be more Americans. Instead of Muellers there'll be Diazes." ■

This article was reprinted from the Hispanic Monitor.

WOMEN'S TRIP

CRC Women's Study Trip

by Beatrice Boyer

We were 10 women, ranging in age from our 20's to our 60's, grandmothers, marrieds and singles, with or without children, from the East Coast and West Coast and in-between. We were teachers and/or journalists, but all were as one in our interest in the New Cuban Women. Where had she come from, what had she achieved, what did she want for the future, what was her standing in the new Cuba? We had come to Cuba on a trip sponsored by the Cuba Resource Center, publishers of CUBATIMES. All of us were active in movements to better the quality of life and to achieve the true equality of women in our own country.

On our arrival in Havana, were assigned a male guide. Our doubts soon changed into warm acceptance, as Arturo was warm and friendly, a non-sexist, extremely capable, charming and intelligent person. We immediately plunged into our studies, meeting Kathy Rivas (whose first ten years were spent in the Bronx, New York) of the FMC (Federation of Cuban Women) who is working to raise consciousness of women politically, educationally and culturally, to achieve full equality in a formerly male-dominated culture. We met with Karen Wald, an American woman now living with her two children in Cuba. We spent many hours being received in offices, schools, hospitals, and homes. We were always welcomed enthusiastically, usually with refreshments, with no limits set to our questions. We were taken on walking tours to illustrate the conferences we had with the administrators, which were also supplemented with printed materials.

Women make up 36 percent of the labor force; before the Revolution it was 12 percent. Women were over half of the literacy campaign workers. Many women are now working in non-traditional occupations — 60 percent of the technicians are women. But discrimination had not been fully overcome despite the equality of opportunity, so the agenda for the next FMC national conference will include promotion of women into leadership positions, courses for rural women to qualify them for better jobs, and the upgrading of women in general. Other problems to be dealt with include teenage pregnancy, the high divorce rate and some men's lack of understanding of women's role.

The FMC was founded after the Revolution but it was not a government organization. There had been women in battalions of the Rebel Army but women mostly did "women's work." Now 83 percent of women over the age of 14 belong to the FMC. Dues are 25 cents a month.

Before the Revolution 70,000 people were involved in prostitution and other related jobs. Women were maids, elementary school teachers and nurses. Now 52 percent of the students the University of Havana are women. Overprotection rather than violence is a problem.

Lenin School

We visited the Lenin School outside of Havana. It has a capacity of 4,000 and is a general technical secondary school of excellence. It serves students from Havana and the Isle of Youth. Moral and political qualities, club participation and a 95 percent average in grades four, five and six qualify the students chosen for entrance. It is a boarding school of high school and pre-university level. The school population is half boys and half girls. Character development is stressed. The day is divided between work and study programs; vocational activities take place in the afternoon, cultural activities in the evening. Theater, movies and sports are available. Students maintain the school buildings and properties, and are involved in the manufacture of small radios and sports equipment. Students also tend a small citrus area. The majority of teachers are women, but there are now six male directors and two female directors. Careers are oriented to the development needs of Cuba.

There is active participation by parents, whose organization is part of the school council. School authorities meet every two months with all parents, once a month with the parents' organization.

In-between our meetings we were well exposed to the city of Havana, as we travelled around on foot and on public transportation — buses and taxis. Our hotel, the Vedado, was in the center of town, near the famous Havana Libre, so that we were often in crowds of people — both Cubans and tourists.

Cienfuegos

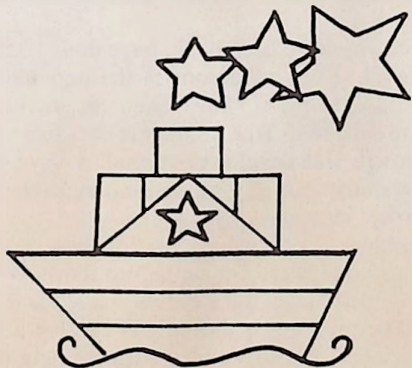
We quickly became a part of Havana, and were sorry we had to go to Cienfuegos for three days. We complained, but were mollified as we travelled in the countryside. We had a wonderful lunch in a simulated Indian cottage. We travelled on and stopped at the Museum of Playa Giron, where we were deeply moved by this memorial to those who fell defending the Revolution during our country's infamous invasion in April 1961.

When we arrived at the luxurious Hotel Cagua at the end of the day in perfect weather, no one regretted leaving Havana. The hotel is located on a peninsula, with spectacular views of the ocean, city and its environs.

Cienfuegos is becoming a highly industrialized city. It is a pretty city without any slums or run-down areas. It was the site of the major 26th of July celebration last summer. While in Cienfuegos we visited a factory that makes prefabricated parts for high rise buildings. The factory has 12 managers — eight men and four women. Women work at all levels of production and maintenance of the plant. There is no difference in salary for men and women doing comparable work.

The following night we were warmly greeted by an honor guard of children and then escorted into a private home where we were greeted by the FMC, heard about their work and were entertained by the children. Cuban families were present. We were overwhelmed again by their hospitality and we were also carried away small gifts they had made for us, little stuffed dolls and bookmarks.

Upon our return to Havana we had two more days crammed with meetings. Again, Karen and Kathy welcomed us. We met Monica Krause, the Director of Sexual Education, and were briefed on the programs of sex education for both children and adults. Contraception and sex education have generally been welcomed by the young but still meet with some objection from the old. Teenage pregnancy and the rural tradition of starting a family after the first menstruation are obstacles being overcome.



We ended our stay in Cuba with a visit to the Tropicana. It was viewed by some of us as sexist entertainment from the previous era, having some sociological interest on "what

was." It dramatically illustrated the past, a yardstick for how much has been accomplished.

We tearfully left the New World of Cuba into which we had plunged, left the dear friends we had made, hoping to learn much more from the books we had received and purchased, and hoping to make a return visit soon. We had much more to learn, and also felt a deep urgency that relations between our countries must improve for the benefit of all people, and hoping too that we can help toward that end. ■

NUTRITION

Interview with a Cuban Nutritionist

by Karen Smith

Anne Suarez has lived in Cuba off and on over the last 30 years. She is a doctor who went to medical school in Cuba, returned to the States to complete her internship and residency and practiced medicine in the United States in pediatrics and public health. She went back to Cuba early in the Revolution and has remained there since, working as a researcher in the field of nutrition.

Q: When you returned to Cuba in 1961 what was the attitude there toward nutrition?

A: I saw immediately that one of the main goals of the Revolution was to raise the nutritional standards of the people, though there was no department of nutrition when I arrived, Fidel in his Moncada program and in his speech after the Revolution specifically made reference to the need for such programs.

Q: What were the health conditions in Cuba at that time?

A: In 1962 there was a high mortality rate. Death was due to infectious diseases, parasites and acute diarrhea, typical of an underdeveloped country. Normally these illnesses do not kill children, but without medical treatment they die. It was so high in 1962 because it was the first time the statistics were being reported. It was probably higher before the Revolution. What you must understand is that diseases have a nutritional component either because you were undernourished before, and got the disease as a result of the undernourishment or after you get the disease you become undernourished.

Q: Was there a public health program in place at the beginning of the Revolution?

A: There were programs in place by 1961 to rid the country of the diseases I mentioned above. As poor nutrition was a component of the diseases, the programs dealt with nutrition as well. First there were recuperation homes set up where children with nutritional problems were sent to be treated. Parents were brought in and taught how to feed their children. One specific part of the project was to encourage the women in the cities to breast feed. Women in the countryside were more accustomed to it.

Q: Where did you work when you first arrived?

A: I worked at the School of Hygiene, which was or-

ganized after the Revolution. It was my job to train doctors to carry out certain programs involving nutrition. The problem was, as you know, that Cuba had lost many doctors who left after the Revolution and we had to train a great number very quickly.

Q: When did nutrition per se become a definite part of the revolutionary program for the masses of people?

A: It was there from the beginning—from the recuperation hospitals to the food rationing system. You see, the food rationing system was originally designed to guarantee a minimum of proteins and nutrients. If you guarantee a certain amount of milk, and meat, and a minimum of eggs, rice and beans, you are making sure that the nutritional needs of the community are being met.

Q: I thought that the food rationing system was designed to deal with shortages in food.

A: No. If all you are involved in is shortages, you would set up a system where some people would get and others not. Here everybody got some.

Q: Who set the minimum requirements for the system?

A: The National Economic Planning Board set the initial quotas but they met with the School of Nutrition before finalizing them.

Impediments to Good Nutrition

Q: What do you see as the main impediments to achieving your goals in nutrition?

A: I would say there are three major impediments. One is the economic blockade imposed by the United States, which has forced us to import foods from far away, which increases the price. Another reason is that due to our dependence on sugar, to obtain dollars to purchase certain items on the world market much of the land is still used for the cultivation of sugar cane. And in addition there are certain eating habits of

the population, certain customs that are hard to change. For instance, Cubans were used to having coffee and bread for breakfast. Now they have milk, eggs or cheese. These are being pushed through nutrition education in schools, on radio, television and in newspapers which run articles on what is a healthy breakfast.

Q: What new foods have been introduced into the diet since the Revolution?

A: Yogurt—which people are beginning to eat more and more.

Q: What does the basic diet of Cubans consist of today?

A: Rice, beans, eggs, milk, meat, chicken, fish, bread, pastas, vegetables and fruits.

Q: What types of vegetables and fruits do the people have access to?

A: When in season, there are cucumbers, tomatoes, lettuce, cabbage, squash, yuca, potatoes, peppers, okra, beets, turnips, eggplant, and oranges, grapefruits, lemons, tangerines, bananas, mangoes, papaya, watermelon, and guava. And now for the past two years apples are being imported from an Eastern European socialist country. Of course, there have always been jars of vegetables and fruits, which we import from other socialist nations.

Q: What major changes have you seen in nutrition that you believe have been brought about by the Revolution?

A: There is more concentration now on internal food production and on a better distribution system. In prior periods food production did not go on because of the needs of the sugar production. There were always scarcities. Now food is guaranteed even in those periods where there is scarcity for one reason or another. The country has also kept up with the increased food demands that resulted from improved redistribution and from the baby boom which took place in the 1960's. Also, before the Revolution we got a lot of things from the United States, like meat. Today, Cuba is self-sufficient in its production of meat. The most important factor is that as a nation which was underdeveloped, and in some ways still is, we are able to meet the nutritional needs of all of our people.

Health Problems Today

Q: What are the major health problems in Cuba today?

A: The three major causes of death are heart disease, malignant tumors and cerebral vascular disease, just like in the United States.

Q: Since you have been back, have there been any changes in the overall health conditions of the population?

A: There appears to have been an increase in height, weight and skin folds (the amount of fat) from 1962 to 1972, as our growth and development studies have shown. There was a new study done in 1982, the initial results of which indicate a further increase.

The problem in doing such studies, however, is that there were no accurate studies done before the Revolution. Johffe from the United States did a nutritional study in 1956 of sixth graders. The problem is that he didn't give actual height or weight statistics, but only stated what the heights and weights were in relation to the United States. He concluded that X percent were normal, X percent were underweight and X per-

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**Tourism
Plans**

Studies on natural resources and feasibility in various parts of the country have led Cuba to decide to develop Havana, Varadero, Cayo Largo, northern Holguin Province and southern Santiago de Cuba Province for the growing tourist industry. Varadero, for example, is planned to increase the number of its hotel beds from the 4300 now available to 10,400 by 1990. The increase, with the accompanying infrastructure, will cost some 3 billion pesos.

**Fear Generated
Detente**

In a recent interview on the "MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour", Fidel Castro claimed that the fear of war, generated by the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, actually helped Russia and the United States achieve detente. Castro said that at the time he believed that nuclear war was a real possibility. "When the war came very close," he said, "then the leaders of the two big powers became more aware about that danger. They worked. They were able to achieve detente."

**Economic
Growth**

Cuba's official news agency, Prensa Latina, recently reported that the growth in the Cuban economy had surpassed the target goals of between 4% and 4.5% which were set at the end of 1983. In 1984, the Cuban economy grew by 7.4%.

**More Talks
Possible**

Despite assertions that the recent agreement on Mariel refugees would not lead to negotiations on other issues, an official in the Reagan administration said that the United States is now willing to begin talks with Cuba about radio jamming and marine matters. The official said, however, that he didn't believe that Castro would be interested in discussing radio interference because of U.S. plans to begin broadcasting Radio Marti. On the other hand, a Cuban diplomat said that Cuba might be interested in talks on U.S.-Cuban Coast Guard cooperation on drug interdiction and search and rescue missions.

**Exiles Join
Contras**

Cuban exile leader, Huber Matos, says that he has begun organizing a permanent Cuban exile detachment to join the "contras" in overthrowing the Sandinista Government in Nicaragua. The initial force, he claims, will consist of about 50 fighters. Matos expects to get volunteers from among Cuban-American veterans of the U.S. Army as well as from former guerillas who served with him in Cuba.

**Western
Trade Sought**

In an effort to raise hard currency, Cuba is making a major effort this year to expand non-sugar exports to countries outside of the Soviet bloc. In a speech broadcast over Radio Havana, Castro proposed that Cuba increase its exports to reach \$500 million annually in trade with hard-currency nations. Citing the uncertain price of sugar, Cuba's chief export, he delineated the country's need to develop other resources for export. The hard currency is needed for Cuba to buy raw materials and to repay its foreign debt. At this time, Cuba's main non-sugar exports are nickel, citrus and shellfish.

**Havana
Cigars Only**

A court in Brussels has ruled that only Cuba makes real Havanas and "Havana-blended" cigars must use Cuban tobacco and designate its origins. Cuba Tobacco, the Cuban state company, makers of

real Havanas, had initiated court proceedings for misleading advertising against Maes S.A., a Brussels tobacco company. Maes was producing cigars under the name Gloria de Cuba, which claimed to be "Havana-blended". "It is a major breakthrough for the protection of the Cuba and Havana names," a lawyer said after the court ruling.

Bishops Meet

The head of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops recently led a delegation to visit Cuba. Bishop Malone, accompanied by staff and the Archbishops of Boston and San Antonio responded to an invitation by the Church in Cuba. The meetings, though mainly pastoral in nature, had political overtones. The delegation discussed Church concerns including alleged discrimination against Catholics, Church mechanisms to convey its message, and other Cuban-American concerns gathered before the trip. The meetings were the most significant in that the visiting group was the highest-ranking Catholic delegation to visit Cuba since 1959.

No Word From Marti

The targeted start-up date for Radio Marti came and went and the air waves remained silent. The radio station, approved by Congress as an "urgent" initiative from the Reagan administration, has had technical and political problems since it was first funded in 1983. Only 100 of the authorized 188 staff people have been hired. In addition, Paul Drew, who accepted the director's job in October, resigned in January. He cited lack of coordination between operating staff of Radio Marti and the Administration and Congressional policy makers among his reasons for leaving the post.

Giron No Secret

The supposedly secret plans for the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961 were apparently openly discussed in the bars of Miami before it had happened. Transcripts of the testimony of three newspaper reporters was made public by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Advance information about the April 17, 1961 landing was available in March to any reporter who wanted it. One correspondent testified that he had first heard of plans for the invasion in July or August of 1960.

Filter Surplus

Cigarette smokers in Cuba received an unexpected treat in December, and again in January of this year...a pack of filtered cigarettes. Cubans can generally only buy unfiltered cigarettes, as the filtered variety are saved for export. However, a surplus announced on Radio Havana made the filtered models available for Cuban consumption...on a limited basis, one pack per person for each of the two months.

Camping in Cuba

Cubans are taking up camping, according to a report given at the 11th Congress of the Latin American Confederation Tourism Press (CLAPTUR) in Havana. People's camping began in 1981, and the 57,780 beds available at campsites have been used by 1.3 million people in two years time. By 1990, Cuba expects to have 148 sites for camping located all over the island with the capacity for 118,400 people.

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weight values, and as no other studies have been done, there has been no way to establish a Cuban norm prior to the Revolution to see what changes have taken place. Johffe did, however, find as much as 50 percent of the population undernourished in some provinces. With this new study done in 1982 we will be able to see what changes have taken place in the last 20 years. The statistics should be ready by next year in time for the Conference on the Study of Human Measurements scheduled for Montreal.

Q: There appears to be a problem of obesity since the Revolution. Why is that?

A: The problem of obesity existed prior to as well as since the Revolution. We are currently studying the problem. Part of the problem is low physical activity. The other reasons we don't yet know scientifically, but it has spread more across the island as more people have access to food.

Q: Are there any new plans for dealing with the problem of nutrition?

A: The Direccion de Educacion para la Salud has recently been designated a Center for Education on Food where classes on nutrition will be taught.

Q: How will the education be conducted?

A: Through the radio, on television, in the schools, in the polyclinics, through the CDRs and through the visiting nurses who visit homes.

Also the mode of medical care is in the process of change. It has been proposed that a system of family doctors be set up, whereby each doctor will be assigned 100 families within an area. ■

"Watch Your Weight. Obesity Affects Your Health." An ad placed by the Ministry of Health in Bohemia magazine



FEATURE

A Revolution Within a Revolution

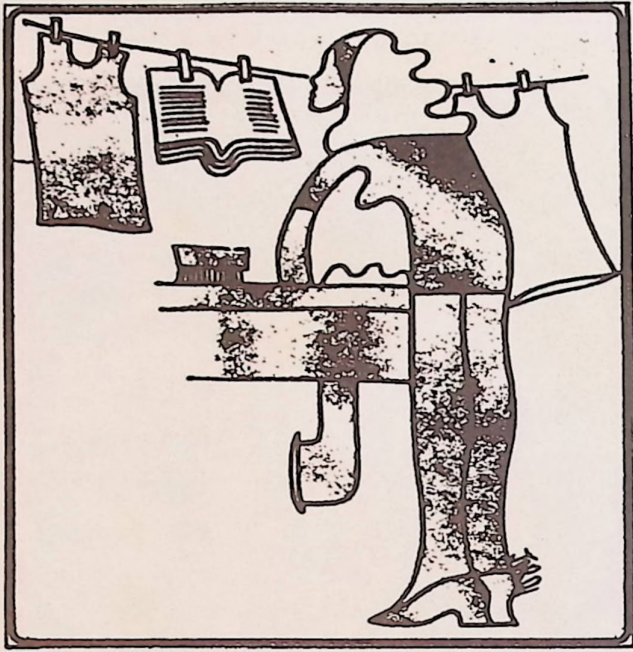
by Judith Wishnia

The women in their flowered blouses and the school girls with the red scarfs of the Pioneers around their necks applauded as they stood beneath the hand-made sign welcoming us to a block meeting of the Federation of Cuban Women in the city of Cienfuegos. We were ten women — scholars and journalists — from all over the United States, who had been invited to Cuba by the Federation to do research on women. We visited technical schools and day care centers, maternity hospitals and cooperative farms. We interviewed the woman in charge of the sex education program and a leading member of the national assembly, Poder Popular. And of course, we had met members of the National Board of the Women's Federation in their beautiful headquarters, the former mansion of a banker, in Havana.

But the highlights of our tour remains the evening with the women of Cienfuegos where we answered each other's questions, exchanged ideas, experiences, and eventually hugs.

Wherever we went we peppered our hosts and hostesses with questions and from their answers and our own perceptions of what we saw, we concluded that one of the most important developments of the Cuban Revolution has been the integration of women into Cuban society, what Fidel Castro has called "a revolution within a revolution." Although many problems remain to be solved, it is clear that the lives of Cuban women have improved greatly since the victory of the Revolution in 1959. The benefits include the integration of women into all levels of the economy, the improvement of health care, especially in maternal and pediatric medicine, the spread of literacy and participation in the political system and most critically for family personal life, the gradual erosion of "machismo" among Cuban men.

Crucial to the governmental efforts in integrating women has been the Federation of Cuban Women (La Federacion de Mujeres Cubana). Founded in 1960, just a little over one year after the victory of Fidel Castro's revolutionary army and headed by Vilma Espin, a heroine of that army, the organization has become one of the largest mass organizations in Cuba. Eighty-two percent of women over fourteen, 2.6 million women, belong to the Federation, paying 25 cents dues each month, enough to make the organization financially independent from the government.



Organized into municipalities, blocks and brigades, the Federation has been and continues to be, the prime mover for employment, health, education, and changes in sexual mores for Cuban women. The Cienfuegos women told us how they began, going from door to door, coaxing reluctant women to come to sewing circles, to join literacy classes, and eventually to participate fully in the life of the community. The first task of the Federation was to train and encourage women to enter productive work outside the home. Before the Revolution, barely 10 percent of Cuban women worked outside the home; the majority were domestic servants or prostitutes. We were told endless tales of "macho" husbands who were reluctant to allow their wives to leave the house, to wear pants, to come into contact with other men, to become economically independent. Aside from encouraging women to enter factories, offices and schools, the Federation, working with the government, established special training centers for women who had never worked before, night schools to train maids and laundresses for new occupations, and special centers for the prostitutes who did not flee to the United States. Now approximately 40 percent of the work force is female and the guiding rule is equal pay for equal work. In a pre-fab housing factory, we watched women operating cranes and pouring cement. Women have moved into all kinds of technical and professional fields — 37 percent of physicians are women.

Women's Work

Problems remain. Despite the encouraging figures for technical and professional women, most Cuban women, like their sisters in capitalist countries, are still concentrated in the more traditional "female" sectors of the economy, doing service and clerical work. One of the goals Federation has set for the next few years is the integration of women into all sectors of the economy, including the traditionally male-dominated occupations. With women making up 50 percent of the technical and professional students and with special efforts being made to shift thousands of women into new categories of

work, there is hope for the eventual integration of women into "non-traditional" work. One of the remaining roadblocks to total integration is the hesitancy of men to do "women's work." While women are becoming engineers, bricklayers, and physicians, men are reluctant to become secretaries, day care teachers, and nurses — 96 percent of nurses are women.

Another roadblock to women's total integration into the economy at all levels is the small number of women who hold positions of authority in industry and agriculture. While we met the female head of a cooperative farm and the chief of gynecology at a maternity hospital, many women are kept from true equality of opportunity at the highest levels of management with the excuse that women, because of their greater family responsibilities, simply cannot be expected to put in the long hours and dedicated work needed for these positions. And indeed, one of the problems being addressed by both the government and the Federation is the problem of the "double shift," the household and family responsibilities working women must face when they come home at night.

One of the most important steps taken to alleviate the problem of the "second shift" has been the wide-spread establishment of well-run, low-fee day care centers, open from 6:30 AM to 7:30 PM, which take care of approximately 100,000 children aged from 40 days to 6 years. The day care center we visited, located in a new housing project in Havana, was airy and clean, filled with activity, and of course, adorable children. The older children sang, recited and drew pictures of butterflies and sunshine for us. Special programs cater to the after-school needs of older children and there are numerous semi-boarding schools where children can stay during the work-week, returning home on weekends. This is especially popular at the technical and secondary levels and in the provinces. But even here old attitudes prevail. It is the mother who gets called for the sick child and while hospitals have established the progressive policy of permitting a relative to stay overnight with a child (or adult) patient, only female relatives, viewed as the more nurturing of the sexes, are encouraged.



BATIKS BY LISA KOKIN

Other efforts to relieve women of the labor of the "second shift" have been the establishment of communal laundries, improved evening shopping hours and the serving of main meal lunches at school and places of employment. But this does not solve the basic problem of who does the housework. Lack of appliances and male attitudes toward cooking and cleaning make household chores a source of contention within the family and in the society-at-large. Fathers adore their children but mothers wash diapers. Everywhere we went, while the men squirmed, women talked of this problem. At a cooperative farm we were told that it was women who had influenced their husbands to join the new farming community because the farm's housing units, built by the state, had running water, stoves and refrigerators, amenities rarely seen in the pre-revolutionary countryside. They also laughingly told of men who, when pressed, would sweep the kitchen but not the balcony where they could be seen by neighbors.

The government, the Communist Party, and the Federation are all working toward the goal of shared family responsibilities. In 1975, the Family Code, establishing the equality of women in marriage and shared responsibility of men and women for familial obligations was issued. But clearly, this remains a goal rather than a reality. Some men talk proudly of "helping" their wives, others told us they would prefer divorce to cooking dinner. And there is a high divorce rate. With more economic independence for women, with marriage now based on love and companionship, both men and women have used easy divorce laws to escape loveless or painful marriages. The high divorce rate reflects, as well, the remaining gender conflicts over sharing family responsibilities between newly independent active women and the more old-fashioned men.

In an effort to change attitudes toward home and family roles, there has been a campaign in the mass organizations and in the mass media to air the problem. An actress told us of her role in a 13 part soap opera now being presented. The main character, a woman from a rural village, is elected to the municipal council. Occupied with her job and the responsibilities of public office, she can no longer perform all the household chores, including what was apparently been an important indication of wifely devotion in the countryside, preparing and supervising the husband's bath. The marriage falters; the old fashioned mother-in-law criticizes the wife and neighbors twit the husband about his wife's activities — she is seen driving with male council members — and he is upset by her "neglect" of his needs. The serial will end with the determination that these problems will have to be solved, not by the women alone, but by the entire family unit. I kept wondering what Marvin Kitman would do with this; Dynasty, it's not.

Cuban women and the Federation have also been deeply involved in two major campaigns of the Cuban Revolution — health and education. Before the 1959 Revolution, there were only 6,000 doctors for the 7 million people of Cuba. Immediately after the Revolution one-half of these physicians went to the United States. Only 20 percent of women had their babies in hospitals and there was high infant and maternal mortality, as well as high child mortality, especially in the countryside, from easily cured diseases.

An enormous effort was made to increase the number of physicians and other health care personnel (including mid-



BATIKS BY LISA KOKIN

wives) and to build health care facilities. There are now 16,000 doctors for approximately 10 million people; over one-third of the doctors, including specialists, are women. Medical students are now equally divided between the sexes. There is an impressive network of clinics and hospitals. The Federation block groups also work in sanitary brigades vaccinating children; others give standardized psychological tests and do pap smears.

Health and Sex Education

We spent an afternoon at one of the large maternity hospitals in Havana, one of two hospitals in the world, by the way, built to resemble from the air, a uterus connected to two ovaries. The woman who headed the obstetrics and gynecology section answered our questions for two hours. All working women are allowed 18 weeks paid maternity leave (6 weeks before and 12 weeks after delivery) and job security for one year. There are special food rations for children and expectant mothers. This focus on prenatal and maternity care had reduced the infant mortality rate from 52 per thousand live births to 16.8, one of the lowest in the world. The maternal mortality rate is down to 3.2 for every 10,000 live births. The caesarian rate at this particular maternity hospital was one-half that of the United States.

There remains the problem of "too-young" mothers. The centuries-old traditions of early marriage and immediate pregnancy have been hard to change. Almost half the first babies are born to women under 20 — many are 14, 15 or 16. When we visited the wards, we saw some of these young girls, "babies" having babies. The Cienfuegos women particularly try to reach young, unmarried pregnant women who are hidden away by their families. It is hoped that this problem will be alleviated by the current campaign for sex education.

The massive campaign for sex education was inaugurated in the mid-1970's with the initiative of the Federation. We were able to meet Monica Krause, the head of the program. She explained that because of four centuries of Spanish and Catholic attitudes toward female sexuality, the task of changing sexual mores continues to be formidable. Men, raised in

the tradition of "machismo" proved their manhood by impregnating women. Women, raised in the tradition of obedience, deference and the concept of sex as something "dirty," were hesitant to discuss their sexuality and to practice birth control. Unwanted pregnancies usually resulted in abortion. Now sex education begins at an early age and there are books and lectures for every level of age and understanding, including medical school. IUD's and the pill are the preferred method of contraception. Because of residual taboos about sex organs, diaphragms are less popular with women. Condoms, associated with prostitution and the prevention of disease rather than birth control, are less popular than other methods with men. Efforts are being made to popularize condoms; they come in enticing colors. Ms. Krause told us with a sardonic smile that she is called by her detractors, the Queen of Condoms.

If these methods are not used or fail, abortion is available to all through the health care system. Within the first 12 weeks, the women alone makes the decision; after 12 weeks, the doctor is consulted in case there is a possibility of complications. But what is most unique about the Cuban sex education program is their definition of what sex education includes. Aside from the usual "how to" and "how not to" make babies, there are discussions about relationships between the sexes centering on the concepts of marriage and the family as founded on love, partnership and equality between the sexes. The effort to change sexual attitudes and to equalize relations between the sexes remains one of the major challenges of the Cuban Revolution.

Political Participation

Cuban women have also been among the prime movers and receivers of the massive campaign for literacy and education. As soon as the Revolution triumphed, literacy brigades criss-crossed the countryside, teaching in living rooms, meeting halls, and makeshift and eventually, newly-built schools. The result is the lowest illiteracy rate in Latin America. By 1980 all Cubans had reached the stated goal of a sixth-grade education and there is now a campaign to reach the ninth-grade level. The women of Cienfuegos showed us their study guides and work books; they hope to have their block at ninth-grade level by this summer. Another mass organization of women, Militant Mothers for Education, with 1.5 million members, works with the schools, encouraging students to study and to remain in school. One-half the students in universities are women.

If Cuban women have advanced rapidly in employment and education, their participation in the political system has been less spectacular. Nevertheless, steady gains are being made. Women make up 25 percent of the membership of the Communist Party, 15 percent of the Central Committee. Twelve percent of the representatives to municipal assemblies, 20 percent of provincial representatives and 24 percent of representatives to the national assembly are women. The wide representation of women at the national, as opposed to the local level, reflects heightened consciousness about the necessity of female participation among the political leaders of the country. Compared to the 4 percent representation in the U.S. House of Representatives and the 2 percent in the Senate, this is impressive.

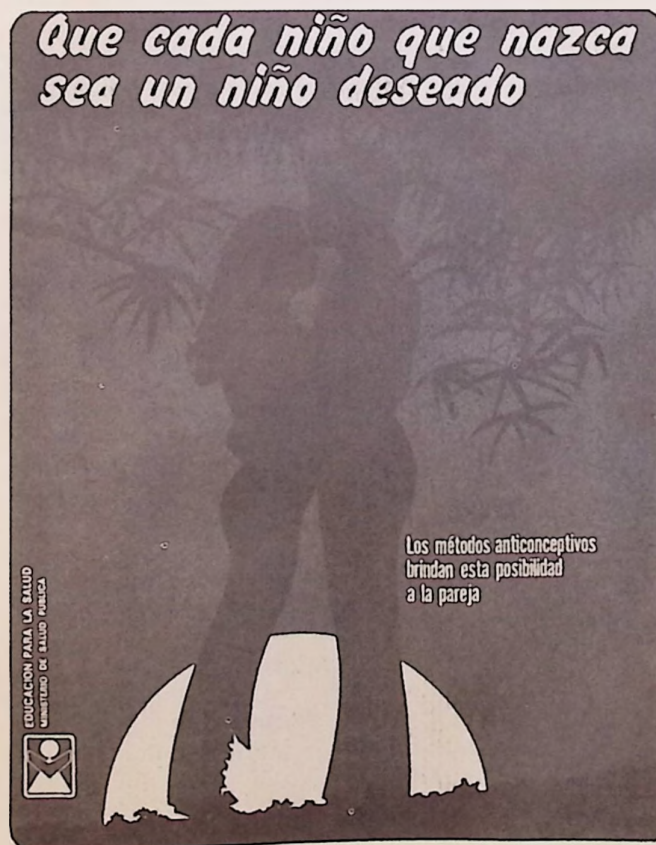
Because of the changing role of women, improved sexual

attitudes and the power and influence of the Federation of Cuban Women, Cubans claim that violence toward women — rape and spouse abuse — is nearly eradicated. Certainly we did not see in Havana the every-day violence one considers normal to urban life in the United States and we as women; alone felt completely safe on the streets at night. Yet it is hard to conceive of a total eradication of such violence — have all the rapists gone to Miami? If there is, as claimed, little violence toward women, that would indeed be a major achievement of the Revolution.

Other problems bothered us. Despite the massive campaign for sex education, it was clear from the responses to our questions about Lesbian women that homosexuality is feared and despised by the average Cuban. While Cuba has moved away from the shameful period when Lesbians and Gays were sometimes imprisoned and there are now no laws against homosexuals, much remains to be done to raise the national consciousness about this segment of the population. The leadership of the Federation agreed. One hopes this will "trickle down."

We were distressed by night club acts — yes, we did go to the famous Tropicana — which still rely heavily on nearly naked women (and men — a revolutionary change?) outfitted in gigantic feather head-dresses. While there was none of the explicit sex so common when Havana was the favored city of

The Ministry of Public Health publishes ads encouraging young people to use contraceptives so that "each child will be a wanted child."



gamblers and underworld figures, it was still disheartening to think that more could not be done to change this form of "entertainment." The daiquiris, on the other hand, were great, as was a discovery for us, seven-year old rum that tastes like brandy. Cubans also readily admit that there are still prostitutes, selling themselves to foreign visitors, not for money, but for the consumer goods, the tape decks and VCR's, available only in stores catering to non-Cubans or those Cubans with access to foreign currency.

Cuba, as we have been told over and over again, is only 90 miles from the United States, near and yet so far. Travel has been restricted by the Reagan Administration; only scholars, journalists and relatives of Cubans are authorized to visit. Since there is much information and experience to be shared, especially by women, this seems an enormous pity. Cuba is fearful of an American invasion, a fear heightened by memories of the Bay of Pigs and the recent events in Grenada. There are trenches surrounding the headquarters of the Federation and all citizens, including women, regularly report for guard duty. How much better it would be for all of us — Cubans and Norteamericanos — if the money going to the military in both countries would go instead to the schools and hospitals we all need. ■

(continued from page 1)

Young couples wishing to marry often doubled up with parents. In 1979 two-fifths of all households consisted of extended families, nearly one-half in larger cities. Doubling up, with its attendant overcrowding and lack of privacy, probably contributed to the falling birth rate in the late 1970s and Cuba's high divorce rate. Divorce, in turn, breaks up households, thus increasing the demand for housing.

Both government construction and self-built housing expanded rapidly in the early 1980s. While helping somewhat to ease the housing shortage, the surge in self-built housing brought with it other difficulties. Virtually all units were single-family detached dwellings, thereby perpetuating low density, urban sprawl and adding to infrastructure costs. No legal or financing formulas enabled households to join together to build multifamily structures. Overworked inspectors had trouble enforcing often inadequate building and zoning regulations. Local officials urged limiting the maximum size of new dwellings in order to spread scarce materials as widely as possible. Starting in 1979 credit became available to purchase materials for housing repair, but except for housing loans for agricultural cooperatives, few self-built units were financed through formal credit channels. Without loans, many new homeowners most likely paid somewhat more than 10 percent of income for housing, at least initially. At the same time, some of the keystones of Cuba's housing policies came under scrutiny in terms of their effectiveness, efficiency, equity and enforceability.

First, the total prohibition on private renting — except for homes in resort areas — prevented a more flexible and efficient use of existing housing. Small households living in large dwellings could not legally rent out rooms, while young couples and divorced people stuck living with former spouses were desperate to find other places to live, even for a short time.

Second, several policies — the ban on private rentals, ownership of only one permanent dwelling, and security

against eviction — came into conflict with regional and economic development policies. By the early 1980s, units "linked" to workplaces were increasingly occupied by people who no longer worked there. For instance, one-fifth of the units controlled by the Ministry of Heavy Industry were occupied by people employed elsewhere. In numerous rural new towns few residents still worked on local state farms. On the other hand, many of those who did work in these farms or factories had to commute long distances to work. Workers and technicians attracted to newly developing areas lived for long periods in workers hostels or tourist hotels waiting to be assigned housing. This, in turn, made it difficult to bring their families with them, and thus served as a strong disincentive to moving to labor-scarce developing areas in the interior. Once assigned housing, they risked losing their original homes, since renting or owning more than one dwelling is illegal.

Third, tenure status became mixed, in sometimes problematic ways. Most Cuban households move by exchanging their dwellings. More than two decades of such exchanges resulted in most "government-owned" buildings having both tenants and homeowners in residence, since tenure status was attached to the household, not the unit. Residents who had built on private or public land not belonging to them after 1971 were required to pay 10 percent of income as rent, in addition to their own expense of building the unit itself, a policy many considered unfair. Indeed, the tenure status of several situations remained murky, including self-built dwellings on land belonging to others and new dwellings built as additions to or on the roofs of owner or tenant-occupied units.

Black and Gray Markets

Fourth, the early 1980's witnessed a revival of "black" and "gray" market activity in the economy as the result of certain economic reforms which affected housing as well as other sectors. The 1980 wage reform raised salaries for almost all workers. This, coupled with productivity bonuses, increased retirement and disability pensions, and higher prices paid to farmers, put more money in people's pockets than goods available. Modest price hikes on selected goods and services in 1981, the first since 1962, absorbed part of the demand and lowered state subsidies on many items, but excess spending power still sought other outlets. Hence, under-the table payments in otherwise legal exchanges or sales of housing and land became more commonplace. Isolated instances of illegal private renting or subletting at "gray market" prices also emerged.

To further absorb spending power, selected non-essential consumer goods were offered at much higher prices at state-run "parallel" markets. Moreover, citizens were encouraged to open interest-bearing savings accounts. Housing was part of this campaign to save — both saving to buy materials to repair or build, and the house itself as a form of fixed personal savings.

Fifth, courts were clogged with drawn-out appeals of evictions by guests and ex-spouses no longer welcome where they lived, and former workers living in "linked" housing who were employed elsewhere. Houses often remained vacant while disputes about occupancy rights or inheritance were resolved juridically.

"free market" will not proceed totally unfettered. A "real estate sales tax" will be levied and, in addition, the state reserves the right to step in and exercise its option to purchase the property at its "legal price." When households exchange dwellings they will normally take their mortgage debt with them, but the new law provides for the parties involved to exchange the debt or to additionally assume payment of the debt on both dwellings. The new law will now permit the inheritance of a dwelling becoming vacant after the death of its owner, even if the heir did not previously reside there. The law also updates regulations on the fate of dwellings owned by people who emigrate, an important item given the 1984 agreement between Cuba and the United States permitting renewed migration of at least 20,000 Cubans annually to the U.S.

4. *Self-built housing:* The new law provides for active government involvement in fostering a variety of forms of self-built construction. These include both building by individual households and by cooperatives. Cooperatives are established only on a temporary basis for the purpose of building multifamily housing; once completed, apartments are owned as condominiums. Trade unions and other organizations are encouraged to promote such cooperatives among their members. Land or the right to build on roofs can be purchased from private parties, as can surface rights in perpetuity on state-owned land. Priority for state land will go first to cooperatives formed by trade unions seeking to build near their workplaces, then other cooperatives, and finally individual builders who fulfill certain criteria. Union-sponsored cooperatives will probably carry on the work of the micro-brigades, which began to be phased out in the early 1980's.

Low-interest loans are available to cover a wide range of building costs: materials for construction or repairs, land, architectural and other technical assistance, rental of tools and equipment and contracted labor from self-employed licensed tradespeople or specialized government enterprises.

5. *Short-term rental:* Owners are permitted to rent rooms — with or without separate sanitary facilities — to no more than two households at any one time. Leases can be for a minimum of one week and a maximum of six months, and are renewable. There are no restrictions on the amount of rent charged. If the homeowner chooses not to renew the lease or there has otherwise been a breach of contract, and the renter

refuses to leave, the owner can then request the government to attach 50 percent of the renter's income. If after three months the renter household still refuses to leave, its members can be evicted.

Permitting short-term renting is seen as a transitional measure to make space available — on a voluntary basis — in existing housing. It is expected that this policy will provide more options for recently divorced people, married couples living apart for lack of housing, people doubling up with relatives, and workers and technicians temporarily transferred to other parts of the country.

6. *Management, maintenance and repairs:* Normal maintenance and repairs will continue to be the responsibility of individual owners, but the government will contribute to costly major repairs of structural elements and common areas of deteriorated multifamily buildings. The draft housing law proposed that public agencies contribute to paying for costly repairs for both single-family and multifamily units (whether common areas or not). This was rejected in the National Assembly on the grounds that the government should not promise what it realistically cannot provide as yet.

Low-rise multifamily housing will be "self-managed" by a council of all residents (in practice not unlike cooperative boards in the United States). Residents are responsible for paying "common costs" of maintenance and repairs. High-rise structures will be managed by local government agencies, which will subsidize part of the maintenance costs.

7. *Non-payment, unwelcome household members and illegal occupants:* All amortization payments — whether for existing, new state-built or self-built dwellings — will be withheld from salaries in the same way consumer loan payments have been for many years. Only self-employed workers will pay directly, and if they fall more than three months in arrears they can be declared "illegal occupants," risking eventual eviction. Any member of a household — as long as he or she is not linearly related (i.e., parents, grandparents and children) — can be asked to leave by the owner(s). Special provisions are made in case of former spouses.

Occupants who are held to be "illegal" under the new law — including squatters occupying state or private housing or land without permission — must return to their legal residences, and if that is not feasible, the government will assign them a room or housing unit. If the illegal occupant still re-



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fuses to move, 30 percent of his or her salary will be attached for three months, and 50 percent for the following three months. As a last resort, the police can remove the recalcitrant party.

8. *Workplace "linked" and owned housing:* To assure a stable work force, a limited number of housing developments will be designated as either "linked" or owned by specific workplaces, military installations, or other political or social organizations. The National Assembly debated what to do with the thousands of families without members employed in the workplaces to which their housing is linked. Unable to reach consensus, the matter was sent to the National Housing Institute for further study, leaving only the broadest provisions on workplace linked or owned housing in the new law.

A Socialist Housing Law

Foreign news dispatches out of Havana have pointed to the new housing law as an example of "capitalism" creeping back into the Cuban economy. President Fidel Castro, in his closing remarks to the National Assembly session responded by in effect asking what capitalist country could make all its citizens homeowners. In Cuba, housing is produced for social use, not for profit. Limited private renting will create a small source of unearned profit, but this will be marginal to the economy as a whole, and this will be tempered by the fact that renters will be living in the same dwellings as their land-

lords. A cap on rent levels was considered, but then rejected as unenforceable. The only way to bring down private rent levels, say Cuban officials, will be massive housing development, so that every household can opt for a low-cost apartment rather than a high-rent room.

Housing scarcity has contributed to a much more thorny problem — which Cuba has yet to really resolve. That is the issue of security from eviction. The right of households (including now, private landlords) to choose who lives with them, and certain workplaces to control their housing stock, is clearly recognized. But at the same time, the rights of residents not to be thrown into the streets homeless is also clear; therefore, forcible evictions have been almost unknown in Cuba, despite being legally authorized for many years. The new law's provisions for withholding 30 to 50 percent of income from individuals or households refusing to vacate a unit is an attempt to put more teeth into current regulations. But it remains to be seen if these provisions will be any more effective than those of the past, since relocation housing is still so scarce.

There will be a transition period of several years before all the new law's provisions are in place. It will go a long way toward providing a framework for resolving many of Cuba's most pressing housing problems. However, many of these problems cannot be fully resolved until there is enough housing developed for all of Cuba's population. ■

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