

## URBAN LABOR AND COMMUNISM: CUBA

*Ralph Lee Woodward Jr.\**

The twentieth century has seen a substantial growth in the importance and power of urban labor movements in Latin America. Urban workers, effectively organized, are readily available as a political force, thus, political groups interested in changing the old order have promoted labor organization and action in recent years. The Communists, for whom the "proletariat" has special ideological significance, have been especially active in promoting organized urban labor for political purposes in Latin America.

Urban labor constitutes a minority of the working population in most of Latin America, but its concentration in the capitals (and occasionally in other major cities) give it a potential out of proportion to the actual number of workers. In Cuba, however, the majority of the population is urban, and, thus, the urban labor force in that island republic has been even more important than in the rest of Latin America. The 1953 census classified 57 % of the population as urban.<sup>1</sup> In 1961 the Cuban government estimated that of a total population of 6,933,253, nearly 60 % were urban.<sup>2</sup> Although the Cuban export economy has been dominated by sugar production, more persons have been employed in the urban processing, packing, and shipping of the crop, than in the agricultural raising of the cane.<sup>3</sup> Traditionally, since independence, the Cuban labor unions have occupied a place of more importance than elsewhere in most of Latin America. Likewise, the Communist Party has had a longer and more successful history in Cuba than elsewhere, the bulk of its strength resting in the urban labor organization. The present Communist regime in Cuba, although outwardly emphasizing agrarian reform and the "peasant" revolt, has, in fact, once more become highly dependent on urban labor for its success and maintenance. It is significant, also, that the two successful establishments of Communist-influenced governments in Latin America - Guatemala in the early 1950's and the present Cuban regime - both depended heavily for their maintenance on urban labor.

\* The author is assistant professor of history at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, N.C.

1. More specifically, 34.9 % of the Cuban population lived in cities of over 100,000; 43.4 % lived in towns of from 5,000 to 100,000; and 21.7 % lived in places of less than 5,000. United States, Department of Commerce, *Investment in Cuba* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1956), pp. 182-184.

2. Cuba, Ministerio de Trabajo, *Cuba en cifras* (Havana: Imprenta Nacional, 1962), p. 1.

3. *Investment in Cuba*, p. 178, states that in 1952 only 41.5 % of the Cuban labor force was employed in agriculture.

## I

Urban labor organization in Havana began during the colonial regime, influenced and organized by Spanish anarcho-syndicalists. Also influential was the Cuban socialist, Enrique Roig y San Martín, who died in a Havana prison in 1889. During the 1890's port and tobacco workers in Havana organized, and the first Cuban labor congress was held there in 1892.<sup>4</sup> After independence, the labor movement continued to grow, generally behind the leadership of the tobacco and dock workers' unions. As North American capital poured into the island, the number of urban industries increased rapidly, but was accompanied by a rise in labor disorder. This early period was highlighted by a bloody strike in 1902 and an unsuccessful attempt to form a Cuban Labor Party under the leadership of Diego Vicente Tejera in 1905.<sup>5</sup> Strikes, riots, and demonstrations contributed significantly to the sending of U.S. Marines in 1917, as North American business interests were unsympathetic to labor demands. World War I brought economic gains to the laboring class, however, and resulted in a temporary relaxation of labor agitation. But the sugar collapse following the war led to widespread unemployment and labor discontent. Before the end of 1919, there were once again serious strikes. Under pressure from the United States, President Mario García Menocal and the Cuban Congress suspended constitutional guarantees, permitting the government, as the U.S. Minister put it, to "legally proceed" against strikers and labor agitators. Violent suppression of organized labor activity on behalf of both Cuban and foreign business interests continued under presidents Alfredo Zayas and Gerardo Machado.<sup>6</sup>

Although various groups calling themselves communists and expressing sympathy with the proletariat and the Russian Revolution had appeared earlier, the Cuban Communist Party was not formed until Julio Antonio Mella founded the Partido Comunista de Cuba in 1925. The Machado government arrested and deported Mella and other Party leaders a few weeks later, forcing the Communists underground.<sup>7</sup> In spite of government suppression, the Communists survived and made considerable headway among labor unions, playing an active part in the strikes and labor disorders of the mid- and late-1920's. Serious

4. Ernst Schwarz, "Some Observations on Labor Organization in the Caribbean," *The Caribbean: Its Economy*, ed. A. Curtis Wilgus (Gainesville: School of Inter-American Studies, University of Florida, 1954), pp. 165-166. See also Rubén Pérez Chávez, "Enrique Roig y San Martín, 1843-1889 (primer marxista cubano)," *Trabajo* (Havana), II (2a quincena de diciembre de 1961), pp. 92-94; and Javier de Varona's review of Joaquín Ordoqui's *Elementos para la historia del movimiento obrero*, in *Casa de las Américas* (Havana), II (Nov.-Dic., 1961), p. 172.

5. Schwarz, p. 166; Varona, p. 173.

6. Robert F. Smith, *The United States and Cuba; Business and Diplomacy, 1917-1960* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1960), pp. 83, 101-105.

7. Mella later played a significant role in the Communist Party development in Mexico until his death at the hands of unknown assassins in January, 1929. Robert J. Alexander, *Communism in Latin America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1957), pp. 270-271.

strikes took place especially among the sugar mill and railway workers. Neither the government nor private enterprise did much to alleviate the grievances of the working class, and labor disorder threatened the economy and stability of the government. Charles E. Chapman reported in 1927 that "one of the most annoying conditions . . . is the prevalence of strikes. Labor is not in the least degree conservative, but is ignorant and opportunist, at the beck and call of leaders, frequently Spanish radicals."<sup>8</sup> The laborers in the cities, Chapman believed, did not differ greatly from laborers in the United States, "although mention may be made of their radicalism on the one hand and of a lower standard of living on the other."<sup>9</sup>

The Machado government deported many of the Spanish radicals, but Cuban labor leaders replaced them. Cuban Communists organized "revolutionary fractions" among railroad workers, weavers, tobacco workers, and others. The Communists continued to organize illegally and to work through front organizations, eventually succeeding in establishing one of the strongest of Communist Parties in Latin America. In the late 1920's they published an illegal weekly, *El Comunista*, and other propaganda material. The core of their strength was the urban labor unions. A central labor federation formed in 1924 by anarcho-sindicalists, and affiliated briefly with the American Federation of Labor in the United States, the Confederación Nacional Obrera Cubana (CNOC), passed under Communist control in the late 1920's following the assassination of its first Secretary General, Alfredo López. Its second Secretary General, César Vilar, was a confirmed Communist. The Machado government, although declaring this national labor confederation illegal, was unsuccessful in its efforts to suppress it completely. The CNOC became increasingly important as a center of propaganda and action opposed to the government. In the early 1930's it instigated and supported many strikes, the most notable being among the textile workers, shoemakers, cigar workers, transportation workers, and finally, the sugar workers in 1933.<sup>10</sup>

The sugar workers' strike led to the overthrow of the Machado dictatorship. In December, 1932, at Santa Clara, the CNOC sponsored organization of a sugar workers' union and the strike. Communists dominated this meeting and maintained that about 20,000 workers participated in the strike that followed. The trade union (Sindicato Nacional Obrera de la Industria Azucarera) which resulted was Cuba's first national sugar workers' union.<sup>11</sup> As U.S. business interests became increasingly alarmed over the strike, North American inter-

8. *A History of the Cuban Republic* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), p. 627.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 587.

10. Alexander, pp. 270-272. Regarding the affiliation of the CNOC with the AFL, see also Schwarz, p. 166.

11. Alexander, pp. 271-272.

vention once more seemed a strong possibility in Cuba, and might have taken place had it not been for the recommendations of the new U.S. Ambassador, Sumner Welles. The Communists, fearing "imperialist intervention," attempted to call off the proposed general strike. They were unsuccessful, however, as other elements in the labor movement continued agitation.<sup>12</sup> The strike forced Machado to relinquish his office in August of 1933, and by September 5 Sergeant Fulgencio Batista had firm control of the Cuban government.<sup>13</sup>

On September 10 a provisional government headed by Ramón Grau San Martín was established. Real control, however, remained in the hands of Batista, as it did throughout the parade of chiefs-of-state who followed Grau until Batista himself became President in 1940.

President Grau promoted improved working conditions for the urban workers during the three and one-half months he was in office. He secured for urban workers paid vacations, the eight hour work day, and higher wages. The Communists, however, were also able to strengthen their position considerably, and they bitterly opposed what they called a "bourgeois-landlord" government. They worked for the establishment of a worker and peasant soviet system, openly calling for the overthrow of the new government. During 1933 most of the country's trade unions joined the Communist-dominated CNOC.<sup>14</sup>

Ruling by virtue of his control of the army from 1933 to 1944, Batista gave the Cuban republic the best government it had ever known. His administrations, although totalitarian, were not as harsh as Machado's and were successful in substantially advancing the lot of the workers, in improving relations with the United States, and in promoting internal peace, stability, and prosperity. Batista profited handsomely from this prosperity, but so did the country in general.

Labor organization continued to be heavily infiltrated by the Communists following the overthrow of Grau San Martín. In 1934 Blas Roca, a Party member since 1929, became the Secretary General of the Cuban Communist Party and has played a leading role in it ever since. The stronghold of the Communists continued to be the CNOC, which claimed to represent 300,000 Cuban workers in January, 1934. The Communist Party itself grew impressively after 1934, the majority of its leaders claiming to be workers or "workers' representatives." Also, front organizations were maintained, even after the Party was legalized again. A strong anti-Communist element in the labor movement remained, however, and the issue of control was in question for

12. Smith, pp. 148-149; Alexander, p. 272.

13. Fulgencio Batista Zaldívar, *Respuesta...* (Mexico: Imprenta "Manuel León Sánchez", 1960), pp. 25, 386, 393.

14. Alexander, p. 273.

several years.<sup>15</sup>

A general strike, begun by students in February, 1935, resulted in a crack-down on Communists and organized labor in Cuba. What began as a student-teacher strike to improve school facilities and teachers' salaries developed into a general strike to overthrow the government of Provisional President Carlos Mendieta when labor unions joined in sympathy with the students. The non-Communist unions took the lead in this action which aimed at the establishment of "a civil government without Batista."<sup>16</sup> The CNOC finally declared for the strike on March 10. The strike was ruthlessly suppressed by the government, and a reign of terror followed that effectively drove all political opposition into exile or underground. This oppressive rule continued for more than two years. Toward the end of 1937 the restrictions eased. Although the Communist Party was still illegal, Batista permitted the formation of a major Communist front political party, the Partido Unión Revolucionaria (PUR), headed by Juan Marinello, and in May, 1939, allowed the publication of a party organ, *Hoy*, edited by Aníbal Escalante. By the summer of 1938 it was clear that a truce, or compromise, had taken place between the Communists and Batista. At its Tenth Plenum, convened in June, the Party adopted resolutions which clearly abandoned the former antagonistic attitude toward the ex-sergeant, and, in fact, agreed to support him. Following a meeting between Batista and top Communist leaders a week later, it appeared that in return for Communist backing of the government, the Communists were assured control of the trade union movement. Shortly thereafter, Batista stated that the Communist Party was entitled to legal recognition which it was formally granted in September.<sup>17</sup>

Immediately, the Communists proceeded to reorganize the labor movement under their control. In January, 1939, the Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba (CTC) was established under the leadership of Communist Lázaro Peña, tobacco workers' chief. It gained the adherence of most of the urban labor unions and soon represented a membership of 500,000. The CTC established relations with the Communists' regional labor federation, the Conferación de Trabajadores de América Latina (CTAL).<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the Ministry of Labor, dominated by members of the Communist Party, favored the Communists and the Communist-dominated unions in arbitrations and hearings.<sup>19</sup>

During these years of Batista's control, labor enjoyed considerable advancement and improvement of conditions and urban labor especially come to be one

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 275-277.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 277-279.

18. Schwarz, p. 166.

19. Alexander, pp. 279-281.

of his major sources of support. The Communists claimed credit for the advances. The Communist Party and the PUR were united into the Unión Revolucionaria Comunista (URC) and, in the election held late in 1939 for the Constitutional Convention, six of their candidates won seats. Additional benefits were given to labor in the Constitution of 1940 which was drawn up by the Convention with Batista's backing. The section dealing with labor was one of the most advanced in the Americas. Blas Roca, Juan Marinello, and other Communist leaders insisted that they were responsible for the labor provisions.<sup>20</sup> Article 60 declared: "Labor is an inalienable right of the individual. The State shall employ all the resources in its power to provide an occupation for everyone who lacks such, and shall assure the economic conditions necessary for a proper existence to every worker, manual or intellectual."<sup>21</sup> Among the assurances to labor under the new Constitution were the following: equal pay for equal work; payment in legal tender only; provision for social insurance; eight-hour work day and 44-hour work week; child labor prohibition; one month annual paid vacation; maternity benefits; right to organize and to strike; low-cost government housing development; protection from foreign competition in employment; and regulations and standards regarding labor contracts.<sup>22</sup>

Cooperation between Batista and the Communists continued through World War II, and the labor unions, a bulwark of support for the President, continued to serve as their focal point. They made a strong appeal for popular support, an important part of it by means of their control of Radio Station 1010, which they gained with money raised in the name of the CTC. The number of registered Communist voters increased from 90,000 in 1940 to 150,000 by 1946, and they elected several of their members, including CTC chief Lázaro Peña, to the national Congress. The daily newspaper, *Hoy*, and other Communist publications greatly increased circulation, and in March, 1943, Juan Marinello became the first Latin American Communist to hold a cabinet post.<sup>23</sup> In the election of 1944 the Communists supported the Batista candidate who was defeated by Grau San Martín, although they elected nine candidates of their own to the Chamber of Deputies and three more to the Senate.

During the war, the Communists changed their party name in Cuba to the Partido Socialista Popular (PSP). Batista insisted that his cooperation with the PSP was necessary for the struggle against Nazi-fascism. He later claimed that he made an important distinction, however, between international communism, as represented by Lázaro Peña, and local communism, as represented

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 280-282.

21. Russel H. Fitzgibbon, ed., "Constitution of the Republic of Cuba," *The Constitutions of the Americas (as of January 1, 1948)*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 240.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 240-244.

23. Marinello was named "Minister Without Portfolio." Alexander, pp. 283-284.

by Eusebio Mujal, who quit the PSP for the Auténtico Party.<sup>24</sup>

The growing strength of the Auténticos, climaxed by the election of Grau, was reflected in their attempts to take control of the CTC. In 1944 some of the leading members of the CTC were Auténticos, and they made a definite move to gain control of the organization from the Communists. Chief among these Auténticos, claiming they were the legitimate founders of the central labor federation, was Eusebio Mujal. The election of Grau San Martín forced the Communists to come to an agreement with the Auténticos in order to maintain their position after 1944. In July of 1944 Lázaro Peña led a CTC delegation to meet with the new president. Subsequently, it became apparent that Peña would remain as Secretary General of the labor central. In addition, the Communists in the Ministry of Labor would continue to play a significant role in labor affairs. Politically, in return for these concessions, the Communists supported and cooperated with the Auténtico administration.<sup>25</sup>

Post war developments in International Communist propaganda and action were reflected in the PSP, and stimulated an upsurge of anti-Communism in Cuba. The new Cuban Minister of Labor, Carlos Prío Socarrás, was anti-Communist, but had gone along with the Auténtico-Communist coalition. Beginning in February, 1946, however, the Cuban Communists shifted from a "national unity" to a strong "anti-imperialism" line. The formal break came at the Fifth Congress of the CTC held in May, 1947, when the Auténticos again tried to gain control. Violence broke out when the Communists refused to agree to replace Peña as Secretary General with an Auténtico or an independent. The murder of an Auténtico delegate the night before the meeting was blamed on the Communists, and Labor Minister Prío immediately suspended the meeting. When the Convention was held later, the Communists reelected Lázaro Peña as Secretary General and 24 members of the 47-man Executive Council, thus assuring themselves of continued control of the organization. The Auténticos thereupon held their own convention and elected Angel Cofiño as Secretary General and an Executive Council controlled by Auténticos and independents. Thus, the split was complete. The Ministry of Labor at first stayed neutral in the struggle for control of the CTC. In the summer of 1947, however, Prío removed Communists from the Workers' Palace which was being constructed in Havana as a headquarters for the CTC. This was followed later in the year

24. Batista, pp. 443-445. Batista wrote in 1960 that he had been aware of and had recognized the difference between "comunismo del patio" and "comunismo internacional" as represented in the "pelea . . . entre el comunista Lázaro Peña y el 'auténtico' Eusebio Mujal." *Auténticos* was the name adopted by the Partido Revolucionaria Cubano of Grau San Martín. It was the most important non-Communist left-wing party in Cuba from 1935 on. Mujal deserted the Communists for the Auténticos shortly after it was founded and became their leading labor organizer. He was Batista's czar of labor from 1952-1958.

25. Alexander, pp. 285-286.

by a general purge of Communists. Lázaro Peña and over a hundred other Communists were arrested and the Communist propaganda organs were first censored and then suppressed, including Radio Station 1010 which was confiscated in 1948. Gradually, and accompanied by a good deal of violence, the chief unions went over to the Auténtico branch of the CTC, especially after the government extended recognition to that faction. The important Maritime Workers' Federation was followed by large factions of sugar workers, tobacco workers, and others. Communist strength in the labor movement dwindled steadily thereafter, and by the early 1950's it was but a skeleton organization.<sup>26</sup> Prío Socarrás successfully carried the Communism issue into the political campaign of 1948: "The first step," he declared in that campaign, "is to remove the mask of the Communists and expose their ultimate aim of world domination. My idea is to destroy the Communist Party in Cuba."<sup>27</sup>

Inflation following the end of World War II increased the cost of living of urban workers without corresponding increases in wages. Furthermore, widespread graft and corruption under the Grau government increased dissatisfaction with the government. Under Prío these trends continued as did repression of political opposition and suppression of individual liberty. The reforms and advances of the Constitution of 1940 remained on paper, but nowhere else. By 1952 much of labor, as well as large segments of the rest of the population and foreign investors, were anxious for a change, but there was little hope that the election of that year would satisfactorily provide a solution. Thus, when Fulgencio Batista moved to take power with a *coup d'état* on March 10, 1952, the government was able to marshal little support against Batista. Prío called for a general strike, but it received little support, partly because Batista had already taken control of the radio and TV stations by the time the CTC declared for the strike. Batista responded with a decree outlawing strikes for 45 days and made it clear that the decree would be enforced. A terrorist labor organization which had operated during the administration of President Prío, the Acción Revolucionaria Guiteras, became ineffective as its leaders went into voluntary exile when Batista took over.<sup>28</sup> Prío took asylum in the Mexican Embassy. The

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 286-292.

27. Ruby Hart Phillips, *Cuba, Island of Paradox* (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1959), p. 245.

28. Edmond A. Chester, *A Sergeant Named Batista* (New York: Henry Holt, 1954), pp. 237-238. The ARG is described by Chester as "one of the most feared terrorist organizations in Cuba" before Batista returned to power. Taking its name from an earlier Cuban terrorist, Antonio Guiteras, Chester estimated its membership at between two and three thousand, operating as virtually a private army. Chester says: "After a certain amount of killing and slugging and threatening, the ARG took over the bus drivers' union, which provided one of the best sources of income in Cuban organized labor. Some of the members of the ARG actually took jobs as bus drivers so that they would appear to have some lawful means of earning a livelihood. Out of this developed the absurd case of the bus driver who always had two armed body guards sitting in the



general dissatisfaction with his government, and the fact that it was Batista, more than any other single figure in Cuban history, who had improved the actual conditions of the urban laborer in Cuba, explain best the reasons for the failure of the general strike.

Batista brought limited prosperity and economic growth to Cuba, although political freedom continued to suffer. After his first meeting with the dictator, U.S. Ambassador Earl Smith described Batista as "a tough guy with bull-like strength and exuding a forceful, agreeable personality. Here was an extraordinary example," he said, "of a virile man of the soil and of mixed antecedents, who had projected himself from a simple sergeant to the Presidency of his country."<sup>29</sup> He was successful in attracting more North American investments and tourists. To these ends he worked closely with the United States, first through American Ambassador Arthur Gardner and later through Smith. Smith himself claimed that "the American Ambassador in Cuba held a position second only to the President of Cuba because of our vast business, cultural and social ties."<sup>30</sup>

The economic progress, however, was accompanied by terrorism, torture, reprisals, and political suffocation. As Hubert Herring put it: "Under Batista Cuba had everything – except liberty."<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, some segments of the population, especially the agrarian workers, did not share the prosperity. The distribution of the wealth in Cuba had always been one sided. The fact that Cuba had one of the highest per-capita incomes in Latin America reflected only its greater urban population with a money economy, not the condition of the agrarian masses. But, for the urban worker, although there were limits, the period of Batista's rule brought higher wages and generally improved living conditions, plus a sense of political importance, as the unions were, with the army, important pillars of strength for the regime.

The Communists were able to regain some of their lost ground in the labor movement following the Batista *coup*, in spite of the fact that the Party was illegal. Some of the leading Communists were exiled, and the Communist organization remained underground, still headed by Blas Roca, but at the same time several Communist labor leaders were given jobs in the Ministry of Labor.

rear of the vehicle." The ARG was led by a lawyer, Dr. Eufemio Fernández, who served Prío as Chief of the Secret Police briefly and whom Chester described as "a strange mixture of culture and violence," and Jesús González Cartas, known as "El Extraño," and whom Chester said was "all violence." These men took asylum in the Guatemalan embassy on March 10 and a few days later left for Guatemala.

29. Earl E. T. Smith, *The Fourth Floor; an account of the Castro Communist Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1962), pp. 15-16.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

31. *A History of Latin America from the Beginnings to the Present*, 2d ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), p. 414. One of the most bitter condemnations of the Batista regime of terror is found in Ray Brennan, *Castro, Cuba and Justice* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1959).

While the Communists maintained an underground organization on the one hand, at the same time many of them joined the government party, the Partido Acción Progresista (PAP) and participated in Batista's *Bloque Obrero* of the PAP.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, this was a period during which the Communists officially were illegal, and as such confined their operations to political education, infiltration into high offices, subversion, etc., but not to organized party activities in the open. Their strength lay almost entirely among the urban workers (and there it was not large), with practically no support in rural Cuba. A Bureau for the Repression of Communist Activities (BRAC) was established and the Communists were subject to a wave of terror, assassinations, and other acts of violence from 1957 forward. Batista began to call all of his opponents "Communists," a technique which later played into the hands of the "real" Communists when Batista was overthrown.

Meanwhile, although the Communists attempted infiltration and subversion, they were unable to unseat Eusebio Mujal from his controlling position. Under his iron rule, the CTC, claiming over a million members, strongly supported the Batista government and, although the central labor federation promoted improved working conditions and pay, it was also used as a political instrument to support the government. Eusebio Mujal personally benefitted handsomely for his support, receiving an estimated \$280,000 income in 1958, plus other material benefits.<sup>33</sup>

Positive benefits to the laboring class under Batista included a few inexpensive housing developments, increased employment through an expanded public works program, generally higher wages (although inflation tended to cancel out much of the value of these), and improved medical services and insurance. The advances made by labor in no sense, however, were the result of a free organized labor movement acting in its own behalf. Strikes and other labor demonstrations were discouraged and, if necessary, suppressed by the Ministry of Labor with the cooperation of the CTC leadership. It became increasingly clear that the organized urban labor unions were instruments of power for Batista, not organizations for the advancement of the labor force. The benefits gained were necessary to insure continued support of the workers of the regime and the system. Control over local unions was maintained closely in the hands of Mujal and the Executive Council of the CTC. A good example of this policy took place in May of 1957, when the CTC leadership determined to get rid of Electrical Workers' Union chief Angel Cofiño. On suspicion of engaging in sabotage, Cofiño was removed from his post as Secretary General of the union and from the Executive Council of the CTC along with other electrical

32. Alexander, pp. 292-294.

33. Brennan, pp. 185-186.

union leaders. When electrical workers began a sit-down strike in protest, the Labor Ministry warned that their action was illegal and that those participating could be arrested and dismissed from their jobs. The strike continued spasmodically and, for short periods, the telephone workers joined in sympathy. Finally, Batista appointed an interventor for the Cuban Electrical Company who ordered all strikers back to work within 24 hours. Cofiño, decided the strike was serving no useful purpose, and, after receiving a promise that the company would not penalize any of his followers, ordered his men back to work. He then left Cuba and joined the growing number of exiles working for Batista's overthrow.<sup>34</sup>

The government used the labor unions in Havana to support itself. The workers were mobilized for pro-Batista demonstrations, for breaking up opposition groups, for "goon squads" and terrorist gangs used against all enemies of the government. There are some signs that Batista may have overplayed his hand with labor to the point of alienating middle and upper class groups in Havana. For example, in February, 1958, Batista attempted to gain solid labor backing for his candidates in the forthcoming election by a decree that raised the minimum wage from \$60 to \$85 monthly in Havana, \$80 in other cities, and \$75 in rural communities. The Confederation of Cuban Employers and the Chamber of Commerce reacted sharply.<sup>35</sup> Much of the support which Castro received in his movement against Batista came, not from labor, but from middle and even upper class business groups who hoped for an end to the growing power of the CTC and a freer, but pro-business, political atmosphere.

## II

Fidel Castro's 26th of July Movement had a growing influence on Cuban labor politics. The personal background of Fidel Castro Ruz had been dealt with in sufficient detail elsewhere. That he had both old and new connections with Communists cannot be denied, but there is still no certainty as to the degree of this influence when he launched his invasion of Cuba from Mexico in the yacht *Granma* in November, 1956. From its feeble beginnings, the Castro movement grew slowly and finally toppled the Batista regime on December 31, 1958.

Official statements by Castro and other 26th of July Movement leaders prior to the fall of Batista's regime suggested some changes to urban labor, but were more specifically concerned with land reform and the agrarian problem. While some of his speeches called for sweeping reforms, Castro's statements were not necessarily Communistic. As early as 1945, Castro called for labor

34. *Hispanic American Report* (Stanford University) (Hereinafter cited as *HAR*), X (June, 1957), 243.

35. *Ibid.*, XI (Feb., 1958), 86.

reform in the form of increased government spending for public works to create jobs at decent wages and to promote industrialization. As a student at the University of Havana, Castro is reported to have taken an interest in urban labor wages, conditions, and grievances.<sup>36</sup> In his famous "History will Absolve Me" speech, defending his attack on the Moncada Barracks of July 26, 1953, Castro claimed that he hoped to gain the support of, among others: "... four hundred thousand industrial and dock workers whose retirement funds are embezzled, whose benefits are snatched away, whose homes are wretched habitations, whose wages pass from the hands of the boss to those of the usurer, whose future is pay cuts and dismissal, whose life is eternal work and to whom relief comes only in the tomb."<sup>37</sup> He proposed solving the housing problem "by reducing rents by fifty percent, exempting houses inhabited by their owners from taxes, tripling the taxes on rented houses, demolishing the slums to erect in their places modern multiple dwelling buildings, and by financing the construction of housing all over the island on a scale never before seen, with the criterion that, if the ideal in the country is that each family possess its own plot of land, the ideal in the city is that each family own their house or apartment."<sup>38</sup> From Mexico, in October, 1955, Castro wrote that the Cuban Revolution of the 26th of July "will achieve all reforms within the spirit and practice of our advanced Constitution of 1940," and mentioned specifically the need for unemployment insurance.<sup>39</sup> In the first manifesto issued from the Sierra Maestra (July 12, 1957), Castro called for "democratization of trade-union politics, promoting free elections in all of the unions and industrial federations, . . . establishment of the foundations of agrarian land reform tending toward distribution of barren lands, . . . adoption of sound financial policy," and "acceleration of the process of industrialization and creation of new jobs."<sup>40</sup> There were indications that Fidel was toning down earlier statements in a bid for a broader base of support.

Meanwhile, other exile groups were plotting for the overthrow of the Batista government, and at first were doubtful of the 26th of July Movement. In July of 1957 Castro, Raúl Chibás, and Felipe Pazos signed a united pact forming the Council of Cuban Liberation, calling for the people of Cuba to form a Revolutionary Civic Front. Exiled labor leaders, having formed a Directorio Obrero, joined in supporting this group. Castro insisted on domin-

36. Brennan, pp. 49-50.

37. Fidel Castro Ruz, *La historia me absolverá* (Havana: Méndez, 1959), p. 11.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

39. Daniel James, *Cuba, The First Soviet Satellite in the Americas* (New York: Avon Book Division of the Hearst Corporation, 1961), p. 52.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 188, citing Luis Conte Agüero, *Los dos rostros de Fidel Castro* (Mexico: Editorial Jus, 1960), p. 161.

ating all anti-Batista action and refused to accept any sort of a leadership compromise with other exile groups. He insisted on complete removal of the Batista government. In January, 1958, Castro accused the other groups of fighting an "imaginary revolution" from comfortable quarters in the United States while the 26th of July Movement was carrying the full burden of the war from the Sierra Maestra. It became especially clear that the Castro group was not pleased with the role of Carlos Prío Socarrás in the anti-Batista movement, in spite of the financial aid that Prío had provided. Castro insisted on the selection of Judge Manuel Urrutia Lleo as provisional president to whom the Miami-based group had given only token consideration, leaning more strongly toward a return of Prío. On this point Castro determined to remove the 26th of July Movement from the Council of Cuban Liberation in January, 1958. Castro's firm attitude here, and his brusque treatment of international economist and banker Felipe Pazos, caused the *Hispanic American Report* to comment that "Castro's 'take it or leave it' attitude smacked of the authoritarianism which he and his followers were purportedly fighting to eliminate."<sup>41</sup> The Directorio Obrero and Directorio Estudiantil each wrote open letters to Castro pleading for compromise and offering to accept Urrutia as provisional president, but no agreement could be reached until July, when representatives of the various anti-Batista organizations met in Caracas and formed a new Cuban Revolutionary Civic Front. The endorsement of this pact in mid-August by a number of important exiled labor leaders, such as Angel Cofiño, caused the rebels to hope that it might influence Cuban labor unions which remained loyal to the dictator. The Directorio Obrero worked closely with the Prío exile group and made strenuous efforts to undermine the position of Eusebio Mujal.<sup>42</sup>

The urban labor unions played a relatively small role in the overthrow of Batista. While certain labor leaders supported the 26th of July Movement and participated in the terrorism and sabotage which plagued Havana from 1956 through the fall of Batista in December of 1958, these men were few and did not represent the vast majority of workers. In Havana more support was found in student groups and even among businessmen than from the urban labor movement. The clandestine "Radio Cuba Libre," which began broadcasting in early 1957, urged student and labor groups to revolt, but was rewarded with little success among working class organizations. It became clear that the rebels were hoping to organize a general strike such as that which overthrew Gerardo Machado in 1933, but there seemed to be little chance of success as 1958 began.

41. XI (Jan., 1958), 20-21. See also X (Aug., 1957), 351; and X (Oct., 1957), 528.

42. *Ibid.*, XI (May, 1958), 256; XI (Aug., 1958), 435. See also Brennan, pp. 233-234; and Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy, *Cuba, Anatomy of a Revolution*, 2d ed. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1961), p. 65.

Faced with new government terrorism and repression, the general attitude of the Havana worker was not receptive to the 26th of July Movement propaganda, especially when existing economic conditions were as good as they were.

On February 24, 1958, Castro launched a new radio station from Oriente Province, "Radio Rebelde," and announced that the people would soon be called upon for a general strike. The campaign for a general strike was supported by advertisements in the newspapers of other American cities, especially Caracas, where large numbers of exiles were located and where there were sympathetic, liberal governments.<sup>43</sup> In March Castro declared that "total war" would begin after Easter, with the general strike to begin on April 5. The strike was a fiasco, primarily because the CTC leadership strongly opposed it. There were, actually, many reasons which contributed to the complete failure of the maneuver. Castro lost the element of surprise by announcing the strike in advance, thus permitting Batista to take every precaution to insure that the strike failed. The police and army were alerted and, under martial law, they were ordered to shoot strikers. Batista guaranteed immunity for any person who killed a striker. He ordered employers who closed their businesses because of the strike imprisoned. CTC chief Mujal announced that strikers would lose their jobs and right to work, along with pension and other benefits. In a television appearance he announced: "People who treat labor well deserve well of labor, and President Batista has done more for labor than any other president Cuba ever had."<sup>44</sup> Some labor union members were inducted into the armed forces for the crisis and were to be issued arms to prevent strikes if necessary. Trade union leaders suspected of supporting the strike, perhaps as many as 500 of them, were arrested. Others were assassinated during the nights that preceded the 5th of April. Finally, the strike itself was poorly coordinated and was not supported by all anti-Batista elements. The Directorio Revolucionario (DR), composed chiefly of students, and strongest in Havana, was feuding with Castro over control and direction of the movement, and it determined not to participate in or support the strike. The main issue between the DR and the 26th of July Movement was again Castro's authoritarian attitude regarding the Cuban Revolution. Likewise, the Communists refused to support the strike, still working at control through their own subversion and infiltration rather than by joining with the 26th of July Movement.<sup>45</sup>

Although the government was wholly successful in thwarting the April general strike, the repression used in this endeavor served to create a real demand

43. See *HAR* (Feb., 1958), 88.

44. Brennan, p. 203.

45. *HAR*, XI (April, 1958), 203; Huberman and Sweezy, p. 62; Earl E. T. Smith, p. 105; Charles O. Porter and Robert J. Alexander, *The Struggle for Democracy in Latin America* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 133.

among the urban population for an end to the Batista regime. The brutal terrorism, arrests, tortures, assassinations, and disappearances continued throughout the remainder of 1958 and caused a shift among the urban workers. They hailed Castro as a saviour when Batista finally fled. The resistance in the city, although small in the beginning, drove Batista to the breaking point, and increased repressions resulted in a mass reaction against him.

It was not until the summer of 1958 that the Communists joined the 26th of July Movement. The repressive measures employed against them by the government and the realization that the terrorism had given the Castro forces a psychological advantage caused the old-time Communist Carlos Rafael Rodríguez to take the initiative in establishing ties with Castro. Havana representatives of the 26th of July Movement were cold to an alliance with the Communists, but meetings were arranged between Rodríguez and Castro in the Sierra Maestra. The Communists did not join in the Revolutionary Civic Front formed in July, but, by the fall, they had committed themselves to support of Castro, although they played no important part in Batista's overthrow.

In September, Radio Rebelde announced that the 26th of July Movement was "against interference in the trade unions; for union democracy and free elections; against the collaborationist policy imposed upon the rank-and-file of the Confederation of Cuban Workers; against firing for trade-union, political and economic reasons; . . . for freedom of assembly and association . . ."46 In the same month, Fidel Castro indicated that he had not abandoned hope for a general strike and scheduled a national convention of labor leaders to meet in the Sierra Maestra October 28-31 to discuss plans for the strike and to draft an economic, political, and social charter for the revolutionary movement. Although some 300 delegates were expected to attend, little came of the meeting, as Batista stepped up his campaign of terror and repression against anyone showing sympathy for the rebels.<sup>47</sup>

Nevertheless, certain elements in the labor movement began to support Castro, mainly by committing acts of sabotage and disturbance in Havana, further embarrassing the Batista government. The underground Labor Unity Movement, led by David Salvador until he was captured and jailed by Batista's police, was very active.<sup>48</sup>

The November election, in which Batista's candidate, Andrés Rivero Aguero, was easily elected by a very small number of voters, settled nothing. The 26th of July Movement warned voters that it would be dangerous to vote and, in

46. James, p. 188.

47. *HAAR*, XI (Sept., 1958), 495.

48. Theodore Draper, *Castro's Revolution, Myths and Realities* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), p. 25.

spite of police protection, most laborers stayed away from polling places. Terrorism on both sides continued after the election and, in December, the Cuban Congress declared a "state of emergency" giving Batista unlimited authority to rule by decree. Disorders continued in the city, and large numbers of troops defected to the rebels in the East. On the 31st, Fulgencio Batista and several of his close associates fled to Santo Domingo, taking with them, according to a time-honored custom, a substantial portion of the public funds. There was general relief in Havana when Batista left, and Castro's *barbudos* were welcomed enthusiastically. Eusebio Mujal and other top CTC officials joined Batista in the Dominican Republic or came to the United States. Castro immediately declared a general strike, except for radio, TV, and some of the press, in order to preserve order. This strike was a complete success, and, although it caused some local inconveniences, it prevented serious rioting, looting, and also the formation of any other government than the provisional, 26th of July government of Urrutia. Urrutia was sworn in at Santiago on the 3rd and on the next day the general strike was ended. The new government was to rule by decree and was given sweeping jurisdiction in order to establish the Revolution and thoroughly eradicate all the evils of the old regime. The real ruler of Cuba, of course, was Fidel Castro, who led a long, triumphant procession across the island and entered the capital on January 8.

### III

Organized urban labor, which had done little to support the revolution against Castro, and had been one of the last loyal supporters of Batista, viewed the new government with apprehension. There was a serious unemployment problem in Havana, and neither the government nor the union treasuries were in a position to directly aid those without jobs, both sources of funds having been pilfered by the outgoing officials. But the government launched a bold program of public works and housing developments which alleviated the employment problem and helped to bring worker support to the new government. At the same time, the government moved to insure its control of the CTC and acted quickly to remove remaining Batista supporters from its leadership echelons. Control of the CTC was placed securely in the hands of members of the 26th of July Movement when Labor Minister Manuel Fernández issued a decree reducing the Executive Council of the CTC from 22 to 9 members, 7 of whom belonged to the 26th of July Movement.<sup>49</sup> Elections held in February and March endorsed the Castro organization. David Salvador was appointed provisional chief of the CTC which claimed nearly 2,000,000 members, organized into 33

49. See *HAR*, XII (Apr., 1959), 88-89.



industrial federations and about 1,800 local unions.<sup>50</sup>

The 26th of July Movement, once in control of the CTC, moved to unify the leadership strongly behind it. Appointments were made to this end, and, later, changes were made in the organization to further regulation by the Movement, which in reality come to mean government control. In March, Marcos A. Hirigoyen, head of the Transportation Workers' Union, and a 26th of July man, declared:

until now only the names of the persons in the offices of leadership have been changed. And with that we have not achieved unity. Unity is achieved by taking account of the inclines that exist in the organization, from a local factory union to the CTC itself. With this idea we must adjust ourselves to the principle of unity on the basis established by the Prime Minister and *líder máximo* of the Revolution, Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz.<sup>51</sup>

Such unity was gradually accomplished as recalcitrant labor leaders were weeded out.

The emphasis of the Revolution was the agrarian reform movement, but the urban workers were asked to rally around the government's program of stimulating agricultural production and promoting the advancement and well-being of the peasant. Specifically, this meant that each laborer was required to "voluntarily" contribute 4 % or more of his wages for the purchase of tractors. Under this program, to which businesses and other segments of the economy also contributed, hundreds of tractors lined the streets of Havana by the end of March, 1959, and, eventually, after a long display in the city, were turned over to the agrarian reform program.

Tangible benefits that urban laborers began to receive, such as reduced rents, new housing, and the creation of new jobs, brought considerable urban labor support to the Revolution. Psychologically, the 26th of July Movement, which had received little aid or support from the urban workers, succeeded in convincing urban labor that it was as much "their" revolution as it was the peasants'. This enabled them to ask the workers for sacrifices which might have been, without this psychological advantage, difficult to exact.

50. Mario Kuchilán's column in the Good Friday edition of *Prensa Libre* presents an interesting commentary on Salvador: "Sintonicemos las fechas para constatar el heroísmo de David el gigante del 26 de Julio. Gloria al salvador de los obreros, salvador del Gobierno, salvador de Cuba que hizo venir a medio millón de cubanos ante Palacio y los hizo desfilar para que Fidel viera que él era capaz de hacer eso y mucho más, hasta de poner a desfilar medio ejército rebelde. Bien. Al César lo que es del César y a Salvador lo que es de Fidel y el 26 de Julio. Y nada más, pero nada menos." *Prensa Libre* (Havana), March 27, 1959, p. 6.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

The Communists, with long years of experience and contacts in the labor movement, were able to advance their own position in the CTC rapidly during the early months of 1959, but not without creating considerable reaction from non-Communist elements. The Communists came out into the open immediately after Batista fled, and, although Castro made some anti-Communist statements occasionally, their right to speak out and to organize was not seriously threatened as they did not oppose the reform measures that the government was taking. The Communist daily, *Hoy*, began to publish on January 1 in Santiago, edited by Carlos Rafael Rodríguez. It moved to Havana shortly thereafter.<sup>52</sup> Communists appeared on radio and TV programs with increasing frequency and there were no restrictions on their propaganda efforts, although other newspapers, including the 26th of July's *Revolución*, frequently criticized them.

Several lesser-known Communists gained high positions in local unions and, gradually, more were appointed to positions in the CTC and Ministry of Labor. The experience of the Communists was of key importance. The old Batista leaders were discredited, many of them already in exile. Few 26th of July members were qualified, or even available, for positions of leadership in the labor organizations. At least one important difference between the Communists and the 26th of July Movement members was clearly evident: The Communists were older, veterans of the labor movement; the 26th of July Movement men were younger, idealistic men, with few labor connections prior to the fall of Batista. This difference played a decisive role in the direction that Cuban labor took. The Communists of the underground resistance movement were soon supplemented by returning exiles, the most important of whom was Lázaro Peña who returned from Mexico early in 1959. These old-time leaders of Cuban Communism joined the less conspicuous Communists in infiltrating the labor unions and other Cuban institutions.

The majority of the Cuban workers evidently did not want Communist leadership. A Frente Obrero Humanista (FOH) was formed by 26th of July Movement workers which was clearly anti-Communist and, in the union elections of the spring of 1959, the Communists were soundly defeated. Even the traditionally pro-Communist dock workers voted against the Communist candidates. The open attempts of the Communists to push their way into the vacuum created by the removal of the Batista labor leaders had created a strong anti-Communist reaction by May. The overall results of the election gave the 26th of July leaders solid control of the CTC.<sup>53</sup>

52. James, p. 112.

53. *HAR*, XII (July, 1959), 266. James, p. 189, reported that of the 33 federations in the CTC, 26th of July labor leaders had won in 28. Communists had won in three, and in the other two control was divided between the two groups.

In spite of these defeats, the Communists continued their efforts to gain control of the labor movement, and they received some aid from various members of the provisional government, especially Fidel Castro's brother, Raúl, and Argentine-born Ernesto "Che" Guevara who had been given Cuban citizenship by special decree.<sup>54</sup> Guevara had been active in the last days of the Guatemalan regime and was important as a link between the Castros and other Latin American Communists. He was, and continues to be, a man of intense energy and has been one of the most influential forces in the Cuban Revolution. These two men obtained the appointment of Communists to high positions in the Labor Ministry. Meanwhile, large numbers of foreigners – Russian, Eastern European, Chinese, and various Latin American leftists – arrived in Cuba.<sup>55</sup>

The new government struggled to achieve an understanding with labor. It was aware of the value of support from the labor unions and was anxious to have control of them. But some of the first actions of the new government were not well received by the workers. One such action was President Urrutia's decree of January 8, 1959, outlawing organized gambling, declaring that it had corrupted public officials during Batista's time. Castro insisted that the luxury casinos remain open for foreign trade, although they should be heavily taxed. Although Urrutia and Premier Miró Cardona protested, Castro's view prevailed. A significant reason for Castro's obstinacy was the CTC's opposition to the decree. Several thousand union men depended upon organized gambling for their jobs. Fidel was wise enough to make several such concessions to the CTC to gain their support during the early days.<sup>56</sup> Meanwhile, the government took positive measures which brought it labor support. Unemployment was reduced by the creation of new public works jobs; the tax system was revised to benefit the small income groups; and reductions were decreed in the electricity and telephone rates and in the prices of certain important food and drug items. Most important were the 30 % to 50 % reduction of rents on urban dwellings. In addition, labor disputes were resolved by the Labor Ministry generally in favor of the unions.

Toward the end of the year, the Communists gained more strength through their infiltration of government, especially Labor Ministry, positions. In October, pro-Communist Augusto Martínez Sánchez replaced moderate Labor Minister Manuel Fernández García. It became increasingly evident that government plans to control the labor movement were being aided by the Communists. In November, the government gave the Ministry of Labor the power to intervene in any company where a labor dispute threatened to halt production or

54. *HAR*, XIII (Apr., 1959), 88.

55. James, pp. 195-198.

56. *HAR*, XII (Mar., 1959), 25.

create serious economic difficulties, and, through the application of this law, the Ministry was able to greatly increase its power. It was through the Ministry of Labor that the Communists were able to take control of the labor movement.<sup>57</sup>

In the fall of 1959, the government, and the Ministry of Labor in particular, began to harass non-Communist labor leaders. Several 26th of July labor leaders were accused of counter revolutionary activities and removed from their positions. A wave of arrests spread throughout Cuba just prior to the Tenth Congress of the CTC held November 18-21 in Havana. Communists were only a tiny minority of the roughly 3,000 delegates present at the Congress, but they managed to create considerable confusion and chaos. Fidel Castro declared that the Congress looked more like a "lunatic asylum" than a labor congress. Capitalizing on strong anti-American feeling, the Communists succeeded in securing the withdrawal of the CTC from the Inter-American Regional Organization of Workers (ORIT), on the ground that it was controlled by the AFL-CIO of the United States. The Congress proposed the creation of a new Inter-American labor confederation to be organized by the CTC. Other anti-American measures were also adopted. The real struggle broke out over the election of a new Executive Council of the CTC. The delegates overwhelmingly voted down a "unity" slate endorsed by both David Salvador and Fidel Castro which included three Communists in the list of thirteen. A second "unity" slate was approved when the prominent Communist names were removed.<sup>58</sup> In spite of this defeat, the Communists were able to continue their infiltration and expansion of control. The Congress adopted a series of procedures for the "purification of counter-revolutionary elements" within the labor movement which came to be used chiefly against the anti-Communists.<sup>59</sup>

A definite trend was evident in the attitude of the government as it increasingly supported Communists and opposed anti-Communists. This tendency, with regard to the labor movement, cannot be separated from the larger international development of deteriorating U.S.-Cuban relations and closer Soviet-Cuban relations. After November, 1959, non-Communist leaders in the labor unions were accused of counter revolutionary activity and purged, beginning with the chief of the Theater Artists, Manuel Fernández, on December 9. By April, 1960, more than twenty elected labor leaders had been arbitrarily removed from their posts and replaced by Communists or Communist sympathizers.<sup>60</sup> David Salvador objected to these purges and to the growing Com-

57. James, pp. 190, 195.

58. *HAR*, XII (Jan., 1960), 599. See also James, pp. 190-192.

59. See James, p. 192.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 192-193.

munist control, but he was apparently unable to stop the trend, and, in fact, only endangered his own position. For a while, Salvador himself headed the CTC committee in charge of the purges. This committee collected evidence against accused labor leaders which was transmitted to federations or local unions so that the workers in mass assembly could decide whether or not to remove the leaders. Invariably, those accused were removed. Conspicuous among those removed in December and January were labor officials who had been outspoken in their opposition to Communists serving on the Executive Committee of the CTC. New authority given the Labor Ministry regarding the employment of any worker in the republic and the use of the militia to back up decisions and intimidate unions promoted this trend further.<sup>61</sup>

Early in 1960, Fidel sent David Salvador on a mission to France, apparently to get him out of the way. When he returned in March and found that 22 of the 28 26th of July Movement labor federation chiefs had been removed, he openly criticized Labor Minister Martínez Sánchez, Raúl Castro, and the purge policy. The conflict with Martínez finally led to his own expulsion from the CTC on August 2. In November he was captured while trying to leave Cuba and sentenced to prison as a counter revolutionary. Meanwhile, others who had supported him were more successful in escaping and a number of labor leaders joined the growing community of exiles in Miami and elsewhere.<sup>62</sup>

By the end of 1960, the PSP had men in key places and controlled a substantial number of workers. That all the workers had not accepted Communist dictation, however, was evidenced when the electrical workers loudly protested the Communist infiltration. Dissatisfied with the new management of the nationalized electric company, which had withdrawn privileges formerly tolerated by the company, and confronted with a rumor that Electrical Workers' Union chief Amaury Friginals was soon to be purged, about 1,000 of the 6,000 union members demonstrated before the Presidential Palace on December 9, 1960, shouting "Cuba Sí, Rusia No." Friginals had been active in the terrorism in Havana against Batista and was a 26th of July Movement member. He was appointed to head the electrical workers in January, 1959. After President Dorticós agreed to talk with Friginals and other leaders, the demonstrators quieted down, but nothing came of the talks. A few days later Friginals heard that he was a marked man, and he went into hiding on December 13. The CTC leaders convened a meeting of the union and the 2,000 workers who attended expelled Friginals and his associates "dishonorably."<sup>63</sup> From that moment on

61. *HAR*, XIII (Mar., 1960), 25; James, p. 195; Porter and Alexander, p. 139. The other members of the CTC purge committee were Jesús Soto, José Aguilera, and Odon de la Campa.

62. James, p. 197; *HAR*, XIII (Jan., 1961), 791; James Monahan and Kenneth O. Gilmore, "How the Kremlin Took Cuba," *The Reader's Digest*, XLII (January, 1963), p. 228.

63. Draper, p. 45; *HAR*, XIII (Feb., 1961), 878-879; James, pp. 199-200.

Cuban labor has remained cowed and submissive to the wishes of the government-controlled CTC leadership, thus returning the labor movement to a position not unlike that which it occupied under Batista. Revolutionary Law No. 924 of January 9, 1961, provided that any worker "in either private or public employment" could be dismissed for counter revolutionary activities. It made overt acts punishable by death and on January 17 three electrical workers were executed for terrorist acts. In the meantime, more than 200 electrical workers had been dismissed for refusing to join the militia.<sup>64</sup>

The removal of David Salvador and other anti-Communists from the labor movement paved the way for the return of Lázaro Peña to the leadership of Cuban labor. The "resurrection of Lazarus" came to a large degree as a result of the activities of Raúl Castro, who was more closely associated with Peña than was Fidel. In 1959 he had no official title, but was frequently seen with Raúl. After the Tenth Congress of the CTC he was given the title of "founder of the CTC" with no official authority, but with an office at CTC headquarters from which he assumed a growing amount of power. At the Eleventh Congress in November, 1961, he was officially elected Secretary General of the central labor federation. Like Lázaro Peña, many of the labor leaders in Cuba by 1961 were men who had previously held high labor positions with the blessing of Batista in the period 1934-1944; or, as Daniel James put it: "Cuban labor, then, has come full circle: from Communist domination under Batista to Communist domination under Castro."<sup>65</sup>

Union elections held in October, 1961, indicated that Communist control and government support of that control had become complete. More than 2,000,000 Cuban workers participated "democratically." However, great emphasis was placed on a "firm decision of unity," in which in almost every case there was just one slate of candidates presented.<sup>66</sup>

The Eleventh Congress of the CTC-R<sup>67</sup> met in November and here the Communist domination was consolidated and manifested. At the Ninth Congress, in 1959, some anti-Communists had carried watermelons into the convention hall as symbols of those who wore the olive green uniform of the Revolution, but who in reality were Communist reds. Now, before the 1961

64. *HAR*, XIV (Mar., 1961), 35.

65. James, p. 194.

66. *Prensa Libre* (Havana: city edition), Oct. 27, 1961, p. 1; *Prensa Libre* (Havana: interior edition), Oct. 27, 1961, p. 5. See also *HAR*, XIV (Dec., 1961), 892-893, citing the CTC publication *Vanguardia Obrero*.

67. Since about the middle of 1961 the central labor organization was called the Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba, Revolucionaria. Upon the proposal of Labor Minister Martínez Sánchez at the Eleventh Congress, the name was changed to the Central de Trabajadores de Cuba, Revolucionaria. He emphasized the need to get away from the idea of a "confederation" and to replace it with the "central" or unity idea.

Congress, Martínez Sánchez accused those persons of having been *Mujalistas* and that they shouted "26! 26!" for the purpose of blocking the unity of the labor movement. "Those traitors who shouted, 'Melons! Melons!' are not here," Martínez declared, "but the melons are with you and we will go on being melons, that is to say, green on the outside and red inside . . . red as the symbol of the international workers' revolutionary movement."<sup>68</sup> The Minister also announced that a new Organic Law of the Labor Ministry would soon be drafted which would speed the advance toward socialism and help to resolve the multiple problems facing the nation, as well as to "improve the perfection of production, increase the productivity of labor, social security, etc."<sup>69</sup> Blas Roca, Lázaro Peña, and other leading Communists also addressed the conference which was totally dominated by the Communists. It is clear that they had gained control of the movement by this date.

The direction which the Cuban government had taken by the end of 1961 left little room for doubt that Communists had gained control. The question of whether Khrushchev was using Castro, or Castro was using Khrushchev, might be an open one, but there was no doubt that the basic principles of Marxism had been endorsed by the Cuban government. The reasons for this are also open to debate, ranging from those journalists and politicians who claim that Fidel Castro was a Communist almost from the day of his birth and that the Revolution was a carefully arranged plot to establish international Communism in Cuba, to those who believe, as this writer does, that the establishment of Communism in Cuba was the result of a combination of circumstances, needs, opportunism, and a short-sighted foreign policy on the part of the United States. But few can still reasonably argue that Cuba is not under the control of Communists who are at least to some degree committed to the International Communist Movement. The urban labor unions played an important role in the progression of events which brought the Communists to power. At the same time, the Cuban government maintained considerable independence of International Communism, and Castro himself has frequently attacked Communists and purged some of those with whom he has disagreed. Castro has never been willing to relinquish his personal control of the Revolution.

Throughout 1959 the government was clearly more concerned with agrarian reform than with establishing a "dictatorship of the proletariat." Nevertheless, it realized that it was essential to maintain control of the urban labor masses in order to stay in power, and it needed urban labor to press forward with the

68. "Una quincena de acontecimientos laborales," *Trabajo* (Havana), II (2a quincena de diciembre de 1961), p. 21.

69. Marta Rojas, "Hacia la tecnificación," *Trabajo* (Havana), II (2a quincena de diciembre de 1961), p. 24.

agrarian reform experiments. The Cuban Revolution from the start has been characterized by a monopolistic trend on the part of the government. All competition, whether it be in the form of independent labor unions, foreign investment, domestic industry, or whatever, has been systematically eliminated. At the same time the young Cuban socialists have been characterized by a pragmatic attitude which has put little emphasis on ideological or theoretical systems. As Professor Cecil Johnson reported to the Southwestern Social Science Association meeting in 1961,

Unlike the Marxists the Cuban revolutionaries do not feel constrained to interpret events in terms of an all encompassing theory. To the contrary, they are very much like their American adversaries in one sense; they are quite pragmatic in their handling of social problems. If a given approach does not work, they have no hesitancy about dropping it and adopting another.<sup>70</sup>

The government, faced with growing opposition to its measures, took increasingly severe measures with terrorists and counter revolutionaries. It established strong military forces as deterrents both to invasion from without and insurrection from within, and received considerable aid from Iron Curtain countries in this buildup. Signs of a relaxation of the military mobilization and a willingness to "begin anew" with the United States in January, 1961, faded rapidly after President Kennedy's inaugural address.<sup>71</sup> The ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion that followed confirmed Castro's predictions of a pending invasion and closed the door on any rapprochement with the United States, putting Cuba firmly in the Soviet camp. This international situation, including the economic warfare waged against the Cubans by the United States, was accompanied by a good deal of patriotic fervor in Cuba which served to enhance Castro's position with the working class. It enabled the Communists to carry on their program of infiltration on a much more rapid schedule and was responsible for the liquidation of all opposition within Cuba that had been mounting prior to the Bay of Pigs invasion.<sup>72</sup>

Formal uniting of the Communist Party (PSP) with Castro's Revolutionary organization signaled the establishment of a completely totalitarian socialist state. In June, 1961, Castro announced that all the revolutionary parties would

70. Cecil E. Johnson, "Cuba: The Domestic Policies of the Castro Regime," *Case Studies in Latin American Politics* (Arnold Foundation Monographs IX) (Dallas: The Arnold Foundation of Southern Methodist University, 1961), p. 15.

71. See *HAR*, XIV (Mar., 1961), 32.

72. See Theodore Draper, "Castro and Communism," *The Reporter*, XXVIII (Jan. 17, 1963), p. 35.



gradually be united into a single Partido Unido de la Revolución Socialista (PURS). As a preliminary measure to this union, however, a separate organization would implement the integration of the revolutionary organizations, of which the 26th of July Movement, the PSP, and the DR were the most important by the summer of 1961. This interim organization was to be known as Organizaciones Revolucionarias Integradas (ORI). Blas Roca, Aníbal Escalante, and other top PSP officials soon appeared in high positions in the ORI along with Fidel and Raúl Castro, "Che" Guevara, and other top 26th of July men. The weight which the Communists carried in the ORI was far greater than their popular support would justify, but the party was not established by popular elections. On August 21, *Revolución*, the official organ of the 26th of July Movement, justified Castro's establishment of the ORI on the basis of Lenin's conception of "democratic centralism:"

Democratic centralism is the method which Lenin discovered for the application of true democracy. It is the only method for applying democracy. It consists of democracy being applied by a central leadership. An ideal approved by the masses is applied by a centralized leadership of the workers' vanguard which is the party.<sup>73</sup>

By the autumn of 1961, all legal political organizations in Cuba had subscribed to this Marxist-Leninist idea. Finally, Castro announced in the wee hours of the morning of December 2 that the PURS was being created for the purpose of leading Cuba through socialism to a people's democracy of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," and that members would be drawn from workers, students, intellectuals, and even from the petite bourgeoisie. He added that "the party is still not officially constituted as such; it has not yet had its first congress . . . There is no hurry; it will be done." This was the speech in which he announced what most of the world had already decided: that he himself was a dedicated "Marxist-Leninist."<sup>74</sup>

The Communist infiltration was not confined to organizations — labor unions, political parties, etc. — but involved the battle for minds as well. News media, Radio Habana, the press in general, became heavily saturated with Communist propaganda, and the national printing office had published a long list of pro-Soviet and pro-Communist books and pamphlets by the end of 1961, many of which were aimed at the literate urban working class.<sup>75</sup> This propa-

73. Draper, *Castro's Revolution*, p. 124.

74. *HAR*, XIV (Feb., 1962), 1089.

75. Among the publications of the Imprenta Nacional in 1961 alone were: *Fundamentos del socialismo en Cuba*, by Blas Roca; *Así se templó el acero*, by Nicolai Ostrovski *Héroes de la*

ganda had several aims. It attempted to persuade the workers that "unity" behind Communist leaders would improve their own personal positions and prosperity, as well as the nation's. It stimulated anti-Americanism and fostered friendship with the Soviet Union, China, and other Communist nations. Finally, it promoted sacrifices on the part of the workers to maintain the government which was moving toward the "dictatorship of the proletariat." This propaganda was exceedingly effective, combined with what Castro called "Revolutionary Terror" against counter revolutionaries, in maintaining his position and the strength of the government.

Early in 1962, however, Castro made it clear that while he accepted Communist aid, and even leadership in many areas, that even though he might be a "Marxist-Leninist," he was not going to turn the reins of power over to the Communists. In March, Aníbal Escalante was removed and he went into exile in Czechoslovakia. This was followed by the sudden departure of the Soviet Ambassador in Havana, Sergei Mihailkovitch Kudryavtsev, who had been active in Cuban politics.<sup>76</sup> The moves apparently were part of a general shake-up in the ORI and the government in which Fidel personally emerged with more power than before. The attacks against Escalante seemed to be primarily a warning to the "old" Communists that the Revolution was not going to be totally controlled by their ideology, and that they were as answerable for their actions as anyone else in the movement.<sup>77</sup>

*fortaleza de Brest*, by Sergei Smirnov; *Chapáev*, by Dmitri Fúrmanov; *Cuatro novelas checas; Síntesis de "El Capital"*, by Karl Marx; *Guatemala nuestra*, by Juan Marinello; *Psicología*, by the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the USSR; *La dialéctica marxista-leninista*, by V. P. Rozhin; *Manual de Economía Política*, by the Academy of Sciences of the USSR; *Fundamentos de la filosofía marxista*, by the Academy of Sciences of the USSR; *El estado y la revolución*, by V. I. Lenin; *El imperialismo, fase superior del capitalismo*, by V. I. Lenin; *El imperio del petróleo*, by Harvey O'Connor; *Sobre el arte y la literatura*, by Mao Tse-Tung; *Las comunas chinas*, by Anna Louise Strong; *Azúcar y población en las Antillas*, by Ramiro Guerra; *Sobre la juventud*, by V. I. Lenin; *Sobre la religión*, by V. I. Lenin; *Elementos para la historia del movimiento obrero en Cuba*, by Joaquín Ordoqui; *Conferencias sobre educación infantil*, by Antón S. Makarenko; *Educación y lucha de clases*, by Aníbal Ponce; and *Lucha de clases y movimiento obrero*, by Rito Esteban.

76. Draper, "Castro and Communism," p. 36.

77. In his March 26 speech attacking Escalante, Castro declared: "The tendency to mistrust everybody who could not claim a long record of revolutionary militancy, who had not been an old Marxist militant . . . the sectarianism of believing that the only revolutionaries, the only ones who could have positions of trust, the only ones who could hold a post on a People's Farm, on a Cooperative, in the government, anywhere, had to be old Marxist militants . . . That policy introduced extraneous matters into the integration process . . . and so many, many months after the forces had been officially integrated, one found someone who would come out and say: 'He's not a member of the Party.' To what Party was he referring, if there already was a new organization here? . . ."

"To what did such a state of affairs give rise? To vanity, to the domination or influence, to privilege. What would this engender but conditions which would earn the old Communists the antipathy and suspicion of the masses? . . ."

"Add to this the fact if an old Communist made mistakes, nothing was done to him; he was not removed from his post, nor was he disciplined in any way . . . it was an established method for the indulgence of all faults; to create a caste spirit, to create a clique spirit . . . Some

The unions held meetings in the weeks that followed and elected "exemplary workers" for membership in the PURS. In Havana about 40% of the PURS membership came from this source. It was by these means that Castro was able to break the hold of the "old" Communists and control the country with his own communist party.<sup>78</sup> It had the effect of giving him more freedom from the Communist International, but economically he had already committed himself strongly to Eastern Europe. More recently, following the missile crisis of last October, the Cuban government has shown signs of moving toward the Chinese bloc, or of playing a Tito-type middle role in world Communism, but economically the Cubans remain closely tied to the Russian bloc. The fact remains, Castro is basically pragmatic.

In order to take control of the labor unions in Havana and other cities of Cuba, the government, at least at first, made major concessions and offered substantial improvements to the workers. It was definitely successful in bringing the rank-and-file workers to the support of the Castro provisional government. In the first months of 1959 CTC unions which stressed the unity theme made substantial gains in wages and working conditions. Public housing, rent reductions, and increased employment from public works more than compensated for layoffs in private construction. Other benefits included improved health services, more social security benefits, and nurseries for the children of working mothers. Furthermore, although eventually United States embargo cut down food and other supplies, increased foodstuff production in Cuba, particularly of vegetables and grains, helped to compensate for the import shortages and actually reduced the cost of some food items. The desire of the government to remove the dependence of the nation on sugar production alone was one which the Castro government has been most concerned with from its earliest days. There was a rapid increase in educational facilities in Havana. Although teacher salaries declined, thousands of unemployed Cuban teachers now found positions.

comrades had lost all sense of control. They imagined they had won the Revolution in a raffle . . .

"How were the ORI nuclei formed? I'm going to tell you how. In every province the general secretary of the PSP was made general secretary of the ORI; in every municipality, the general secretary of the PSP was made general secretary of the ORI; in every nucleus, the general secretary - the member of the PSP - was made general secretary. Is that what you call integration? Comrade Escalante is responsible for that policy.

"What results from this? . . . If extreme sectarianism still remains, it will once again give rise to anti-communism and to confusion. Because many people will ask: "Is this Communism? Is this Marxism? Is this socialism? This arbitrariness, this abuse, this privilege, all this, is this Communism?" . . .

"That sectarianism fosters anti-Communism anew . . . To isolate oneself from the masses when one is in power, that is madness. It is another matter to be isolated by the ruling classes. . . but to be divorced from the masses when the workers, the farmers, the working class is in power, is a crime. The sectarianism becomes counter-revolutionary." *I. F. Stone's Weekly*, XI (Jan. 14, 1963), p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> Draper, "Castro and Communism," p. 45.

There were problems, but the new government showed a sincere and vital interest in education and made substantial progress (although not as sensational as some of the government illiteracy figures would indicate). In Havana alone, during the first year of the Revolution, 37 new schools were built.<sup>79</sup> In addition, the Ministry of Labor sponsored literary contests for workers and encouraged cultural development and the campaign against illiteracy.<sup>80</sup>

In the summer of 1960 Castro announced the beginning of Workers' Social Circles, social clubs for labor union members, taking the facilities of the night clubs, yacht clubs, recreation centers, etc. This program did not really get underway until the spring of 1961, however. In April, many of the clubs, beaches, and other previously private recreational areas were nationalized and, on Labor Day (May 1), they were turned over to the 24 Círculos Sociales Obreros for the "proletarian masses." The old Havana Yacht Club at this time was renamed after Julio Antonio Mella, the first Secretary General of the Communist Party of Cuba (1925). It is not clear just how many workers have been able to avail themselves of these previously private facilities, but they have greatly improved workers' morale.<sup>81</sup>

Although Revolutionary leaders continued to guarantee the people a higher standard of living, serious shortages of some commodities resulted stemming from deteriorating relations with the United States and failures in the government's economic planning. The first rationing took place in July, 1961, following the impounding by the Edwin Harris Advertising Company of a 29-car-load shipment of lard worth \$600,000 already paid for by the Cuban government. This resulted in the rationing of one pound of lard and one pound of other fats per month per person.<sup>82</sup> More rationing came in 1962 when other food items became short. Nevertheless, in spite of the claims of United States news magazines and "hunger strikes" in a few localities, there is little evidence that the Cuban people have been "starving." In fact, the majority of them may be living better than previously, and it is the middle and upper classes who have had to tighten their belts somewhat. While the exiles coming to Miami have had many grievances, few if any of them appear to have been suffering from malnutrition. Reports of visitors to Cuba, in fact, suggest that there must, at least, be serious doubt as to the idea that living conditions in Cuba for the workers have declined. As Donald W. T. Bruce wrote to the editor of *The Times* of

79. Johnson, p. 11.

80. For example, see "Resultados del concurso literario de la revista TRABAJO," *Trabajo* (Havana), II (2a quincena de diciembre de 1961), pp. 80-97.

81. Helvio Corona, "Cultura, deportes y recreación," *Trabajo* (Havana), II (2a quincena de diciembre de 1961), p. 136; Jaime Gravalosa, "Los trabajadores en el poder," *Trabajo*, II (2a quincena de diciembre de 1961), p. 65.

82. *HAR*, XIV (Sept., 1961), 606.

London on February 21, 1962, after his second visit in six months to Cuba,

Whatever the merits or demerits of the system of government at present in operation it is difficult for a visitor to that delightful island country to come to any other conclusion than that Dr. Castro and his colleagues enjoy the overwhelming support of the great bulk of its population. The purely material reasons for this lie in the simple fact that, for the first time, the poorer sections of the population are getting a fair share of the basic necessities of life in terms of both food and clothing. It has been necessary to enforce some rationing, particularly of meat and fats, to accomplish this and a real decline in the consumer standards enjoyed by the middle class has occurred in consequence.<sup>83</sup>

The government issued figures, admittedly subject to varying interpretation and reliability, which indicate considerable increases in standard of living, employment, wages, social security, pensions, and other benefits.<sup>84</sup> Meanwhile, government officials, notably "Che" Guevara, have admitted that many mistakes have been made in the economic programs of the Revolution and that there have been major setbacks. Guevara's statements again tend to emphasize the pragmatic nature of the Cuban Revolution.<sup>85</sup>

Control of organized urban labor in Cuba has become one of the main supports for the Castro government since 1959. Demonstrations by labor unions for the new government were organized early in 1959 and have been frequent ever since. Especially on such occasions as May Day, and patriotic national holidays, the labor unions have been the most important source of a ready-made "cheering section." The benefits given to the workers to a large degree were designed to create this large, readily available supporting group within the capital. The unions were also used on many occasions to support the anti-American campaign of the government, and the chauvinistic chanting of "Cuba

83. Reprinted in the *HAR*, XV (Mar., 1962), 2, from *The Times* of London, Feb. 23, 1962. Mr. Bruce went on to say: "In turn this has resulted, understandably, in a volume of bitter criticism which is aired quite openly in the more expensive hotels and restaurants in Havana despite the fact that the essence of such criticism is that it is not possible under 'the police state' to utter it in safety.

"Although my own trips were not sponsored in any way by the Cuban Government, I found myself free to travel wherever I wished on the island, without any 'guide' or 'interpreter'; to take whatever photographs I wished; and to converse with anybody at random. I availed myself of all those facilities and was pleased to note that the Cubans with whom I talked felt able to express themselves quite freely, and sometimes controversially, on political and other matters. . . ." Other travelers have reported similar experiences.

84. See, for example, the Ministry of Labor's *Cuba en Cifras* (Havana: Imprenta Nacional, 1961).

85. For example, in March, 1962, Guevara declared: "We made an absurd plan . . . with absurd goals and with supplies that were totally dreamed." *HAR*, XV (May, 1962), 225.

Sí, Yanquis No!" was indicative of this use.

A more significant use of the labor unions, however, has been their employment in the militia, a ready reserve of which organized urban labor supplies most of the membership. The "Rebel Army" had served its purpose in overthrowing Batista and increasingly was a potential counter revolutionary force, differing little from other Latin American standing armies.<sup>86</sup> The reserve militia, supposedly established for national defense, was in reality a check against the army taking over. The idea of arming workers was proposed by the Communists in Guatemala but was not put into operation sufficiently to prevent the overthrow of the Arbenz regime there by Col. Carlos Castillo Armas in 1954. The army offered virtually no resistance in that case, and the labor unions had, for the most part, not yet been armed. In Guatemala the move had been slowed by President Arbenz, himself an army man. One who had strongly urged the arming of the workers in Guatemala was "Che" Guevara, and he was more successful in promoting the idea in Cuba. The CTC and the Labor Ministry played key roles in bringing about the establishment of militia units in the labor unions. Well armed and equipped, they are frequently displayed in uniform as a show of force. Exiled Transport Workers' Union Leader Marcos Hirigoyen told Daniel James in 1961: "Today the unions are militia barracks. The militia are present everywhere in labor. The militia, alone and exclusively, set the meetings and name the [local union] executives."<sup>87</sup>

The militia, mainly urban CTC members, has been repeatedly mobilized when danger has threatened the Cuban Revolution. A decree of January, 1961, guaranteed militiamen full pay from their jobs while they were under mobilization. And its existence, in many ways more closely controlled by the government than any standing army could ever be, makes the possibility of overthrow of the Castro government by an external force extremely difficult.<sup>88</sup> The arming of so many workers makes Cuba unique among Communist countries. Nowhere behind the Iron Curtain are the people themselves armed as they are in Cuba.

In addition to official action by the militia, used at times to influence labor elections and against counter revolutionary groups and activities, there is also evidence to suggest that the CTC had provided "goon squads" of strong-armed thugs to eliminate or intimidate opposition. In early 1960, a mob attacked the offices of *Avance*, *Diario de la Marina*, and other anti-Communist publications. Worker gangs have also been used to break up anti-government meetings and to intimidate all opposition. The extent of this is unknown at present, but there are rumors among Cuban exiles that such activity is as prevalent as it was under

86. Draper, *Castro's Revolution*, p. 25.

87. James, p. 198.

88. Rojas, p. 25.

the Communist regime in Guatemala, where, following its overthrow, evidence of widespread torture and assassinations of political opposition was found. The labor unions have also cooperated closely with the Committees of Defense in an effort to discover and destroy counter revolutionary activities.<sup>89</sup> Castro himself openly encouraged worker action against counter-revolutionaries after rebels in Las Villas Province hanged a 16 year old peasant teacher. He suggested that a squad from the CTC should be formed to capture the assassins.<sup>90</sup>

Perhaps more important than these direct uses of organized labor to support the government, however, has been the gradual transition of the CTC from an institution promoting better conditions and benefits for the workers to a virtual government agency more concerned with improving production. This situation is especially significant because of the role the Communists played in its development. As early as 1959 some restrictive measures had been taken by the government, and by March, 1960, collective bargaining had been abolished and replaced by a system of arbitration by the Ministry of Labor. Arbitrations were generally declared in favor of the unions when the majority of employers were private concerns, but later, when the government itself was the largest employer following extensive expropriations, the Ministry more often ruled against the unions. Also, in 1959, an Office of Labor Control was inaugurated which gave the Ministry of Labor wide powers to determine the employment of individual workers. Established for the purpose of avoiding collusion in employment for political purposes or patronage, or by corrupt labor union officials, and to avoid manipulation, nepotism, and racial discrimination, it, too, later became widely used as an instrument of the government for the control of labor, used to dismiss legally any worker who failed to comply with its politics.<sup>91</sup> The law became more effective in March, 1960, when Decree No. 761 required every worker to register with the Ministry of Labor.<sup>92</sup>

In September, 1960, the Labor Ministry responded to the government's need to increase production by tightening up working requirements, insisting on more working time and establishing penalties for "crimes against production" for workers who refused to cooperate with the speed-up system reminiscent of the Soviet Union's Stakhanovist policies of the 1930's.<sup>93</sup> The shortage of technical personnel and the tremendous management problems that accompanied nationalization contributed to the problems of Cuban industry, and thus, indirectly,

89. James, pp. 204-205, 307-308.

90. "Una quincena de acontecimientos laborales," p. 23.

91. Rojas, p. 28.

92. James, p. 195.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 199, citing Dr. Aureliano Sánchez Arango, "Situación de los campesinos y obreros dentro de la reforma agraria," *Cuba, 1961*, supplement to *Cuadernos*, No. 47 (Paris: March-April, 1961), p. 40.

to Cuban labor.<sup>94</sup> Soviet labor officials in Cuba worked closely with the Ministry of Labor and the CTC on these problems.<sup>95</sup>

In August, 1961, the CTC was reorganized, making it more manageable from CTC headquarters. Unions were established for each plant and a national federation for each industry, eliminating much overlapping. The number of national federations was reduced to twenty-five. Also, professionals such as doctors, teachers, and engineers were allowed to organize for the first time. The reorganization program, the government hoped, would expedite worker cooperation in fulfilling production goals of the four-year industrial plan to begin in 1962. A great deal of emphasis was placed on "unity" of the labor movement.<sup>96</sup> This theme became more and more dominant and was pursued by the Communists and the government alike in an attempt to marshal the labor unions behind the production plans. The CTC was also called upon about this time to provide "Patria o Muerte" brigades to volunteer work in building schools as part of the illiteracy campaign. By the end of the year, the government claimed that 60,000 workers were participating in this program, about half in urban areas.<sup>97</sup>

Meanwhile, the CTC launched a vigorous campaign against absenteeism. This theme was carried into the national federation congresses and the CTC Congress held in November, 1961. President Osvaldo Dorticós delivered the opening address to the CTC-R delegates and declared: "Comrade workers! Fight and triumph! Fight for our Revolution and achieve the final victory of our Socialist Revolution." He emphasized that the Revolution needed the sacrifice of the working class, but that no one could deny that the Revolution had provided the working people great benefits. He told the workers that they now held the political power in Cuba; that they no longer struggled to gain benefits from a dominant group that was indifferent to the working class. Instead, Dorticós said, the Cuban workers were now the owners.<sup>98</sup> At these meetings it became completely evident that the unions no longer existed for the workers, but for the government. The new CTC-R chief, Lázaro Peña declared:

We must not only consider the specific aspirations and demands of the workers as we have done before, but also, and this is now the most

94. Even Huberman and Sweezy, highly favorable and optimistic about the revolutionary reforms, admit this; see p. 199.

95. Rojas, p. 27.

96. *HAR*, XIV (Sept., 1961), 694; Rojas, p. 27.

97. Margot Obaya, "Cuba: Territorio libre de analfabetismo," *Trabajo* (Havana), II (2a quincena de diciembre de 1961), p. 10.

98. "Una quincena de acontecimientos laborales," p. 23.



important, the new tasks and obligations that correspond to us in the establishment of socialism, in the construction of the new society . . .

Our 25 constituent congresses adopted in one form or another a common determination: to eliminate those labor contracts that hindered the development of production, the increase of the productivity of labor, the advance of the economy of our socialist revolution, as a new voluntary contribution of the workers.<sup>99</sup>

Specifically, this meant that workers gave up many of the rights and benefits that they had gained under Batista. Some of them were clear cases of "featherbedding," but others, such as the 9-day annual sick leave, were ended because of abuses of privileges which slowed production. Instead of correcting the contracts to eliminate the abuses, benefits were now lost altogether. The new contracts permitted introduction of labor-saving machinery and other innovations designed to improve production. "Che" Guevara made it clear that the government would not tolerate opposition to the new contracts. Some of the national federations went further than others, even voting to forego Christmas bonuses so that the money could be used for industrialization.<sup>100</sup>

The campaigns to eliminate absenteeism and to promote the unity of the working class continued through 1962. The unions had become no more than servants of the state, and specifically of the Ministry of Labor, which completely controlled the labor movement and the workers. In March, 1962, Guevara emphasized that labor should accept the discipline of "democratic centralism" when a new austerity law was put into effect. The Ministry eventually established penalties for absent and tardy workers in the summer of 1962. Penalties included public disgrace, salary deductions, shortening of vacations, suspensions, or transfers to other jobs. Furthermore, not only a minimum salary of 90 pesos was established, but also a maximum of 200 pesos, with all wage changes subject to the Labor Ministry's approval.<sup>101</sup>

In September, 1962, Lázaro Peña emphasized what he called "socialist emulation" at the National Council meeting of the CTC-R, with more emphasis placed on production by exemplary "vanguard workers." "Socialist emulation," Peña said, "while voluntary, was nevertheless a moral obligation for every Cuban worker to do his utmost at every task that faced his country." President Dorticós assured the meeting that "socialist emulation" would be coordinated with the national economic plans for 1963, although wage rates would be tied to production only in the case of new workers.<sup>102</sup>

99. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

100. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-23; *HAR*, XIV (Jan., 1962), 988.

101. *HAR*, XV (Oct., 1962), 707.

102. *Ibid.*, (Nov., 1962), 805.

Thus, by 1963, there was no doubt that the freedom of Cuban organized labor had been lost. The Communists had taken it over completely, and the CTC was being operated as an appendage of the government for the benefit of the government's economic plan, as part of a vast totalitarian socialist dictatorship.

#### IV

The development of organized labor in Cuba has been closely associated with the Communist Party and with the Cuban government. Communist were significant leaders in the early organization of Cuban labor and have played an important role in it ever since. Since the 1930's the governments of Cuba have been closely involved with the organized urban labor movement and have consistently made the CTC a strong base of support for their policies and maintenance of power.

The "dictatorship of the proletariat" in Cuba has meant the subordination of the interests of the working class to the interests of the state as a whole, at present interpreted through "democratic centralism" by a select group of leaders, few of whom are "proletarian" workers. This subordination of labor to government control is not new in Cuba; it was a definite characteristic of both Batista regimes.

At the same time, the pragmatic nature of the Cuban Revolution has presented a strong challenge to the old-guard Communists of Latin America as they have been unable to completely dominate the Cuban Revolution. The success of the Communists in infiltrating and controlling Cuban labor reflects their long experience and interest in the Cuban proletariat, but it also reflects the absence of a strong free trade-union movement. The chief reason the Communists have been able to control the labor unions has been the power vacuum created when previous totalitarian governments were overthrown. The Guatemalan experience of 1944-1954 suggests the same thing. While the Cuban labor movement has been one of the largest and most powerful in Latin America, it does not necessarily follow that it has been healthy. Although it has been at times successful in gaining certain benefits and advantages for the urban workers, the CTC has been used for political ends which have not always benefitted the workers or the nation, and it has not served as an adequate spokesman for the workers' interests. The experience of the CTC should interest other Latin American workers' organizations.