

# CubaTimes

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## Human Rights in Cuba

by Elaine Fuller

The contrast between the State Department's 1983 report on human rights in Cuba and the report for 1979 raises several questions. Could conditions have changed so markedly in Cuba in so short a time? Of course, specific cases could have changed or the number of political prisoners and other data. But the State Department is evaluating general conditions. If conditions were so drastically different, wouldn't they have involved events that at least occasionally made the evening news? And finally, which report, if either, provides a more realistic assessment of human rights in Cuba?

Comparing the 1979 and 1983 sections on Cuba of the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* we see the contrast straight away in the introductions. Each summarizes what the State Department considered most significant in terms of respect for the integrity of the person, respect for civil rights and economic well-being. In the first category, the 1979 introduction highlighted the release of some 3,600 political prisoners and estimated that about 1,000 remain jailed. The 1983 report lists several conditions we expect to see elaborated in the main body of the text: that "death sentences were pronounced on several persons who tried to organize an independent trade union" and their lawyers later arrested; that "summary executions have been carried out in various parts of the country"; that political prisoners had been kept in jail after the expiration of their sentences or rearrested without explanation; and that "a number of lawyers and judges have been arrested on allegations of corrupt practices but who may actually have been resisting intensification of security restrictions on dissent in Cuba."

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## The Cuban Revolution and Its Impact on Human Rights

October 6, 1983



United States Department of State  
Bureau of Public Affairs  
Washington, D.C.

Following is an address by Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, before a conference on Cuba sponsored by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., October 6, 1983.

It is a privilege and a pleasure for me to be here this afternoon. Public discourse about Cuba in the United States is preoccupied with the problem of how we can best respond to Castro's foreign policy initiatives. It seems to me, however, that in addition to focusing on Cuba's foreign policy, we would do well to pay greater attention to Cuba's domestic policy. How we do so is, I think, one of the most important questions we would gain a greater insight not only into the sources of Cuban foreign policy but also into a variety of problems confronting our united States throughout the so-called Third world. For this reason, I propose to discuss my remarks this afternoon to the evolution of the Cuban revolution and particularly its impact on the human rights situation within Cuba.

**Evolution of the Cuban Revolution**  
The July 26 Movement, which overthrew the Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1959 and brought Fidel Castro to power and international prominence, was liberal and democratic in character. In the programmatic manifesto of the movement, issued from the Sierra Maestra in July 1957, Castro declared that after coming to power he would

hold "general elections" that would provide an "absolute guarantee" of freedom of association, of information, and of the press and would restore the individual and political rights guaranteed by the Constitution of 1940, which Batista had violated by his coup in 1952. Further, the manifesto maintained that the struggle in the mountains was being waged to "put an end to the regime of force, the violation of individual rights, the infamous crimes, and to seek the peace we desire through the only possible way, which is the democratic and constitutional way of the country." As late as July 1958, Castro reiterated his determination to "... guide the nation, after the fall of the tyrant [Batista], to normalcy by instituting a brief provisional government that will lead the country to full constitutional and democratic procedures."

Castro was also consistent in his denial of any intention to experiment with socialism. In an interview given to *Comment* magazine in February 1958, he stated:

I personally have come to feel that nationalization is, at best, a cumbersome instrument. It does not seem to make the state any stronger, yet it hinders private enterprise. Even more importantly, any attempt at wholesale nationalization would obviously hamper the principal point of our economic platform—industrialization at the fastest possible rate. For this purpose, foreign investments will always be welcome and secure here.

And, again, in May of 1958, Castro declared:

Never has the July 26 Movement talked about socialism or undermining the constitution. This is simply stupid fear of our revolution. We have proclaimed from the first day that we fight for the full enforcement of the Constitution of 1940, whose norms establish guarantees, rights, and obligations for all the citizens that were a part of production. Committed threats to free enterprise and limited rights...

Once the July 26 Movement succeeded in overthrowing Batista, however, hopes that Cuba would tread a democratic path lasted a few months at best. Within 6 months of becoming Prime Minister, Castro made it clear that to be an anticommunist was considered an unfriendly act by the government. Within a year of the new regime's coming to power, Cuba was visited by Anastas Mikoyan, Vice Chairman of the Soviet Council of Ministers, with commercial proposals and plans for arm deals. In December of 1961, Castro completed his betrayal of the Cuban revolution by formally announcing his commitment to Marxism-Leninism.

Some students of the Cuban revolution have argued that Castro had been a Marxist-Leninist since his student days and that all his democratic professions were no more than an elaborate disinformation campaign, but this seems quite unlikely. Even more unlikely is the view that the United States somehow forced Castro into embracing communism. In this connection, President Eisenhower's decision to play golf rather

## TO OUR READERS

In this issue of CUBATIMES we take a look at the U.S. State Department's latest report on human rights in Cuba. Elaine Fuller examines some of the assertions of the report, including the stories of mass arrests and executions of workers for attempting to organize an independent trade union. As evidence for these accusations, the State Department refers to information that came to the attention of the International Labor Organization. When the reports of the International Labor Organization are examined, however, a different picture emerges. The I.L.O. found that the five "trade union organizers," who received long prison sentences were, in fact, tried and convicted before Cuba's Supreme Court for numerous acts of arson in industrial, agricultural and public places and for sabotage of telephone lines, which they carried out as part of a right-wing terrorist group called "Zapata Group."

The I.L.O. reports also show that this case was brought to their attention by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. The I.C.F.T.U. originally named five men who were either sentenced to death or received 30 years in prison for attempting to organize a strike in the sugar industry. The I.C.F.T.U. subsequently also reported that five con-

struction workers were sentenced to death for organizing a trade union at the Lenin Park recreation center in Havana. However, it named the same five men who had been cited already as having been sentenced for organizing in the sugar industry. As can be expected, none of the details of this case appear in the State Department's report.

If you missed the March-April issue of CUBATIMES, which featured an analysis of the accusations that the Cuban government is involved in drug trafficking, copies are still available for \$2.00

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Where is the data to back up these serious accusations? Although the trade union case is mentioned three more times, no further information is forthcoming, except that it involved five persons and the death sentences were commuted to 30 years in prison. As for the summary executions, we learn only that four Jehovah's Witnesses were "reported to have been executed" during the year and "five others sentenced to death" for "having a mimeograph machine to reproduce religious tracts." One of the others was "allegedly spreading propaganda to incite armed rebellion." The only other case mentioned was Carlos Alberto Gutierrez, who "was shot for belonging to a group caught painting antigovernment slogans on walls."

It is true that the Jehovah's Witnesses have been suspect in Cuba for many years, primarily because their religion dictates against any allegiance to the state and they actively proselytize to that effect. Because of this, there is a general prejudice against them, an attitude which creates the possibility of injustice against an innocent person who happens to be a Jehovah's Witness. But the State Department is not making this case. They are asserting that there is no freedom of religion in Cuba. They say the "Cuban Government actively discouraged Protestant sects," but they seem to have never heard of the Ecumenical Council of Cuba, which has easily accessible offices in downtown Havana. Neither do they mention the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Matanzas, nor the Catholic Seminary of San Carlos and San Ambrosio, also in Havana.

When I was in Havana in January, I stopped by the Ecumenical Council's offices to deliver some letters from people in the United States. They invited me to join them in a week-long national assembly of local church representatives about to begin in Santiago. I was not able to change my schedule and attend, but there was certainly nothing secretive in their activities. I was told that there are cases of discrimination in terms of hiring for particular job categories, but no interference with religious activities. The Ecumenical Council represents 13 Protestant denominations in Cuba, most with historic ties to their counterparts in the United States. The State Department could easily have found many church people in this country who could have given them reliable data on the churches in Cuba. This, by the way, was a failure of the 1979 document as well.

On the question of torture and other cruel punishment, three cases of former political prisoners are listed: Armando Valladares and Jose Rodriguez Terrero, who both spent 22 years in prison, and Dr. Abdo Canasi, who spent 10 years in prison. The remaining case is that of a demonstration by mothers of prisoners. "The police reportedly dispersed the mothers using high pressure water hoses and dogs."

Under the category of arbitrary arrest, two people, Ricardo Bofill and his friend, Carlos Jesus Menendez Cervera, are mentioned. A more serious case, however, in terms of relevance to general conditions, is the report of 200 persons being arrested in Sancti Spiritus province for "protesting the government confiscation of their harvests. Eleven of these farmers, accused of attempting to blow up the Baza Dam, are reported to have been executed."

The State Department reports that this case, as well as a case regarding the arrest of 20 to 30 workers at the

"Chapara sugar refinery for attempting to organize an independent trade union," were referred to the International Labor Organization (I.L.O.) for review beyond its initial review of November 1983. This is indeed correct. In its 230th report to the I.L.O. Governing Body, of November 15-18, 1983, the Committee on Freedom of Association put forth the two cases which had been brought before it by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (I.C.F.T.U.) in June 1983. However, the I.C.F.T.U.'s communication contains absolutely nothing about eleven farmers being executed for anything.

### The International Labor Organization's Review

The 233rd report of the Committee to the I.L.O., dated February 25-March 3, 1984, contains the Cuban government's response to these allegations. As to the arrest of 200 farmers in Sancti Spiritus province, it states that the farmers gained title to their land through the agrarian reform of the Revolution and sell part of their crops to the state at adequate prices. It goes on to explain that the farmer "has the right to retain part of the fruits of his labor for his own sustenance, or to sell it on the free market at a price that the farmer himself may fix. It is therefore meaningless to talk of a protest movement or of alleged imprisonment in this connection." The Cuban communique concludes that "in Cuba there are no persons detained in the Sancti Spiritus Province for having participated in collective protest action." It claims the other case, regarding the arrest of sugar refinery workers, was a complete fabrication as well. The I.L.O. makes no conclusion, but asks the I.C.F.T.U. to send more detailed information pertaining to trade union activities in both cases.

The cases noted by the State Department are undoubtedly meant to be representative of widespread conditions regarding respect for the integrity of the person, but its report is extremely vague on general conditions and data. It is also vague about what happened in these cases and how current they are. What is more glaring, in view of its repeated reference to five workers condemned for trying to organize an independent trade union, is its failure to report on the I.L.O.'s investigation of that case.

The I.L.O. reports that the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions first expressed its concern in a telegram dated April 18, 1983. It reported that "some 200 workers had been tried for having attempted to organize a strike in the sugar industry." According to some reports, it said, five men, which it named, had been sentenced to death. According to other reports, they had received 30-year prison sentences. Then, in a communication of April 29, 1983, the I.C.F.T.U. alleged "that according to its information, 50 workers were arrested in Havana in October 1982 for having tried, with their comrades, to organize an independent trade union to defend their interests. The group of workers belongs to the State construction undertaking, which has its headquarters in Havana and is engaged in work at the 'Lenin Park' recreation center in the city." The I.C.F.T.U. goes on to say that five of these workers were sentenced to death. However, it names the same five who were cited in its earlier telegram as having been sentenced to death for organizing a strike in the sugar industry.

To the Cuban government, the discrepancy merely demonstrates "that an attempt is being made, pointlessly, to under-

mine the prestige of Cuba by inventing a 'case' of infringement of freedom of association for obvious purposes of propaganda." In its conclusions, the I.L.O. noted the judgement of the People's Supreme Court of the Republic of Cuba concerning 26 accused persons, including the five named by the I.C.F.T.U. The judgement describes them as men who in 1978 "set up the organization known as the 'Zapata Group,' belonging to the ultra-reactionary terrorist organization 'Alpha 66' based in Miami in the state of Florida, whose fundamental task is to destroy the economy of the country and create panic among the population so as to create an atmosphere of insecurity with the aim of overthrowing our socialist State by violent means." The Supreme Court judgement describes a long list of actions for which the men had been charged. It includes setting fires to many agricultural, industrial and public places, sabotage of telephone lines and distribution of libelous documents signed by the "Company for Sabotage against Communism." The I.L.O. concluded that "the sentence rendered by the Court was based on acts other than their trade union activities." As for the arrest of four lawyers and a judge who interceded on behalf of the five, the I.L.O. noted that "Cuban penal legislation grants the right to appeal against court decisions, so that it would be absurd and unnecessary for any third party to intervene voluntarily in order to secure a reversal of a court decision." The I.L.O. concluded that "this aspect of the case does not call for further examination."

An Amnesty International spokesperson in London told me that while their file on the five labor unionists was still open, they had absolutely no confirmation that these men were trying to organize a trade union or committed acts of sabotage. Even the source of the original charge, he said, remained unknown and since May of last year, Amnesty has received no information on the case from any source.

### Discrepancies Between 1979 and 1983 Reports

It does not condone the death penalty or even a single case of cruel punishment to question whether these cases, as reported, make the argument that "the Cuban government continues to violate human rights on a large scale." If we try to put them in the context of general conditions presented in the 1979 State Department human rights report we find a great discrepancy. That report concluded that "torture now seems to be rare." It reported general agreement among recently released prisoners "that prison conditions in most facilities have improved since 1975. Now, modern prison facilities have been constructed. Reports on maltreatment at the hands of guards are rare, and such maltreatment probably is not officially condoned, though there are still exceptions to the rule." It went on to outline the "progressive plan" of prisoner work, rights and privileges implemented in 1971, and to discuss the hard-core political prisoners (plantados), who refuse to take part in it.

Furthermore, the 1979 report presented no cases of arbitrary arrest or imprisonment for political beliefs though it quoted Amnesty International as saying this seems to have happened to certain individuals. It did say that "former political prisoners often find it difficult to find satisfactory employment and become reintegrated into Cuban society. The answer of the Cuban government to the problem is to encourage emigration." (What the State Department did not men-

tion, however, is that the release of the 3,600 men followed discussion with the United States government in which it was understood that the U.S. would give them entry visas. That it did not was one of the conditions leading to the "Mariel exodus" the following year.)

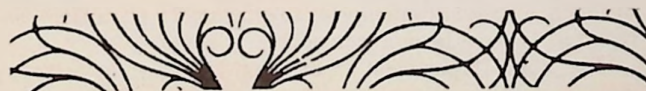
Regarding civil liberties, the 1983 report says that Cubans traveling outside their home provinces "must provide convincing reasons for their presence in another part of the country." The 1979 report said, "Domestic travel within Cuba is not circumscribed or controlled." The 1983 report says, "The state also closely controls all forms of intellectual and artistic expression and represses dissent through the threat of severe punishment for any deviation for authorized standards." The 1979 report didn't even mention artistic freedom as a concern. This is one area where the experience of a great many U.S. citizens can put the lie to the State Department's recent report. A wide variety of Cuban artists, deviating enormously from one another and therefore, one can safely assume from some "authorized standard," have appeared or presented their works in the United States. Cuban artists participate in many international art festivals and are hosts for such festivals in Cuba.

Finally, concerning the centerpiece of the 1983 report—widespread summary executions—there is no mention at all in the 1979 report. But according to Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, these current "facts about Cuban repression have been available for many years now" (speech on October 6, 1983, before a conference on Cuba sponsored by the Center for Strategic and International Studies).

It is not that I think there are no executions in Cuba, or that prison officials always act in an exemplary manner. And the Cuban government does not deny having some political prisoners. The reality is that all governments, including our own, have some political prisoners and establish some limits on citizen activity, beyond which it is not legitimate to go. The questions are, what principles are these limits based on and what history do they grow out of? Do they mean widespread violation of human rights or not? Do they support a status quo of general misery and repression or not? Are they really necessary for national security or not? These questions can be asked of Cuba, the United States or any other country.

But at the present moment there is an even more urgent question that must be asked? If the 1983 State Department report on human rights in Cuba expresses more than the usual anti-Cuba sentiments, what is it getting at? Elliott Abrams provides us with the answer when he urges us "to pay greater attention to Cuba's domestic policy. Were we to do so, I think we would gain a greater insight not only into the sources of Cuban foreign policy but also into a variety of problems confronting the United States throughout the so-called Third World."

Abrams is quite simply trying to use the human rights issue to give legitimacy to the "right" of the United States to attack and overthrow governments of underdeveloped countries which are confronting it with "problems." The State Department's human rights report has become a tool toward that end. ■



## Radiomathon

by Bob Greenberg

Officials of President Reagan's re-election campaign have decided to return a \$5,000 contribution raised from Cubans living in the Miami area. The money was part of a total of \$201,400 raised during an 18-hour radiomathon run by the Political Action Committee (PAC) of the National Coalition for a Free Cuba. The Coalition is a branch of the influential Washington-based Cuban American National Foundation.

The president of the PAC and coordinator of the radiomathon, Carlos Benítez, is a prominent Republican of Dade County, of which Miami is a part. Benítez, formerly a member of the Executive Committee of the Financial Division of the Campaign to Re-elect Reagan, was expelled from his post because the radiomathon could possibly have used "questionable activities of fund raising," according to Ronald E. Robertson, the main accountant of the Reagan re-election campaign.

A spokesman for the Reagan campaign, John Buckley, said that the radiomathon could have led the public to believe that the funds raised would go to the campaign for the re-election of the President, while in reality almost all of the funds raised went to the Cuban American PAC. "We don't want there to be a misunderstanding of any sort, and for that reason we have broken our relations with the (Cuban American) PAC." The Reagan campaign also sent back the \$5,000 contribution and cancelled a Miami luncheon set for February 24 which was expected to raise \$250,000 for Reagan.

The Executive Director of the Cuban American National Foundation, Frank Calzon, said that he is not personally involved in the activities of the PAC, and for that reason was not aware of the return of the money nor of the expulsion of Carlos Benítez. "Frankly, I knew nothing of this situation," said Calzon in a telephone interview with the *Miami Herald*.

In the wake of these events, Cuban exile contributors have been calling Spanish language radio stations WQBA, WRHC and WOCN to find out what will happen to the money they contributed as a result of the January 30 radiomathon aired on these stations. Also attacking the actions of the Cuban American PAC were some Republican leaders of Dade County and Mike Thompson, member of the State Committee of Dade, who stated that "they [the PACs] have used the popularity of Reagan to raise money for their cause, when 95 percent [of the funds] could not get to Reagan."

The *Miami Herald*, in an editorial of March 10, also attacked the three Hispanic radio stations for donating 18 hours of air time and their employees' time to raise money for the President's re-election. "This practice is against the principles of United States journalism, in that the private newsman must remain independent and not promote any candidate." The editorial also complimented the President's re-election committee for distancing itself from the Cuban fundraising efforts.

The *Miami Herald* also found it strange that Frank Calzon, Executive Director of the Cuban American National Founda-

tion, denied any connection with the PAC. Very strange indeed, considering that the PAC and the Foundation share the same address in Miami and the same Board of Directors.

### Some Want Money Back

Since all the money raised will now be ostensibly used to help those politicians who support Radio Marti, and since this purpose was never clearly mentioned during the 18-hour radiomathon, some Cubans are now asking for their money back. "The next time any news media considers becoming a center of political fundraising, its administrators had better think about this tale. This idea was a disaster from beginning to end." (*El Miami Herald*, "Editoriales", March 10, 1984).

One might ask why national Republican leaders would reject \$5,000, demote a high party loyalist and risk losing the support of the powerful Cuban minority. One possible answer might be found in the Miami column written by Roberto Fabricio. He suggests that allowing the Cuban American PAC to take over the Reagan fundraising operation in the Miami area would gain the national re-election campaign only \$5,000, the legal limit, while they would lose an estimated \$1 million which it is expected will be given by Cubans to support the Reagan candidacy.

The fear of establishment Republicans was reflected in the words of Carlos Salman, one of the most influential Cuban Republicans in Dade County: "I never imagined that the response to the radiomathon would be of such a magnitude. People active in the Republican Party reacted with great resentment because they estimated that we have a cake of \$1 million to be raised among Cuban Republicans in Dade, and every time a piece is taken, the cake becomes smaller."

This "cake of \$1 million" should have been divided among the five regular Republican organizations in the area—the Reagan-Bush National Campaign of Florida, the

*"Don't anyone move; this is a marathon!"*

en presente



National Reagan-Bush Campaign, the Republican Party of Florida, the Republican Party of Dade and Viva 84, the Hispanic committee of the Reagan campaign. "The PAC came to look for a piece of the cake and received such a big piece that it worried all of us," said Salmon. Carlos Salman was one of the founders of the Cuban American National Foundation, but left the organization six months ago when he saw a conflict between the Cuban American PAC and his role in the Republican Party.

Jorge Mas Canos, an influential Cuban in Dade County, who directs the Cuban American National Foundation as well as its PAC, has launched an attack on the Miami *Herald* for fomenting the crisis. On March 10 a full page ad was placed in the paper by the Board of Directors of the National Coalition for a Free Cuba (PAC) and read over the radio station WQBA by Jorge Mas Canosa. In this ad the *Herald* is accused of having aligned itself "with the traditional enemies of the Cuban cause. First in line, of course, are the agents of the Cuban communist government." ■

## LITERATURE

### A Conversation with Nancy Morejon

by Jean Fraser

"A writer has a distinct role in Cuban society. That role is to write well and to be useful. All writers should be useful to our people." Those are the words of Nancy Morejon, noted Cuban poet and writer. Nancy's poems deal with the lives of women, reflecting a profound indignation of their past exploitation, particularly that of Black women, and a confidence in a brighter future for them which relates directly to her pride in the Cuban Revolution, its ideals and accomplishments.

Nancy Morejon was born in Havana in 1944. She is an editor at the Cuban Writers and Artists Union (UNEAC), where she works with Cuba's national poet, Nicholas Guillen. On a recent visit to Cuba I spoke to her about her work and the situation of Cuban writers.

Writers in Cuba do not suffer from lack of exposure, even a bad writer, according to Nancy, can get wide publication. "The problem is not that the society allows someone to write, but rather you must win that right," she said, indicating there are different levels of writers. "It is very important for you to know bad writers can exist in Cuba, because there are several possibilities for writers to express themselves. She believes that the state should and must create an atmosphere that is supportive of artists and writers. Writer's workshops exist throughout the country where beginners as well as professionals and young people can learn and practice their craft.

There is an obligation that comes with the right to be published and to communicate in Cuba. That, says Nancy, is a duty to give the people your best. She does not think writing is easy. "You may have a very progressive or emotional idea, but sometimes you don't have the technique or style to express it. Then your message is lost, it is bad, it is of no use. No one can trust a bad poem. Writing about the Revolution,

or race relations or equality between the sexes are important for our time, but you have to be a good writer to express these ideas." She continued, "Talent is a gift of nature—you may be 17 years old and be a great poet because you were born with that talent, but practice is still very important in this work. We are told the first 40 years of a writer are the hardest."

In Cuba, writers can be and sometimes are professors, journalists or editors. They are paid for their jobs in addition to collecting royalties for their books. "I cannot imagine a writer working for a salary, because it is like saying I will pay you for writing 10 pages a day or year—that's crazy. In our time and in our country, the usefulness of culture should be deeper, more profound. You cannot pay someone to write and you cannot buy someone with a salary. I don't think that, because I don't receive a salary to write, I am not a professional."

### Freedom to Write

As for the freedom to write what one chooses, according to Nancy, that is not a problem. She feels no pressure to write or not to write on any particular subject. She says she has a good relationship with her publishing house, and in addition to her own poetry, she also translates Haitian poetry. Her most recent publications include *Parajes de un epoca* (1979), *Poemas* (1980), *Nacion y mestizaje en Nicholas Guillen* (1982) which received the UNEAC prize for best essay as well as the "Enrique Jose Verona" and "Mirta Aguirre" awards for literary criticism in 1983, *Octubre imprescindible* (continued on page 9)

Cuban poet, Nancy Morejón.



## NEWS BRIEFS

### Cuban Troop Cutback

Diplomats from several Western nations said that Cuba will cut its troop strength in Ethiopia from 10,500 to fewer than 3,000 by June. The Cuban troops aided Ethiopia in a war against Somalia in a dispute over the Ogaden region. The diplomats were said to have been informed that the troops were leaving because a new Somalian attack was unlikely and that Ethiopia is too poor to share in the cost of maintaining the Cuban troops.

### Havana's Historic Restoration

The Cuban Government has begun an extensive restoration of Old Havana. The long-term project should take 35 years to complete, and includes the refurbishing of forts, plazas, and an estimated 900 historic buildings. Although the area has been called one of the historic treasures of the hemisphere, authorities are encouraging families interested in historic preservation to apply to live in restored houses, to avoid turning the district into a sterile museum. The Cuban Government hopes that the restoration of Old Havana will serve as a source of pride and heritage for the Cuban people, as well as attracting sorely needed tourist trade.

### Renault Truck Contract

The Renault Vehicles Industry of France has won a contract to sell 200 heavy trucks to Cuba. The contract is a result of recent talks between France and Cuba to reinforce trade relations. France has become Cuba's leading supplier of trucks and has advanced Cuba additional commercial credit.

### Edible Mud

A new component that adds bulk to animal feed has been developed in Cuba. The component, called GICABU, is made by drying the mud extracted by cane juice filters in sugar mills. The mud, which has a high nutrient content, is then treated chemically to correct its PH balance. Dregs from distilleries are used for this process. GICABU is an example of an industrial by-product that has been put to good use. It also represents a great savings in foreign currency for Cuba.

### Infant Mortality Rate Down

Cuba registered the lowest infant mortality rate of its history in 1983 - 16.8 for every 1000 live births. The rate was reported by the Ministry of Public Health. It represents an 0.5 decrease in relation to 1982's rate of 17.3 per thousand. A report presented in December by UNICEF included Cuba in the group of countries with the lowest infant mortality rate along with industrialized nations. Cuba was the only Latin American country noted in this category. It has been noted that the infant mortality rate is considered by experts to be one of the most reliable indicators of the health conditions of children and is closely related to other factors such as per capita income, life expectancy and literacy rates.

### Castro's Seeds Sown

If it weren't for the personal intervention of Fidel Castro, an odd-looking greyish bush would not be flowering in the Waimea Arboretum and Botanical Garden in Hawaii. The rare bush, called the *Erythrina elenae* is naturally found in only two places in the entire world. Both of those places are in Cuba. Frustrated in his attempt to acquire the obscure flora for his park, Keith Wooliams, arboretum director for the Waimea Falls Park, wrote directly to Castro. Months later, a packet of seeds arrived in Hawaii with a message indicating that Castro was responsible for the gift. This year the strange looking plant will bloom for the first time ever outside of Cuba.

## NEWS BRIEFS

### New Paper Factory

Cuba's largest paper manufacturing plant, located in the province of Sancti Spiritus, is currently on its test run and will be turning out its first 10,000 tons of paper by the end of this year. Utilizing sugar cane pulp instead of wood pulp, the new plant will help Cuba realize a savings of five million pesos annually. It is projected that the plant will ultimately produce 75,000 tons of newsprint and writing paper a year. Sixty percent of the output is planned for domestic use and the remaining forty percent is slated for export. Cuba has the necessary printing facilities, and the new plant in Sancti Spiritus will now make it possible for Cuba to publish over 80 million books a year.

### No Response from Reagan

The Reagan Administration received two proposals from Cuba to normalize U.S.-Cuban relations and to ease tensions in Central America. The first proposal, delivered in 1982, asked Washington to lift its trade embargo and restore diplomatic relations with Cuba, and offered Cuban help to resolve U.S. differences with Nicaragua. The second, more conciliatory message delivered in 1983, reiterated the first proposal, but also conceded that "the Caribbean area is of vital interest to the United States". Although the go-between, Luis Burstein, a former Costa Rican information officer, had been encouraged by U.S. administration officials to go to Havana to talk with high-level Cuban officials, the Reagan administration decided not to respond to either proposal, claiming that they offered "nothing new".

### Radio Marti Update

Emilio Milian, a Miami newsman who was known for his fiery anti-terrorist editorials and who subsequently lost both of his legs when his own car was bombed in retribution, has been offered the directorship for the controversial Radio Marti. Although Milian turned down the job when it was originally offered, he now claims to be "favorably disposed" to taking it. Milian said that he is reconsidering the offer because the United States Information Agency (USIA) was not able to find another man for the job.

### Benefits Up

Before the revolution 50% of all workers lacked social security benefits. Now all workers are entitled to them. What was paid out in social security benefits in a year in the past, is now paid out in 12 days.

### Castro, Kennedy and Fate

In an interview published in Parade magazine, Fidel Castro claimed not to hold the former President John Kennedy responsible for the Bay of Pigs. Viewing the invasion as an inheritance of the Eisenhower administration, Castro expressed admiration for Kennedy noting that "He was, simply, very young...". Further, Castro said that Kennedy had sent him a private message seeking a "dialogue with the United States - with him - and reflecting his preoccupation and disposition to find a channel of contact, of dialogue, and to overcome the great tensions that had existed." The message was delivered by a well-known French editor on November 22, 1963.

### WSJ Hypes "Exposé"

We find it curious that the Wall Street Journal, a publication which normally prides itself for its investigative pieces, chose to run yet another rehash the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration's much maligned story accusing Cuba of being the French connection in the Caribbean, as a front page piece.



(continued from page 6)

(1982), and *Cuaderno de Granada* (1984). Her books are usually sold out very shortly after publication. She said, "I feel free with myself and with my country. I am a product of this society, and I agree with our political policy. I would never think of writing a verse or a poem against the realities of this Revolution because I am proof of this Revolution. It would be suicide. These things are very poetic, sometimes people don't understand."

Nancy is a member of UNEAC, the union that represents not only writers, but artists, filmmakers and dancers. Membership is not mandatory, although the most important Cuban writers are members. It is not necessary, however, to be member to have a book published. UNEAC acts as a council or academy, organizing lectures and readings, and sometimes

festivals, as well as information meetings. Members are required to pay monthly dues, like most unions in the U.S. The association gathers and organizes many activities that are important to its members, but is quite different from the Ministry of Culture. UNEAC has also built a complex in the countryside where its members can go on vacation. There are studios and a library on one side and houses on the other side.

Nancy believes that writers play an important role in the society. "We are a small underdeveloped country, but one of the greatest. People who have another level of information about their culture have a duty to diffuse this knowledge and diffuse this culture to our people. We give a very concrete service to our society, and this is one of our links with our people, our country." ■

## FEATURE

# Alicia Alonso: Farewell to Giselle

by Beatrice Siegel

Cuban prima ballerina Alicia Alonso will say farewell to the peasant maiden *Giselle* when she dances the second act *pas de deux* with Jorge Esquivel at the 100th anniversary celebration of the Metropolitan Opera House on May 13th. Her appearance in New York will mark more than 40 years of a career that was launched by Alonso's first performance as *Giselle* in 1943 for American Ballet Theatre when she was called on by Anton Dolin to replace an ailing Markova. Her brilliant and sensitive interpretation of the role hailed the birth of a new ballet star. Since that debut Alonso has not only danced *Giselle* across all continents but she has staged the ballet for opera houses in Paris, Vienna, Argentina, Italy and, of course, for her own Ballet Nacional de Cuba.

It was *Giselle* that brought the young Alicia fame, but it is her consummate artistry and dedication that maintain her in the top ranks as ballerina, teacher, and director of a successful company. On the eve of her memorable last performance of *Giselle*, I interviewed Alonso in Cuba to discuss the developments within the company since my last visit in 1975.

Changes come from two sources, Alonso asserted. The first is the inner need of dancer to stretch the body to its limits of expressive motion by expanding technique. The second source of change arises from the observation of the work of other companies, either when the Cubans tour abroad or when foreign dancers perform in Cuba.

"The dancing world has become very advanced," Alonso said. "Not only technically but in imaginative productions, especially in lighting and costumes. There is less fuss, fewer adornments. The stage has become a simple setting on which a dancer, in simple costume, performs."

She cautioned about an emphasis on technique that encourages pyrotechnical dancing. "There is danger in that," she said with feeling. "It is exciting showmanship and audiences like it. But frequently bravura dancing becomes a thing in itself. When that happens, audiences may not realize it, but

they are being robbed of dance that has meaning, that says something. In short, they are robbed of the art of dance. Bravura relies on purely physical technique," she concluded. "Art also uses the brain."

Under Alonso's watchful eye, her company instills fresh vigor into the classics. She abhors fixed habits that deprive a performance of its spirit. To correct this, she often takes rehearsals with her lead dancers. One morning at the Ballet School in Vedado, she was working with Loipa Araujo, who was scheduled to dance *Swan Lake* that evening. Wearing a leotard with a filmy chiffon skirt, her hair tucked under a bright scarf, Alonso stretched out on the floor like a 16-year-old student. She communicated to Araujo the refinement of style, the importance of detail in expressing emotion. Patiently she demonstrated the use of arms, hands and fingers—what it means when the hand flies upward with a straight wrist; what it means when the hand gently flutters downward.

For its new repertoire, the company typically reaches back into the history of its country as a source of inspiration. Alberto Alonso, well known as a founder of Cuban ballet, and especially for his choreography of the well-known *Carmen*, has created a new number called *A Tribute to Jose White*. White was a 19th century Cuban composer and violinist who had studied in France for many years. His works had been lost until their recent discovery by Cuban historians and musicologists.

Captivated by the music, Alberto created a dance to White's *Concerto in F Minor* for violin and orchestra. The dance, he says frankly, is in the Balanchine tradition. By that he means that the dance is not wedded to a story but instead that the music itself determines all movement. In a clinging chiffon gown evoking the romantic era, Alicia Alonso partnered by Jorge Esquivel leads the ensemble in flowing lyrical movements, first as soloist, then with the group when the solo violin merges with the other instruments of the orchestra. Alberto Alonso admits the dance needs more structuring. Although he is trying to emulate Balanchine, he has



Alicia Alonso in *Giselle*.

not yet achieved the dramatic tension in his work that is such an integral part of Balanchine's choreography.

### Alonso Portrays Callas

*La Diva*, another new work, has been created for Alicia Alonso by leading choreographer Alberto Mendez. Using music developed by Felix Guerrero from other diverse works, with a stage design by Salvador Rodriguez, the production moves through five scenes to portray aspects of the life of legendary opera star Maria Callas. Alonso is glamorous and sensual in the first scene. Costumed in an evening dress of 1930's vintage, she is discovered leaning against a grand piano. In gestures, mime, and movement, she establishes the aura of the world of opera, in which the regal theatrical personality of Callas thrived. As the scenes unfold, we see Callas's growth as a singer; her life in the ambience of safe society; her appeal as a mature artist; her love affair that ends in frustration and grief; and her death as a lonely woman isolated from her friends and the world of art. The final scene resurrects *La Diva* as the triumphal legend she has become.

This work is as much theater as it is ballet. It affords Alonso an opportunity to communicate passion, pain, social and creative success, as well as loneliness. She does this not only through her acting, but through dance sequences in which she is partnered by Esquivel as her lover and which dramatize the character she is portraying.

Seeing such works in Havana and talking with Alicia Alonso and other company members, make it clear that the Ballet Nacional de Cuba, under Alonso's leadership, is a vital growing organization. It experiences the world beyond Cuba's borders through frequent travels abroad. At the end of January 1984, Alonso took part of the company on a four-

month tour to Moscow, Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, Switzerland, and England, performing in London for the first time since 1953.

The part of the company that remains in Cuba will continue to perform in the provinces and to learn new dances in preparation for the Ninth International Dance Festival to be held in Havana in October 1984. On Alonso's return to Cuba, she will rest up a bit, and then take the second group back to Spain for concerts, while the first group prepares for the Dance Festival.

This International Festival, to be held in the recently refurbished Grand Theatre Garcia Lorca in the old part of Havana, gives Cuban dancers an opportunity to observe and perform with ballet dancers from Europe, as well as the United States, Canada and Latin America. For twelve days they dance together, talk, and learn from each other and thus solidify Cuba's place in the dance world.

### Alonso the Teacher

Cuba's outreach is reflected in another imaginative program. This past December saw the convening of the Second International Practical Dance Course. The *Curso*, as it was called, gave master classes in every aspect of dance experience and was under the direction of Alicia's daughter, Laura. This year more than 100 students from eleven countries registered for studies in lighting, makeup, stage management, costume, and dance history, as well as instruction in advanced ballet taught by Cuba's leading teachers and performers. The most popular of these is Laura Alonso who, as her mother's ballet coach, is known world-wide.

The *Curso* was held in a beautifully restored colonial mansion on the Malecon Drive, with a view of Morro Castle, an

old fort jutting into the sea. The highlight of the event was Alicia's attendance at a class in dance history. Responding to questions by dance historian Miguel Cabrera, Alonso talked about her early dance experiences in Cuba. (Simultaneous translations into English and French was provided by all lectures.) Media reporters from Switzerland, France, Italy and other countries were present, as was a film crew from Chicago that was working on a documentary about Alonso and Cuban dance.

Alicia's reply to questions from a Mexican dancer and a dancer from Peru about how to form a ballet company in their provinces brought wild applause from the assembled students. Noting that Cuba already sends dance teachers and performers abroad, she said that the day will come when there will be one Latin American School of Ballet. She thus promised that Cuban dance experience will continue to be a source of help and inspiration to others.

At the end of her talk, Alonso was surrounded by young dancers who were eager to have her autograph, or a personal word with her, or simply to touch her. World famous as she is, she is always accessible. It is one of her endearing and enduring qualities that she can be reached—that she responds equally to dance students and dance audiences. Although Alonso can also be remote, aloof, even elitist, that is a theatrical role she assumes as a superstar.

She is "touched" she said, by the celebration to be held at the Metropolitan Opera House. It reminds her, she said, of many things, of her own dance history, the friends of those years, and of the United States, the country she had long considered her second home. She thinks of herself as a Cuban-born, U.S.-trained ballerina.

At age 62, Alonso finds it both psychologically and technically rigorous to perform a demanding dance such as Giselle. In her final performance in Havana on December 24, last year, she achieved moments of startling artistry; again and again she made trust and faith universal qualities. The audience, moved by the gentleness in her performance and aware that this was Alonso's farewell to Giselle, gave her a standing ovation.

Having "lived" Giselle for over 40 years, it is a painful experience to say good-bye. When she performs with Esquivel at the Metropolitan Opera House in May, she knows she is saying farewell to an era. But she is definitely not saying farewell to performing nor to the leadership of her great Ballet Nacional de Cuba. For she has promised her dancers—who watch over her and guard her health—that she will live to be a thousand. **H**

## LABOR

### Cuban Workers Confederation: 15th Congress

by Elaine Fuller

In mid-February, the Cuban Workers Confederation (C.T.C.) held the 15th national congress since its founding in

1939. It was the third national congress since the beginnings of economic reorganization in the early 1970's. Some of the main debates had to do with issues of worker/management relations and problems of productivity. There was also continued discussion of women in the work force with a special speech by Vilma Espin, president of the Cuban Women's Federation.

Debates and speeches were interspersed with celebrations for exemplary workers and demonstrations of solidarity with workers of other countries, particularly Nicaragua. Attending the week-long congress were 2,180 delegates elected at the local and provincial level from among 51,000 candidates. Almost 68 percent came from locals of the 17 national unions comprising the Confederation and 27 percent were women. In addition to elected delegates, congress participants included 115 representatives from unions in 86 other countries and 600 representatives of the government, management and mass organizations.

As did those in 1973 and 1978, the 15th C.T.C. Congress took as its primary objective the continued struggle toward economic development that has been incorporated since 1975 in a more decentralized economic management system. Within the context of set prices and wages, most enterprises are responsible for achieving "profitability"—keeping costs less than income through higher productivity and greater efficiency. Enterprises producing necessities are subsidized, since retail prices for their goods are set very low.

Tensions between management and labor came to the fore in debate on Decree Laws 32 and 36. These two laws were decreed in 1980 in response to persistent and widespread problems of labor indiscipline and low productivity. For an economically severe problem the solution was politically extreme. Law 32 gives full authority to management to penalize infractions of work regulations. However, sanctions must be in writing and workers have the right of appeal to the corresponding municipal court.

Law 36 provides authority to the appropriate ministries to sanction management for their violations. Workers who have been unfairly penalized may claim indemnification from the funds of the enterprise. One proposal at the congress was that indemnization be taken out of managers' salaries. This was a response to an initial excessive application of Law 32. The dominant view, however, saw this proposal as a threat to higher productivity. If managers had to worry about a personal economic penalty for making a mistake, they would become reluctant to apply the law. There was general consensus, however, for a union campaign against excessive application of Law 32 and for establishing a legal mechanism to rehabilitate workers who have complied with sanctions and maintained satisfactory work conduct.

### Debate on Wage Policies

Debate on wage policies also took place at the workers' congress. At present, almost half the labor force works under regulations which link wages to productivity. The 1973 C.T.C. congress introduced work norms, bonuses and extra pay for overtime or work in hazardous conditions. Norms incorporate different skill levels with supplementary wages for those achieving higher levels. The main problem raised at this year's congress was that too often norms were not set

properly. This sometimes resulted in different wages for the same job — against the principal of equal pay for equal work. There was also a strong complaint of not always being able to get the training needed to improve skill levels because either management or a particular state ministry would not have set up the appropriate courses. The C.T.C. is expected to campaign to remedy this.

Roberto Veiga, general-secretary of the C.T.C., thinks that in the future, supplementary payments must be directed toward perfecting the organization of work to benefit society as a whole. An example is the recent problem of skilled workers leaving the Ministry of Construction for projects of the Poder Popular (People's Power), so they can work in one locality. Living conditions for workers at some of the big construction sites are not always the best and many don't like moving around so much. However, this jeopardized certain large construction projects. To slow the exit, the Ministry began paying higher wages for seniority. Eventually, those working with Poder Popular began demanding the same seniority pay. The C.T.C. had to explain that the increases were instituted to achieve certain economic results and if the Poder Popular workers were treated the same, the problem would not be solved.

Another major debate at the Congress concerned Law 56, which states that if work is interrupted because of lack of raw materials or some other reason not the fault of the workers, they receive 78 percent of their wages until the plant reopens. This law grew out of the hard times of a few years ago but

now, the general consensus is that it is too often being abused by both workers and management. On the one hand, there were reports of workers being laid-off, not for lack of materials, but for lack of good management, the law being used as an easy way out of some difficult situation. On the other hand, laid-off workers often devote themselves to their own private enterprise—contracting out their labor as a self-employed person—with the danger of this becoming an ingrained habit. Also, when the law was first introduced, it was not expected that one enterprise would be laying-off workers while a near-by enterprise was expanding, especially if the two belong to the same industry. Now it happens that workers laid-off at one plant can often contract themselves out to another plant nearby—in effect receiving two salaries.

The C.T.C., which participates at the highest government level in setting prices and wages, must now consider whether Law 56 is relevant in the improved economic conditions of today. The economy has shown a steady recovery and growth since the poor year of 1981. Productivity has increased remarkably since 1977 and management is beginning to improve. As enterprise management has slowly become more autonomous, the potential has grown for greater union participation in running factories and other work places. At the local level, heads of unions sit on enterprise councils. For this potential to develop, the level of education and training must continue to increase. The average level of education for the Cuban work force is the 6th grade. Thus, the C.T.C. has put a great deal of emphasis on raising this average level. ■

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## Improper Context

by Geoffrey Fox

*Improper Conduct*, France, 1984. Written and directed by Nestor Almendros and Orlando Jimenez-Leal. Produced by Margaret Menegoz, Barbet Schroeder and Michel Thoulouze for Les Films du Losange and Antenne 2.

The most effective propaganda arouses our fears without alerting our rationality to what is going on. *Improper Conduct* is a very effective anti-Castro propaganda film, especially for its intended audience, the intellectuals of Western Europe and the United States, because it plays on anxieties not only about Cuba but about our own lives. It interviews seemingly reasonable people who are much like us—artists and writers who are a little kooky, perhaps, in life-style and habitually critical in their thinking, and who for just those reasons have run afoul of an intolerant regime and are now in exile. To strengthen our identification, two non-Cuban intellectuals (Susan Sontag and Juan Goytisolo) are also interviewed. Although the film sometimes exaggerates and often falls into overly facile generalizations in its zeal to damn the Cuban Revolution, it contains too much truth and is too well crafted to be dismissed. If we do not confront the issues raised, our support of the Revolution will sound hollow even to ourselves.

Several of the interviewees are homosexuals who were interned in the harsh labor camps called UMAP (Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Produccion), which were supposed to cure them of effeminate mannerisms. The UMAP camps were a terrible idea of the late 1960's, which caused great hardship to many men and failed utterly in their purpose. One can sympathize with the bitterness of the former detainees who are now in exile. The camps were dismantled in 1969, but discrimination against conspicuous social deviants—including those guilty of "improper conduct"—has been codified into laws, passages from which are displayed in the film. Contrary to the impression created by the film, however, open homosexuals, including some prominent intellectuals, do live and work in Cuba today.

Novelist Guillermo Cabera Infante and Carlos Franqui, former revolutionary journalist and now self-appointed exile archivist of the Revolution, tell of their futile efforts to protect homosexual writers (especially Virgilio Pinera) from persecution in the early days of the Revolution. This persecution is a tragic story, worth recalling not as a characterization of Cuba today but as a reminder of what a terribly contradictory process a Revolution is. Armando Valladares, a long-imprisoned former Batista police agent and more recently a poet (now in exile in France), tells a hair-raising tale of sadistic treatment by guards and homosexual prisoners of a 12-year old boy who, Valladares says, told him his story from the next cell. If this story is true (Valladares in the past has greatly exaggerated his own torments in prison), it is inexcusable.

Also inexcusable is the mistreatment of women prisoners which the grandmatronly Martha Frayde, at one time a representative of the revolutionary government to UNESCO in Paris, says quite convincingly that she witnessed when she herself was imprisoned. Another impressive witness is Ana Maria Simo, who presents herself as a committed young Communist Party militant in the mid-1960's who was bewildered to find herself suddenly arrested and held *incommunicado*. The reason, she says she discovered in a humiliating interrogation several days later, was her association with prominent members of the Writers' Union whom the G-2 despised as known or probable homosexuals. This experience persuaded her that no intellectual, regardless of Communist credentials, was safe in Cuba.

### Cuba Out of Context

These are serious charges that merit careful examination and interpretation, but in the film they function along with many cheaper shots (sarcastic visual and spoken comments about Fidel Castro, for example) as just so many insults against the Cuban government. Cuba is plucked from history, presented as an unchanging dystopia with neither context nor chronology. No discussion, not even an image, appears of the conditions which made the Revolution necessary and possible and which continue to dictate its necessities and possibilities.

For example, the "militarization" Susan Sontag complains of is presented as a product of ideology rather than a response to a history of real threats and attacks. More seriously, filmmakers Nestor Almendros and Orlando Jimenez-Leal seem unable to imagine the Cuban people themselves as makers of history, asserting sometimes contradictory demands as they struggle for autonomy and gradually increase their political sophistication. The narration and Jimenez-Leal's remarks in the interviews interpret every political action as an initiative exclusively of Fidel and his closest associates, and the responses of the masses as the results of manipulation and intimidation—except when the response is against the revolutionary government, in which case they are presumed to be acting spontaneously.

Thus, the 1980 mass occupation of the Peruvian embassy by Cubans hoping for asylum, and the subsequent "boatlift" of over 100,000 from Mariel, are presented as proof of the failure of the Revolution to win popular support. The vociferous prorevolutionary demonstrations of as many as 5 million Cubans (May 17, 1980) are explained as mobilization by coercion—a staggering task for a government with no popularity. A few young Marielitos basking on a Florida beach tell the camera that, if they are as corrupt as the Cuban government claims, it is the fault of the Revolution because they are too young to have known the old society. This is a clever, but inadequate, answer. Not the revolution, but probably Miami television (easily seen in Havana) and a thousand other contacts showed them the pleasures of the consumer society. Contrary to the film's vision, there is a larger context for events in Cuba.

### Assault on *Machismo*

There is also an internal dynamic. The widening participation of the population creates numerous clashes as new interest groups find a voice. In the early stages, one type of clash

was likely to have been between a poorly educated and resentful proletariat and the more privileged intellectuals. The harsh measures against homosexuals and other deviants were no doubt widely popular among sectors of the population which associated, too zealously, "immorality" with the corruption of the Batista years. What has eased the lot of homosexuals more recently has been the assault on *machismo* generally and the legitimizing of a gentler, more caring kind of masculinity. The battle is far from won, but Cuba today has the most thorough antisexist legislation in the hemisphere. All this activity is mainly a byproduct of the increased participation of women in industry and politics and their assertion of their rights.

Revolutions are disorderly and socially violent processes. Almendros and Jimenez-Leal have drawn our attention to the early phase of the process in Cuba, when great advances were made by the workers and *campesinos* (advances not mentioned in the film), but grave injustices committed against some of the intellectuals. They would have us condemn the whole process, abandoning the critical faculties and imagination that enable us to see beyond our own class and professional interests. But if the world were that simple, we would not need intellectuals. ■

## BOOK REVIEW

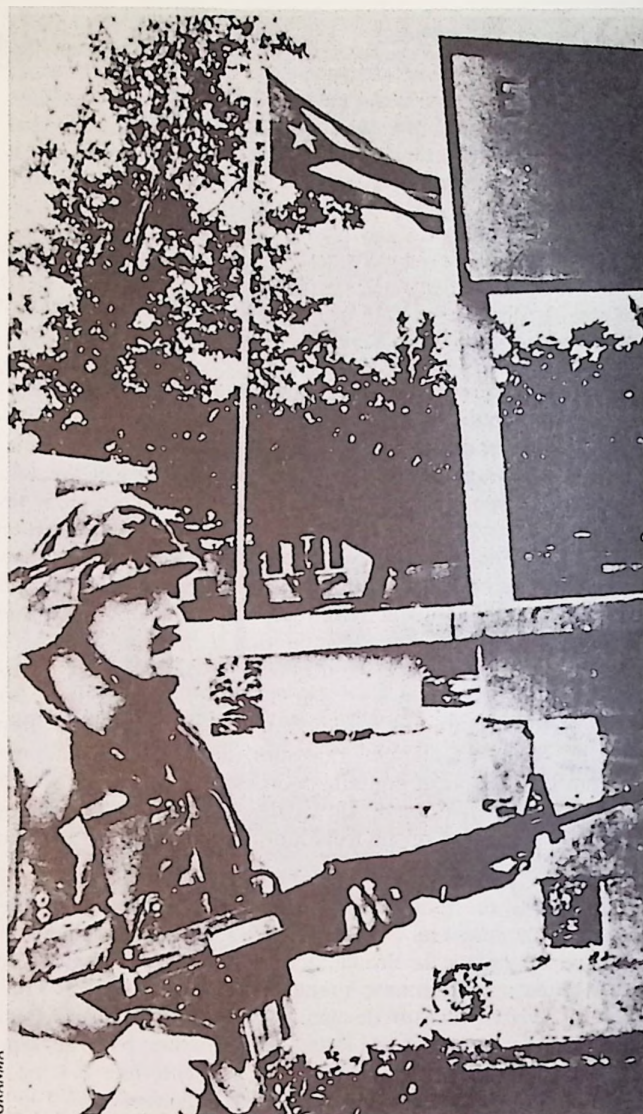
### Maurice Bishop Speaks

by Mary Boger

*Maurice Bishop Speaks: The Grenada Revolution 1979-1983*, edited by Bruce Marcus and Michael Taber (Pathfinder Press, New York: 1983).

Maurice Bishop, a founding member of the New JEWEL Movement and Prime Minister of the People's Revolutionary Government from 1979 to 1983, was the symbol of the Grenada Revolution. For most Grenadians his house arrest and subsequent murder meant the end of the Revolution. The party and government responsible for his death had no legitimacy before the people. Revolutionaries used violence to solve their internal differences and the People's Revolutionary Army turned its guns against the people, killing some and wounding others when thousands of Grenadians took to the streets protesting Bishop's house arrest and demanded his freedom. The confusion created by these events provided the long sought excuse for the U.S. to invade Grenada, with the tacit consent, if not outright support, of the North American people.

We may never know fully the subjective motivations of each of the actors in the Grenadian drama; whether Bishop was revelling in the limelight of a personality cult, as the opposition proclaimed; whether a deeply held political principle or simply an opportunistic power play motivated this accusation. Individual shortsightedness and weaknesses of character have always plagued revolutionary movements. While such mistakes and their consequences may dishearten even the most committed we must learn from history.



The statements of Maurice Bishop offer insights into the goals, approaches, specific programs and organizational forms developed by Grenadian revolutionaries during the period of state power. (One interview, though, does predate March 13, 1979). For the already informed, *Maurice Bishop Speaks* will be a useful reference in evaluating the man and the course of the Revolution. For those who know little about Grenada, the selections offer a broad picture of the dilemmas and possible solutions for a small, dependent, poor nation embarking on socialist transformation. Pathfinder Press has selected public speeches, addresses and interviews that were originally intended to educate the Grenadian people about their history, accomplishments and problems, as well as to present the case of Grenada to the world public in order to gain support for the new government's projects. Some speeches aimed to pressure unfavorable government's to restrain from belligerency or to influence the strategies of international or regional bodies, such as the Nonaligned Movement, the Organization of American States and CARICOM.

Education, health care, freedom of the press and religion, democracy, defense, production, security, national sovereignty and independence and many more issues are addressed by Bishop in these documents.

In reading them, one cannot help but be impressed by both the clarity with which Bishop presents the issue at hand, whether it concerns the lack of schools or the participation of women in production, and by the attention paid to the subjective and qualitative aspects of the issues. For Bishop, it is not simply a question of building more schools, but examining the division between manual and mental labor, the class and gender biases in the education structure, and the very personality the society sets out to develop. If the question of women is the focus, every aspect of a women's reality is placed before the audience—for women to work they need daycare; to break out of traditional roles they need training; to be mothers and also work they need job protection, security and pregnancy and birth benefits; to guarantee their full and rightful place as equals in society they need their independent organizations. For all of these to be accomplished, the breakdown of sexual exploitation and domination personally, politically and socially is necessary. This involves a struggle with men and the creation of new relationships between men and women.

### Third World Problems Stressed

Another strength of the collection is that the fundamental problems of economic development in the Third World are articulated clearly by Bishop—most fundamentally, the dependence on only a couple of agricultural export crops (in Grenada's case nutmeg, bananas, and cocoa), which receive a relatively low and continually declining price on the world market, while almost all other production and consumption goods must be imported at ever rising prices. The pressure towards permanent indebtedness to simply survive from one day to the next, let alone develop and grow, with no immediate solution to this situation, was the material reality inherited by the People's Revolutionary Government on March 13, 1979. The need, therefore, to immediately educate and organize the population to participate actively in solving their problems was of crucial importance to the survival of the revolutionary project. New forms of participation and organiza-

tion grew up out of the needs of the Revolution and the creativity of the new leadership and the people—from repairing and maintaining the streets, to formulating economic national plans, to enabling the unemployed to work uncultivated lands.

For those of us trying to understand the dynamics that led to the murder of Maurice Bishop and other key members of the New JEWEL Movement (N.J.M.) and the People's Revolutionary Government (P.R.G.), this book will be inadequate. Except for the appendices, which include the statements issued by the Communist Party of Cuba concerning the events within Grenada and the invasion by the United States, the controversies within the N.J.M. and P.R.G. and mass organizations are not treated. The differences of opinion around key areas of economic policy, foreign relations and educational and social programs are not at issue in these speeches and interviews. If anything, unanimity of program, tempo and tasks would be surmised from these documents. The nature of the N.J.M. as a coalition party comprising a spectrum of social classes and ideologies is never analyzed. Some of the questions debated within the party and not reflected in these documents are: the role of the private sector and, more generally, the tempo of the transition to socialism, the kind of army needed, the relation of the army to the party and the state, what kinds of internal surveillance of the population are necessary to prevent attacks by counterrevolutionaries, the division of labor and leadership roles within the party and government and the class character of the party itself.

Does the absence of mention of these controversies reflect one of the weaknesses in the Grenadian revolutionary process? Why didn't the party educate and engage the population in these vital issues so important to their national agenda? There is no question that the Grenadian people were taken totally by surprise when their beloved Prime Minister was put under house arrest and criticisms were made of him. Most individuals and organizations close to the P.R.G. and N.J.M. inside and outside the country had no awareness of the depth of the differences or what enabled the differences to get so out of control that the Revolution itself was jeopardized. Bishop was criticized by the Coard faction for developing a cult of the individual. Did the N.J.M., including Bishop, create a cult of the party that ended by alienating the population from the party?



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## Bishop the Man

These documents are a part of the materials necessary for a serious analysis of the Grenada experiment. There is no authoritative and publicly available analysis or history of the N.J.M. and the P.R.G. nor written documents by the participants themselves about the social transformation process during the four and one-half years of the Revolution. Therefore, a full evaluation is not possible. Books like *Maurice Bishop Speaks* become an important record of the 1979-1983 experience.

Lastly, one cannot complete a review of the words of Maurice Bishop, no matter how brief, without commenting on the quality of the man that comes through in all the speeches, interviews and addresses. When reading the book and, particularly, if one had the good fortune to meet the man or had the opportunity to hear him speak, one is sadly reminded of our loss. His natural intelligence and commitment to principle (though not formula) abound in these reminders of the person. His great commitment to and practical achievements toward nationalism, regionalism, and internationalism throughout the entire course of his political life is reflected in the following passage: "... the people of Latin American and Caribbean regions are now moving fast to end these attitudes of narrow nationalism, of isolationism, of racism, of chauvinism. We as a people in the region are moving fast to

build a collective sense of identity, conscious of the fact that we have one basic history, one basic cultural background, one geographical region, and we undoubtedly have one basic future as a people." (1980 First Anniversary Celebration of the Grenada Revolution)

Painfully, we are reminded again and again in address after address that the unity of the people behind the leadership of the N.J.M. and the program of the P.R.G. is crucial to the progress of the Revolution and the ultimate guarantor of the security of the nation from imperialist intervention. "... if we are to make sure that our country nonetheless continues to move forward, we have to be able always, comrades, to maintain our unity, to maintain our vigilance, to continue to raise our levels of consciousness so that we will always be fully aware of what is happening and what the possibilities for our country are."

The reader is moved by the clarity and simplicity of Bishops's presentation. When addressing his own people he educates, though he is never condescending or paternalistic. Instead, his genuine respect for the intelligence of the people, his sincerity, integrity and humility combined with a sense of historical responsibility are self evident. When asked once to say what he considered to be one of the Revolution's greatest achievements he responded, "I think one major achievement has been that we have been able to mobilize our people to participate in helping to rebuild this country." ■

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