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TRIAL OF MARCOS RODRIGUEZ ALFONSO - II

Routine Trial Became Political Exposé

Not since the 1959 trial of Hubert Matos (a commander of the Rebel Army who was convicted of treason when he protested the infiltration of Communism into the 26th of July Movement) has public interest in a judicial proceeding been so stirred in Cuba as in the recently ended case of Marcos Armando Rodríguez Alfonso.

Marcos Rodríguez, a member of the Communist Party, was convicted of being the informer who directed police of the Batista dictatorship to the hiding place of four student members of the Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil on April 20, 1957. The four were killed as they tried to escape from Apartment 201 at No. 7 Humboldt Street in Havana. His sentence was death before a firing squad.

Rodríguez' trial lasted from March 14 through March 19. An appeal from the conviction was heard by a panel of judges of the Cuban Supreme Court of Justice from March 23 to March 30 and the high court's decision was announced on April 1.

The historical importance of the case (designated No. 72 of 1964) lies in the fact that, through a series of circumstances apparently beyond the control of the Castro regime, the simple trial of a police informer was converted into an indictment of Cuba's Communist Party and some of its most influential and respected members. The process against Rodríguez became a Pandora's box of accusations, incriminations and insinuations between major figures of the Cuban government as Fidel Castro, apparently to put an end to more damaging rumors circulating throughout the country, ordered a full airing of the testimony by Cuba's newspapers, radio and television and appeared himself as a "witness".

As the testimony for and against Communist Party members (the question of Rodríguez' guilt or innocence was pushed into a secondary plane) unfolded before the startled eyes and ears of the Cuban people, the trial emerged as a scandal of major proportions; a political and moral indictment of the Communist Party and its philosophy and methods.

Communists Cooperated with Batista

The roots of the "Humboldt 7" case are hidden in the past history of Cuba, particularly that of the indigenous Communist Party which, as events proved, has always been highly opportunistic and has managed to

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survive against whatever opposition raised against it with a minimum of sacrifice and a maximum of gain.

Although the Party is now presented by Castro's propaganda apparatus as a fount of wisdom and the cradle of all democratic struggles against tyranny and oppression since its founding in the 1920s, the facts contradict this idealistically fabricated façade.

The Cuban Communist Party (called during the two regimes of Fulgencio Batista the Partido Socialista Popular - PSP) has been controlled for the past 30 years by substantially the same group of Cuban leaders -- now designated by themselves and others as "the Old Guard" -- with the same eminently political purpose of influencing the course of the island's history. The PSP not only avoided all violent methods of resistance to its opponents but also followed a positive line of alliances with politicians and dictators, no matter how corrupt and despised by the people, to deliver its approximately 150,000 strictly controlled Party votes in return for positions of influence and for cash.

This situation was particularly true in the late '30s and early '40s when the Communists achieved an alliance with Fulgencio Batista. In exchange for PSP support, the Cuban dictator named a Communist to his cabinet (Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, without portfolio), allowed the comrades to take over the Cuban labor movement (Lázaro Peña became head of the CTC), permitted many other Communists to occupy lesser governmental positions and gave the Party freedom to build up a powerful propaganda apparatus which included the daily Noticias de Hoy under Aníbal Escalante and the potent short wave station Mil Diez.

Significantly, the Communist Party, although ostensibly outlawed by Batista when he returned to power by military coup on March 10, 1952, did not engage in the active revolutionary campaign undertaken by the university students, workers and others against his dictatorial government.

Attempt Made to Assassinate Batista

It is in the latter part of Batista's regime that the present trial had its origin. On March 13, 1957, student members of the DRE (one of the two active organizations fighting against Batista, the other being Castro's 26th of July Movement in the Sierra Maestra) mounted a large scale assault on the presidential palace in Havana. Batista, who fled to his living quarters on the top floor, narrowly escaped being killed and the attack was bloodily liquidated by his military forces.

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The attack on the palace was part of a daring plan to seize control of Cuba from Batista. Envisioned by the DRE leadership and a group of civilians, the plan called for the dictator's assassination (which was actually announced over a Havana radio station by a DRE conspirator) and a simultaneous uprising by young officers at Havana's principal military garrison at Camp Columbia. The students and military personnel, aided by opposition politicians, were then to take over the government, promising immediate elections and attempting to restore peace to the island.

This plan, had it succeeded, would have had the practical effect of leaving Fidel Castro and his still feeble 26th of July Movement on the fringe of power. He had landed in December 1956 in Oriente Province with 82 men who had accompanied him from Mexico in the yacht "Granma". Strafed from the air and hunted on the ground, Castro had managed to reach safety in the rugged Sierra Maestra mountains with only 12 followers and, by the time of the palace assault, had been able to rebuild his revolutionary force to only about 40 men. His "army" was then simply a band of fugitives which had to be constantly on the move to avoid death or capture at the hands of Batista's army.

The 26th of July Movement, therefore, played only a secondary role at the time; its importance grew as the Cuban Army displayed its inability or disinclination to hunt Castro's forces down and as a result of the failure of the DRE to accomplish its mission.

With the failure to achieve the death of Batista and capture the presidential palace, the remainder of the plan of the DRE and its allies was dropped. Of about 50 young men taking part in the assault, some 30 were killed then or later, decimating the DRE leadership. Other members were arrested or escaped to the mountains or into exile and with its effectiveness greatly reduced, the DRE played only a secondary role in the revolutionary movement against Batista while Castro's barbudos in the Sierra Maestra gained in strength and prestige.

Among those who escaped from the frustrated palace assault were Faure Chomón, one of the two leaders of the DRE, and Fructuoso Rodríguez, Pedro Carbó Serviá and José Machado, all of whom occupied important posts in the university organization. For more than a month after the attack they moved from hiding place to hiding place as Batista's police tried to liquidate all remnants of the revolutionary group. On April 19, 1957, Rodríguez, Carbó and Machado were taken to an apartment at No. 7 Humboldt Street occupied by a fourth DRE member, Joe Westbrook. When they arrived, about midnight, a friend of Westbrook's, Marcos Rodríguez Alfonso, was there.

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DRE Leaders Betrayed by Informer

Rodríguez, known as "Marquito," was a familiar figure on the campus of the University of Havana where he was a student of philosophy. He dressed erratically, wearing leather sandals with U.S. pennies between the straps, and was never seen without a book beneath his arm -- a fact later used to identify him as "the delator del Humboldt 7."

A promising intellectual at 19 who had already written some creditable poetry, Rodríguez sought the company of students of all university groups. He claimed to have been a member of the Communists' Juventud Socialista with the assigned task of reporting to the Party on the activities of the DRE and other student organizations -- a statement denied by JS leaders of that period during his trial.

Rodríguez was particularly outspoken in student discussions against what he called "aggressive methods of fighting" the Batista dictatorship of the DRE and the July 26 groups, urging instead "resistance of the masses," the euphemism used by the PSP to hide its passivity in the struggle. Rodríguez' efforts to gain the confidence of DRE and other leaders was reportedly unsuccessful; survivors of the revolutionary organizations said he was often ostracized because of his "red" leanings and the suspicion that he was a spy for the Communists.

Humiliated and angry over an argument he had that night with the DRE fugitives, in which he (and probably the PSP leadership) was accused of cowardice, Rodríguez the following morning called Lt. Col. Esteban Ventura Novo, the most feared officer of Batista's repressive force ("el más verdugo") and made an appointment to see him that afternoon. Denying that he had received money for his betrayal, Rodríguez admitted that he revealed the hiding place of the four from motives of "hate" and "vengeance" and because he believed the Party's policies would have greater acceptance among students with them dead or in prison.

Ventura's men promptly surrounded the block, broke into the apartment at Humboldt 7 and, with no effort to take prisoners, riddled the four DRE men with machine gun fire.

Pretending to be a fugitive from Ventura's esbirros, Rodríguez went first into hiding and then obtained asylum in the Brazilian Embassy in Havana. After a few months he was given a safe conduct and went into exile in Costa Rica where, although from a modest family (his father was a chauffeur for Diario de la Marina), he appeared to dispose of

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considerable sums of money. The same was reported of him when he was in the Brazilian Embassy; also the fact that he had developed a warm friendship with Ambassador Vasco Leitaó da Cunha and his wife, Virginia.

From Costa Rica, Rodríguez traveled to Chile and Argentina, going later to Mexico with funds apparently exhausted but bearing a message to Cuban Communist leaders there from an unnamed comrade in Buenos Aires. Although suspected by surviving DRE leaders of complicity in the Humboldt 7 affair, in Mexico he enjoyed the friendship of and frequent meals with Joaquín Ordoqui Mesa and his wife, Edith García Buchaca, both of them members of the Politburo of the PSP, who admitted that they had developed a paternal regard for him.

Possibly to avoid complications in Mexico and later in Cuba, Rodríguez pulled strings within the Party to obtain one of five scholarships offered by the Czech Embassy in Mexico City to study in Czechoslovakia. When Batista fell from power on January 1, 1959, Rodríguez stayed on in Mexico for about a month and then returned (possibly after an "all clear" had been given by comrades in Havana) to Cuba. During his stay in Mexico he had been accepted as a full Party member on the recommendation of Ordoqui.

In Havana, Rodríguez promptly obtained a job in the cultural section of the Rebel Army at Camp Columbia. When two members of the DRE and the widow of one of the murdered students learned of his presence in Cuba and went to Army Chief Camilo Cienfuegos with a complaint, Rodríguez was arrested and held for investigation in the Humboldt 7 case. He was, however, quickly freed (ostensibly because of lack of proof but likely because of pressure from the Party, although the evidence against him included an identification by one of Ventura's agents) and he was permitted to leave Cuba to accept his Czech scholarship and later a diplomatic assignment in Prague.

Suspected of Being Foreign Agent

In January 1961, Rodríguez was extradited from Czechoslovakia to Havana because of a suspicion that he had become the agent of an unnamed but imperialist and anti-Cuban foreign government. And then he languished in prison for more than three years before his case was called for trial in the Audiencia of Havana. At some point in the course of time the suspicion of espionage was either cleared up or dropped and that of complicity in the Humboldt 7 murders took its place; the point was never cleared up but the investigator and interrogator who obtained his confession were not appointed until mid-1962.

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On March 14, Rodríguez' trial opened with his complete confession of guilt. The judicial process was given only scant mention by the Cuban press and radio and a routine conviction with sentence of death and a speedy execution seemed indicated.

Mentioned almost in passing was the fact that among witnesses against Rodríguez were Major Faure Chomón, Minister of Transportation, and several ex-DRE members who had been interested in solving the Humboldt 7 mystery since 1957.

The trial, however, continued for six days and attracted public attention because of its length, unusual in Cuba where swift and summary "revolutionary justice" is the rule.

Another indication of the importance of the case was the veiled suggestion in a Radio CMQ broadcast on the trial on March 16 that Rodríguez was a Communist or had strong Party connections since, it was reported, he had "had differences over the methods of fighting against the (Batista) tyranny" with the men killed at Humboldt 7, a cliché used by the PSP to describe its opposition to the violence advocated by the younger revolutionaries.

On March 19, Rodríguez was found guilty and sentenced to die in front of the paredón. His case was appealed to the Supreme Court but still a quick approval of the sentence and execution was expected. On March 21, however, the Communist Party newspaper Noticias de Hoy published a letter from Prime Minister Castro to Blas Roca, its director, in which he directed the full publication of Chomón's testimony and called on all interested to appear as witnesses at the appeal hearing.

Castro not only called the world's attention to the importance of the trial, ordering full radio and television coverage, but also admitted tacitly that "something was rotten in the state of Cuba."

Enemies Sowing Confusion and Doubt

Conceding that "confusion exists with regard to the trial," Castro charged in his letter to Roca that "intriguers are taking advantage of it" and some people "even dare to insinuate that the Revolution fears to shed the light of day on the trial in all its magnitude or is capable of concealing guilt."

He attacked "certain elements (within his regime) who are not in the slightest concerned with the truth, who are neither pure nor revolutionary... who do not lose the slightest opportunity to promote

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resentment, ambition, divisionism or the reactionary spirit and hatred of the petit bourgeoisie which they have for the Socialist revolution and which they conceal under the varnish of neo-revolutionarism."

Those "enemies", Castro continued, want "to take advantage of the trial to sow confusion and doubt. It is necessary for the intriguers, the pseudo-revolutionaries, the new-style sectarians, who are not contented with anything less than rolling the heads of honest revolutionaries and the Revolution devouring its own children, like Saturn, to be disarmed and given a real lesson in civics."

Castro, however, failed to make clear exactly who the "elements" wishing to harm the Revolution might be. On the other hand, he left no doubt of his certainty that Rodríguez was guilty as charged. He told Roca that he would "request that the trial be reopened for evidence... Let it be as public as a trial can be. Let all those who have something to say testify concerning the slightest charge or insinuation against them. Let everything that must be discussed be discussed. Let us all appear at this trial and, if necessary, let everything be judged that must be judged legally as well as morally."

The testimony of Major Chomón in Rodríguez' first trial, the complete text of which was published by Hoy, as Castro had directed, on March 21 revealed clearly that the Minister of Transportation was not only testifying against the accused informer but also, by inference, was accusing the Cuban Communist Party of having maintained (and perhaps still maintaining) an espionage apparatus within other organizations, a network of informers which served primarily the interests of the Old Guard even to the extreme of denouncing the Party's enemies to the police.

The trial of Rodríguez has two aspects, Chomón declared, one of which is on trial at the present time and another which "will be tried in the court of history." Rodríguez, he said, "sneaked off to Prague" to escape his responsibility for the massacre and he implicated the former Old Guard leader Aníbal Escalante, purged for "sectarianism" in 1962, almost with the same breath. Rodríguez "was waiting in Czechoslovakia because he had to wait, as he told Aníbal Escalante when he (Escalante) asked him about his situation," Chomón testified. (The insinuation was never developed during the trial but, since Rodríguez was extradited in 1961 and Escalante was not exiled until 1962, the conversation must have occurred during one of the Communist leader's unpublicized trips behind the Iron Curtain in 1959 or 1960.)

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Chomón described Rodríguez and his betrayal of the DRE leaders as "a bitter fruit of sectarianism," a charge made in the past against the Old Guard, and as though to clinch the point he read into the court record a letter written by him in prison (and smuggled out by his father) to his former protector and Party sponsor, Joaquín Ordoqui, a founder of the PSP, a major of the Rebel Army and a vice minister of the armed forces.

In his letter, Rodríguez asked Ordoqui to intercede in his behalf and reminded him that in 1957 he had been "given instructions to gather information about the DRE," an organization he described as "anti-unitarian" and "unpopular," which was aided by former President Carlos Prío and the Dominican Republic's dictator Rafael Trujillo.

He also reminded Ordoqui that his work as a spy had been very useful since "every step and every action of the DRE were reported" to the Party through "surreptitious" contacts.

Rodríguez recalled for Ordoqui that at one point (presumably early in 1959) he had urged him to issue a public statement for the Party which would state that DRE charges (against Rodríguez) were based on political, anti-Communist considerations and not on proofs of his guilt. (He stated also in his letter that José Antonio Echevarría, principal leader of the DRE killed in the March 13, 1957, uprising, was "anti-Communist.") Ordoqui, however, had replied that it "would not be tactical nor prudent since it would create a scandal."

Rodríguez urged Ordoqui to speak out in his behalf, asserting that his arrest represented "an abuse of power" and lack of "principles of Socialist legality." Finally, he concluded, "a difference has to be established clearly between the man who gives information to his Party and he who gives information to the police."

Major Chomón, however, saw no difference in such espionage. Describing Rodríguez' activities as motivated by "sectarianism," the former DRE chief reinforced his attack on the Communist Old Guard with the assertion that while the "sectarian" Aníbal Escalante served as organizing secretary of the Organizaciones Revolucionarias Integradas (ORI), into which the diverse political elements of Castro's Revolution had been lumped, it was full of "opportunists, informers and ex-soldiers of Batista."

Chomón then pronounced the phrase which became the crux of Marcos Rodríguez' trial: "He who is capable of spying on the actions of revolutionaries is capable of treason and of spying for the police..."

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This infiltration, a contemptible method of fighting, has done a great deal of damage to the Revolution."

Chomón Initially Opposed Fidel Castro

The attack by Faure Chomón against the Communist Party's veteran leaders in which he accused them of complicity in Rodríguez' crime was a complete about-face for the Minister of Transportation.

Immediately after Batista fled from Cuba on January 1, 1959, Chomón and his DRE militants occupied the University of Havana and the presidential palace and, by raiding the San Ambrosio arsenal before Fidel Castro's main force arrived in Havana, they disputed for a few days the leadership of Cuba with the bearded revolutionary. The incident moved Castro, who didn't arrive in the capital until January 8, to make his first speech in Havana ("Armas para qué?"), which was directed against Chomón and his Student Directorate.

Although reprisals against Chomón and the DRE were expected as the controversy grew bitter, the Communist Party apparently provided him with protection, under which he made a complete switch to Communism. He was the first leader of the Revolution to proclaim publicly, on March 13, 1960, that Cuba was a Socialist state and that he himself was a Communist. Later the same year Chomón, with the apparent support of the Party, was named first Cuban ambassador to Moscow. He was the only member of the DRE to be included in the National Directorate of the ORI and later of the Partido Unido de la Revolución Socialista (PURS) which replaced it.

Last December, however, reputedly because of his incompetence and of differences with the Maximum Leader, who is said to have neither forgotten nor forgiven his 1959 struggle for power with Chomón, he was dropped down to the post of Minister of Transportation.

As for the motives of Chomón's accusations against the Old Guard, it is believed that he might hold it responsible for his demotion or, on the other hand, it may be an effort to ingratiate himself with Castro by giving him a weapon to use against the old-line Communists in what seems to be a continuing struggle for positions of power in Cuba's government. Signs of change are seen in a rumor that Aníbal Escalante has returned to Havana from exile which has been reported from Cuba and the March issue of Cuba Socialista, theoretical monthly of the Party, carries an article by Ladislao G. Carbajal, former ORI provincial secretary in Oriente, hotbed of sectarianism, and the "right hand" of Aníbal Escalante until both were purged in March 1962.

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Against this background, the "second" trial of Marcos Rodríguez (actually the hearing of his appeal from his death sentence) began in Cuba's Supreme Court of Justice in Havana on March 23. The sessions were reported in full by the government-controlled press and carried throughout the island by radio and television networks.

Rodríguez' Second Trial Begins

What was scheduled to be a review of Rodríguez' trial by the Criminal Division of the Cuban Supreme Court of Justice was converted in fact into a second trial when Fidel Castro ordered the case reopened for new testimony. Such "testimony" consisted largely of lengthy speeches of either personal or Party defense and neither the prosecutor nor the defense attorney made any real effort to examine or question the witnesses.

Underscoring the importance of the case was the fact that the prosecuting attorney was Cuba's Attorney General, Dr. José Santiago Fernández, while Rodríguez' defense attorney was Dr. José Antonio Grillo Longoria, public defender of the Supreme Court, who seemed highly embarrassed by the role thrust upon him.

The first to testify when Rodríguez' second trial began on March 23 was the defendant himself. He declared that he had been a member of the "central nucleus" of the Juventud Socialista at the University of Havana during the Batista dictatorship and had been assigned to infiltrate and spy on the DRE for the Party. He named as his JS contacts Raúl Valdés Vivó, now deputy director of the Communist newspaper Hoy; Antonio Massip, currently ambassador to Poland, and others.

After admitting that he had informed Colonel Ventura of the hiding place of the DRE leaders, following a "disagreeable" discussion with them the previous night, Rodríguez, speaking in a voice barely audible, dropped the bombshell of the trial. He said that, while in exile in Mexico, he had confessed his guilt in the Humboldt 7 case to Edith García Buchaca.

Questioning by the prosecutor revealed that other activities connected with the case had been going on outside the courtroom. Rodríguez was asked if he had been present at "a meeting in the Party headquarters to deny the imputations made against Dr. Edith García Buchaca." He admitted that he had been taken to the meeting and because he "did not want to involve anyone and create any problems" he had denied having confessed his guilt to Ordoqui's wife. However, he later reiterated his original statement as to Dr. Buchaca's knowledge of his crime.

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Witnesses for the DRE Called

Following Rodríguez on the stand was Martha Jiménez Martínez, widow of Fructuoso Rodríguez who died in the Homolot 7 shooting, who said that early in 1959 she had learned that the accused had returned from exile and was employed "in charge of the instruction department of the Rebel Army."

She described her efforts to bring Rodríguez to justice, reporting that even though one of Ventura's esbirros had "without hesitation, picked out Rodríguez as the person who had denounced" the DRE leaders from a number of photographs and she had made a formal request for his arrest on February 4, Rodríguez was held under investigation only a very short time. "Surprisingly, one day I learned Marcos was free."

Commenting on Rodríguez' release from detention, the next witness, Major Julio García Oliviera (originally a DRE member) said that "we were informed the investigation had negative results."

Party Charged with Protecting Rodríguez

Another major and a very important witness, Guillermo Jiménez recalled that he had been a member of a DRE delegation which, "considering the (Communist) militancy" of Rodríguez called on Joaquín Ordoqui and Carlos Rafael Rodríguez as representatives of the Communist Party to express "the doubt and suspicion about Marcos and their interest that Marcos' situation be clarified... We have considered it our obligation to inform the Party of our concern and our opinions about the culpability of Marcos."

According to Major Jiménez, the DRE delegation did not get very far. "They (Carlos Rafael Rodríguez and Ordoqui) said that he (Marcos Rodríguez) was not a member... They were of the opinion that he was not capable of informing the police... Comrade Ordoqui did not have the same opinion (as the DRE delegation), he believed that Marcos could not be an informer and said so on that occasion."

Ordoqui, Jiménez' testimony declared, said at that meeting that "he did not know Marcos Rodríguez in Mexico and that he was of the opinion that Marcos could not have been the author of such a thing as we were accusing him of." (This surprising statement was never clarified; Ordoqui later revealed he knew Rodríguez very well in Mexico and had sponsored him for Party membership himself.)

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Responding to Rodríguez attorney, Major Jiménez admitted that the Party had tried to defend him because, as he said, "an accusation of that importance should have been discussed at that meeting (with Ordoqui and Carlos Rafael Rodríguez) to clarify matters."

The witness stated that he believed the motive for Rodríguez' crime was his "great contempt" for the Revolutionary Student Directorate. Asked by the prosecutor if he would reiterate his statement made at the first trial that Rodríguez' "motivation for the denouncement was ideological," Jiménez answered evasively with the declaration that an informer "could not have any ideology, least of all a revolutionary one."

Preceding Jiménez on the stand, two former members of the DRE were called to give some details of Rodríguez' life in the Brazilian Embassy and in exile in Costa Rica, his travels to Chile and Argentina and his arrival in Mexico.

A friend of Rodríguez, Dra. Blanca María Mesa López, gave in to the emotion of the moment and said she hoped that "after this humiliating trial there will be a great purge and a great clean-up of the revolutionary press." She charged the weekly magazine Bohemia with giving "false and tendentious" information about details of the Rodríguez case.

Chomón Rectifies Earlier Testimony

Transportation Minister Faure Chomón, returning as a witness, referred to the initial arrest of Rodríguez in February 1959 on order of Chief of the Army Camilo Cienfuegos (who later disappeared mysteriously on a flight from Camaguey to Havana) and recalled how "days later" he was released. (Rodríguez himself said he was in custody only one day.)

Chomón stated that in view of the fact that there was a very strong suspicion against Rodríguez, although no proofs of his guilt, a DRE delegation went to see "other comrades (of the Party) about the need to make an effort so that Marcos is submitted to different tests," a visit which, as Major Jiménez had testified, was unsuccessful.

The cabinet member referred to "a deficient shorthand version" of his testimony given at the first trial which was printed (in an unnamed publication) and which caused a furor in Cuba: "In the streets different versions were circulating, twisting what had been said on that occasion... Rumors which were doing harm to the Revolution, profounding worrying the people."

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The falsified version, which Chomón did not quote, apparently contained a strong attack on the Communist Old Guard with an accusation that some of its members (principally Ordoqui and Edith García Buchaca) were trying to conceal the informer's guilt.

Such was not so, Chomón declared, reversing even the "corrected" version of his testimony which had been printed in Hoy. "Attacking sectarianism was not going against the old Communists... it was going against the imposters and frauds." Admitting his own errors of the past, Chomón said that he was now a Communist. Scolding those who are spreading rumors, he declared that they want "to take refuge in an anti-sectarian sectarianism," adding that the DRE had fought against Batista "to construct Socialism." He did not repeat or comment on his closing statement of the first trial in which he said that "judging Marcos we shall bury sectarianism."

The first day of the new trial ended with a number of prominent old-line Communists stained by implications of complicity in the case of Humboldt to Edith García Buchaca, who was said to have known of Rodríguez' treachery since 1958; Joaquín Ordoqui, who had strongly defended the accused, and Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, who had also risen to Rodríguez' defense in the meeting with the DRE delegation. The government publication Bohemia was charged with spreading false information about the trial.

While Major Jiménez reiterated his earlier testimony, Faure Chomón tried, apparently without too much success, to explain and justify his former attack on the Old Guard's sectarianism.

Membership in Juventud Socialista Denied

The first witness on the second day of Rodríguez' new trial, March 24, Raúl Valdés Vivó of Hoy, former leader of the Juventud Socialista in the University of Havana, flatly denied that the accused had been a JS member or its informer within the ranks of the DRE which, he said, had been anti-Communist.

He admitted, however, that he had had a conversation "in whispers" with Rodríguez about internal matters of the DRE. He described the Juventud Socialista, now absorbed into the Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas, as "a very small organization... its line was exclusively the line of the masses to promote the fight against Batista."

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Another JS leader, César Gómez, also admitted to having had conversations with Rodríguez about university politics and said that the accused had asked to be admitted to membership in the Socialist youth organization, to which Gómez said he had replied that "admission had to be won with merits," a statement which might have guided Rodríguez to the betrayal of the DRH fugitives at Humboldt 7.

Alfredo Guevara in Trial Background

Although he spoke only briefly, one of the second day's most important witnesses was Alfredo Guevara, president of the Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográfica (ICAIC), who recalled that he had known Marcos Rodríguez since the early '50s when the accused was employed as a janitor (conserje) by the Sociedad Popular Nuestro Tiempo, a Communist cultural organization.

Guevara (no relation to "el Ché") testified that Rodríguez had created problems at Nuestro Tiempo with his lack of discipline and that he had adopted "an attitude of reserve" toward him which he had continued when they met later in exile in Mexico (although Guevara had been the one who identified Rodríguez to other comrades on his arrival there from Argentina with a false passport). As though to place his attitude of "reserve" in juxtaposition to that of others, he added that with García Buchaca and Joaquín Ordoqui had "a paternal affection" for Rodríguez, who visited often in their home.

The involvement of Alfredo Guevara in the Humboldt 7 affair or, for that matter, in the relations of Fidel Castro with the Communist Old Guard, has never been clearly explained. Guevara, about 40, an intellectual (and reputedly homosexual), a member in his youth of the Juventud Socialista, is considered one of Fidel Castro's closest personal friends as well as of his brother, Raúl. He is reputed to have persuaded Castro to abandon the gangster groups of pistoleros at the University of Havana and to dedicate himself to more serious political purposes. Reports have it that when Castro was released from prison on the Isle of Pines in 1955 his first visit was to see Guevara, then ill with tuberculosis.

About 1956, Guevara is reported to have broken with the PSP over its lack of aggressive attitude toward the Batista dictatorship (the Communists called Castro a "putschist" for his attack on Moncada in 1953), maintaining that armed force would be required to overthrow him. In 1957 he went to France and then to Italy where he studied film making (and met Cesare Zavattini, who later became advisor to ICAIC). In 1958

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Guevara continued his film studies in Mexico, where he met Marcos Rodríguez, developing, it is said, an immense dislike for him.

Though continuing a Marxist, Guevara did not bend again to the Party's discipline. After Castro's takeover in 1959, he was reportedly asked to rejoin the Communist Party but refused and, with his intimate knowledge of Communist operations and dogma, Guevara is credited with being one of Castro's closest advisors on the building of a united Marxist party in Cuba, first as ORI and currently as PURG. He also is supposed to have assisted the bearded dictator in ridding himself in 1962 of the "sectarian" Communist leader Aníbal Escalante.

Since that time, Alfredo Guevara reportedly has incurred the ill will of the Communist Old Guard by opposing its drive to extend its ideological supremacy over the arts in Cuba, including motion picture production. The Old Guard's position was purely dogmatic; it proclaimed the cult of Socialist realism, while Guevara, more liberal in outlook, took a stand similar to that of Communist intellectuals in France and Italy.

The conflict came into the open in December 1959 when the Communist newspaper Hoy, under Old Guard control, attacked Guevara's film institute on ideological grounds. A long discussion followed in which Guevara accused Blas Roca, Hoy director, of initiating the attack and of knowing next to nothing of artistic matters. Reputedly on Castro's orders, the discussion, in which Edith García Buchaca, executive secretary of the Consejo Nacional de Cultura, took Roca's side, was terminated with neither having a clear advantage.

Some observers believed at the time that Hoy's strong criticism of Guevara was an indirect attack on Fidel and Raúl Castro, whose long and sincere friendship for the ICAIC president was well known in Party circles. More likely, however, the friction between Castro and the Old Guard is not so much ideological as a matter of age, of different generations. It is said that he and his followers and the old-line Communists just don't get along; he is reported to have a personal dislike for many of the latter whom he tolerates but, at the same time, distrusts.

With Alfredo Guevara's brief but self-confident testimony the trial of Marcos Rodríguez took a new turn: four Old Guard Communists took the stand in succession, behaving more like defendants in the case than the accusers.

Communist Party on the Defensive

The testimony of Dr. Buchaca was defensive throughout. She called Rodríguez' statement that he had confessed his guilt in the

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Humboldt 7 murders to her in Mexico "a monstrous accusation." She admitted a "close relation" between him and her husband and herself while in exile but declared that they had had no information from Cuba to indicate that their friend was a police informer. (DRE members testified, however, that the suspicion against Rodríguez was common knowledge in the Cuban exile community in Mexico.)

Dr. Buchaca asserted that "twenty years as a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party" should be sufficient to defend her against Rodríguez' accusation and she considered herself exonerated by a face-to-face meeting with him in Party headquarters on March 23 which had taken place in the presence of the Party leaders, including both Fidel Castro and Major Chomón.

She interpreted the charge of concealed knowledge against her as an attack on the "forces of the Revolution, especially on the Partido Socialista Popular, in order to create doubt, lack of confidence, division and disintegration in the forces that are united today in the United Party of the Socialist Revolution."

Dr. Buchaca claimed that the attack on her "is not an isolated fact," and, revealing to some extent the present political atmosphere in Cuba, she added that "the calumny of the accused found a fertile ground because during the year just past we have witnessed a campaign to undermine the authority of the true revolutionaries of long standing... This defamation campaign has been developing on all levels and that calumny (of Rodríguez)... has undoubtedly produced a certain effect."

She considered that the first trial the week before was a product of that "defamation campaign... and unfortunately some testimony, among them that of Faure Chomón, did not help to clarify the truth... The case of an informer was linked with the judgment of the conduct of the PSP... I think it has to be said here that this trial has been converted into a political trial... because, jointly with the declarations (of Rodríguez), a defamation campaign has been carried on in the streets."

Commenting on the fact that, after denying the accusation against her in the Party headquarters confrontation with the accused prior to the opening of the second trial, Rodríguez repeated it again when placed on the stand, Dr. Buchaca said she sensed an anti-Communist climate in the courtroom. "When seeing the unity of the confrontation," she said, "the accused breaks down but when he comes to the courtroom and receives other and different impressions and a climate which is also different" he repeats his accusation.

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She closed her testimony with the statement that she did not want history to judge her (apparently doubtful that "la historia me absolverá") but she wanted to be judged now by contemporaries familiar with her lifetime in Party activities.

Dr. Buchaca (once married to INRA Boss Carlos Rafael Rodríguez) was followed on the stand by her present husband, Joaquín Ordoqui Mesa, vice minister of the Armed Forces, who also defended his actions with respect to Rodríguez.

According to him, "Marcos behaved perfectly well in Mexico" and he added somewhat arrogantly: "I have no X-ray in my head to determine whether he was good or bad." Ordoqui admitted that he had received a letter last year from Rodríguez in prison but he disclaimed any responsibility for the assignment of the accused to an important diplomatic position in Czechoslovakia prior to his arrest.

Ordoqui also admitted two facts: that he was a member of the discipline committee of the PSP (reputedly chief of the so-called Communist "Cheka") and that he had sponsored, from Mexico, Rodríguez' application to become a member of the Communist Party.

Ordoqui was followed by his predecessor in Dr. Buchaca's affections, Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, who began by denying that he was related to the accused. He gave his version of the interview with the DRE delegation which called on Party representatives to ask that an investigation of Rodríguez' complicity in the Humboldt 7 affair be carried out, declaring that "Ordoqui was not convinced and, what is more, there was a moment of irritation on the part of Comrade Ordoqui."

The INRA minister-president also called "the idea that the Partido Socialista Popular could produce informers" a monstrous one.

The last of the Old Guard witnesses was César Escalante, chief of the regime's propaganda apparatus and brother of Aníbal who was purged in 1962 for "sectarianism."

Although he claimed not to know the accused and said that his name had not been mentioned in the trial, César Escalante had asked to be called as a witness because "my history, my life as a revolutionary and as a Communist and the lives of old members of the PSP were mentioned." Defending the veteran PSP leadership, Escalante said the trial was being used "to divide, to intrigue and, above all, to throw mud on the old Communists."

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The statements of Faure Chomón and of Major Jiménez made in the first trial, he charged, were "used by the slanderers" and were published deformed in the weekly Bohemia, "producing restlessness." He defended his brother of complicity in the case (in addition to the meeting between Rodríguez and Aníbal Escalante in Prague mentioned by the former, Ordoqui said that the exiled Communist leader had sent an "emissary" to see the accused in La Cabaña prison probably either in late 1961 or early 1962), declaring that "a Communist is not capable of being a traitor... and sectarianism, an erroneous appreciation that a Communist might have, will never lead to treason or to denunciations to the police."

César Escalante expressed the belief that the Communist Party would emerge from the trial stronger than it had been before.

President Dorticós Takes the Stand

The third day of the second trial, March 25, drew a larger audience to the Supreme Court than had either of the two previous days. Testimony presented during the third day also reached a wider audience beyond its walls: the trial broadcasts throughout Cuba by radio were amplified by the addition of the powerful Radio Progreso network.

The day's proceedings began with statements by officials of the Department of State Security, the secret police. One of them declared that only in July 1962 had he received instructions to begin investigating the suspicion that Marcos Rodríguez had been the informer of Humboldt 7, a process in which five investigating officers were used in the course of three years. Major José Abrahantes, a former DRE leader now chief of the state security division ("G-2") of the Ministry of the Interior, said Rodríguez was returned to Cuba in March 1961 on suspicion of being a spy for an "imperialist" foreign government. (The charge apparently proved unfounded or was dropped for other reasons.)

Principal testimony of the day was given by Cuba's President Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado who said he had first learned of the Rodríguez case when, after the confession by the accused in which he implicated Dr. Buchaca, he was told about it by Fidel Castro. The only other person who shared the secret, he said, in addition to the interrogating officers, was Vice Prime Minister and Armed Forces Chief Raúl Castro. According to Dorticós, Fidel Castro obtained their agreement to handle the case himself as he thought best.

Several months after he learned of the confession (according to Ordoqui, "six or seven months later"), Dorticós received a visit from Ordoqui during which he asked, as a favor to Rodríguez' father and

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grandfather, that the situation of the accused "be clarified."

Faced with this "embarrassing situation," Dorticós went to Castro who decided that Ordoqui should be told of the confession and its charge of complicity against his wife. Backed up by Blas Roca at his request, Dorticós did so, at which both Ordoqui and Edith García Buchaca demanded a face-to-face confrontation with Marcos Rodríguez, a meeting which took place on March 23 in the presence of Dorticós, Emilio Aragónés, member of the PURS secretariat; Transport Minister Faure Chomón; Blas Roca of the Communist daily Hoy, and Ramiro Valdés, Minister of the Interior -- all Party bigwigs of the highest level. (Although Dorticós did not mention Fidel Castro, Dr. Buchaca testified that he also was present.)

Instead of reading the stenographic transcript of the confrontation into the record, Dorticós played a tape recording of the meeting. In addition to Rodríguez' denial that Dr. Buchaca had been told of his crime, the accused made and then retracted a statement that his charge implicating her had been "suggested" to him by his interrogators.

The scheduling of the following day's hearing for 9 p.m. with the announcement that it would be televised for viewers throughout Cuba made it virtually certain that Fidel Castro was planning to "testify" in the Humboldt 7 case.

Fidel Castro Is "Star" Witness

Provided with all of the trappings of a major political pronouncement, Fidel Castro had himself called as a witness in Marcos Rodríguez' trial on the night of March 26 (which fell on Holy Thursday and ran into Good Friday, days traditionally reserved in the past for religious exercises.) The entire country, which had been following the judicial process since the 14th, heard and saw his performance on nationwide radio and television networks as he talked for four hours and 35 minutes.

Almost with his first sentence, Castro established his "absolute conviction in the guilt of the accused." He also recognized at once "the importance the trial has acquired from the political point of view."

Castro read into the record selections from what he said was his own personal interrogation of Rodríguez (after warning reporters not to put Rodríguez' words in his mouth nor vice versa) which apparently took place between the end of the first trial and the "confrontation"

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in Party headquarters in which he asked the accused if he "was conscious of the harm he was doing." Marcos, he said, declared that "he would give his life for the Revolution" because "for my sectarian mentality four men died."

In an apparent effort to clear completely the Communists implicated during the trial, Castro urged Rodríguez to tell the whole truth so that his words "do not go on causing harm after your death."

Rodríguez, Castro said, reaffirmed his account of his confession to Edith García Buchaca in Mexico and said that her reply to him then was: "You have to be more faithful to the Party and go on fighting."

Explaining his denunciation of the DRE leaders to Batista's police, Rodríguez told the prime minister that he believed that, with them "out of the way," there would be "less friction at the university," an objective the PSP had in 1957 and which could have been the "merit" Rodríguez had been told he needed to join the Juventud Socialista.

Castro strongly denied "rumors, intrigues and lies" which hinted that one witness, an agent of Colonel Ventura, had been executed in spite of orders to the contrary "so that he wouldn't be used as a witness against Marcos." He explained that in 1959, soon after he came to power, trials and executions of "war criminals" were held in La Cabaña fortress and the petition to investigate Rodríguez was presented at army headquarters at Camp Columbia and "practically they were two different armies."

Turning to the political aspects of Rodríguez' trial, Castro admitted that "unexpectedly and involuntarily, a legal trial was transformed into a political trial."

He declared that "honestly" he could not believe that Faure Chomón had intended "to transform this trial into a political one... it was an error of Comrade Faure's" which could be explained as "there were things which were not clear... which could cause him concern."

These obscure circumstances, Castro added, could imply responsibility for "all of us, not only for comrades of the previous epoch (the Old Guard)... but also for the political direction of the Revolution."

In view of the fact that "pseudo-revolutionaries are presenting us as covering up shameful deeds," Castro said, he had decided to tell all about the case of Marcos Rodríguez.

In April 1963, shortly before leaving on his second trip to the Soviet Union, Castro recalled, he was given the confession obtained

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from Rodríguez after months of investigation and interrogation. (The confession was made, the interrogator revealed, when Rodríguez slipped and denied he committed the crime for money.)

Castro proceeded to read paragraphs of Rodríguez' confession which he described as "a mixture of truth and lies". (The only "lie", however, which the dictator later "rectified" was that concerning Dr. Buchaca.)

In his confession, Rodríguez flatly declared that the Juventud Socialista in 1957 "was interested in the political thinking, the extraction, unity, inclination, sources of financial aid, ways and means, operations, tendencies, figures behind the facade, outside connections" of the Revolutionary Student Directorate. Such information he obtained was transmitted through Raúl Valdés Vivó, Antonio Massip, Amparo Chaple and others "to the university bureau (of the Juventud Socialista) and from there to its final destination, the Party."

Rodríguez admitted the anti-Communist attitude of the DRE and the Party's lack of aggressiveness against Batista. One day, he recalled, when he spoke over a public address system at the university "against Yankee imperialism," he was cut off abruptly by Fructuoso Rodríguez (later killed at Humboldt 7) who told him "our problem is not with the Yankees but with Batista." Other DRE members expressed scorn for the Communists, Rodríguez said, and told him that they "had no courage to carry a revolver."

Concerning his stay in Mexico, Rodríguez indicated that he moved in revolutionary Cuban exile circles at the highest level; he visited the homes of Emilio Aragónes, Osmani Cienfuegos and José Abrahantes (now a member of the PURS secretariat, the Minister of Construction and chief of the secret police in charge of his case, respectively) as well those of the Ordoquis and others.

Mentioning his confession to Edith García Buchaca, Rodríguez described her reaction: "Later, I felt very bad and confided the secret to Edith... She was perplexed. She did not know what to do. She promised she would not say anything and explained that she knew about cases like mine in the Chinese People's Republic." (During the "confrontation" Dr. Buchaca admitted that they had talked about Red China but claimed that Rodríguez' guilt, even presented hypothetically, was never discussed.)

His scholarship to study in Czechoslovakia "was decided upon by the Party," Rodríguez said in his confession, and the original accusation against him in February 1959 was the subject of a discussion between representatives of the DRE and the Communist Party as part of "a conflict with the 26th of July Movement, as Ordoqui and Edith told me."

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Rodríguez described his close friendship with Brazil's ambassador in Havana, Vasco Leitao da Cunha (who was named foreign minister two days ago following the overthrow of Janio Goulart), and his wife while he was in asylum in the embassy and "the frequent visits of Fidel Castro, which I used to communicate to the Party."

Castro then read parts of Rodríguez' confession which dealt with his activities in Czechoslovakia which, as the Cuban prime minister indirectly implied, made clear the importance the accused had within the Party and the protection he enjoyed (and, at the same time, the dominant role the Communists were playing in the Cuban government in 1959 while Castro was still proclaiming that his Revolution was "as Cuban as the palms.")

The Party, Rodríguez said, decided he should leave for Prague in May 1959. He was issued a new passport, returning "the false one to Ordoqui," was told "not to marry" and "as soon as I arrived in Prague to see Fabio Grobart" (considered by Kremlinologists to have been the Soviet agent directing the Cuban PSP since the early 1930s). Shortly after his arrival, Rodríguez was in charge of a Party delegation which visited Bulgaria and which included as a delegate Harold Gramatges, later Cuba's ambassador to France.

Cuban "Who's Who" in Europe

The names of the people with whom Rodríguez dealt in Europe read like a "Who's Who" of the Cuban revolutionary government. He visited Rumania and Hungary; in Prague he briefed Grobart on the latest developments in Cuba; he met Leonel Soto, today director of the PURS' revolutionary indoctrination schools, who delivered to him a typewriter sent as a gift by Ordoqui; he received letters from Edith García Buchaca; he had a conversation with Dr. Juan Marinello, former PSP president, later rector of the University of Havana, now Cuba's ambassador to UNESCO in Paris, who advised him on his studies; he traveled with Efigenio Ameijeras, former chief of police and now a deputy defense minister; "directed by the Party" he helped Mas Martín, today an international youth agitator and one of the organizers of the recent Communist youth congress in Santiago de Chile; he talked with Belarmino Castilla, another deputy defense minister; he received the Party's directive to work in the Cuban Embassy to be opened shortly in Prague; he traveled to Paris on Party business; he acted as advisor to the official delegation to Prague headed by Raúl Castro; he was told by his Ambassador Angel Ruiz Cortéz ("not a Party member") that "Aníbal (Escalante) was preparing the roster of the embassy in which he was included as 'cultural attaché'," "meanwhile he served as official interpreter and he saw Ramiro Valdés,

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Minister of Interior and chief of the secret police, who told him that "all cultural attachés were collaborating with him and that surely he (Rodríguez) would also do so" (an interesting sidelight on the "cultural" activities of Cuban attachés).

In addition to serving as "interpreter," Rodríguez, according to his confession, also "gave political orientation to the Embassy," answered letters and collaborated with the Regional Policy division of the Foreign Affairs Ministry in Havana. He attended diplomatic receptions in Prague, later assisted two Cuban delegations which passed through Czechoslovakia, one headed by Minister of Education Armando Hart Dávalos and the other an economic mission led by Industries Minister Ernesto "Ché" Guevara.

Rodríguez Warned by Brazilian

Days before his arrest, which occurred on January 10, 1961, Rodríguez met a Brazilian diplomat in Prague who warned him, he declared, that he would be arrested soon and, acting as the agent of Ambassador Da Cunha, offered him the means to escape from Czechoslovakia. "For me that was impossible to accept," Rodríguez wrote in his confession. "This would have meant abandoning the Party, the Revolution and all I have fought for." (No one at the trial made an effort to explain how Da Cunha had learned in advance of Rodríguez' danger.) He was in jail in Prague for several weeks before he was extradited to Havana in March to face his accusers.

Commenting on the amazing confession of the Communist police informer, Castro showed himself indignant: "It was really shameful to read the unending list of activities, dealings and relationships of this man, a man who could have been an enemy agent, regarding key matters, with key comrades, with key delegations.

"How could it be possible for a man of this type to have made such a serious infiltration, to have been in such a privileged position to spy on Cuba's relationships with the Socialist camp"? (Neither he nor any other witness attempted to answer the question directly.)

Since the very day on which he received his copy of the confession, Castro testified, he was "always seriously concerned"; Rodríguez' statement "presented not one but several problems." Unfortunately, he admitted, the situation "got out of our hands... Why did this matter slip out of our control? Why? Why were we not able to give this matter the thorough, responsible and serious attention that we desired and should have given it?"

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In explanation, Castro mentioned the intervention of Joaquín Ordoqui in the case and the testimony Fauxe Chomón gave during Rodríguez' first trial.

Complaining of "the violation of Socialist legality," Castro went on, Ordoqui visited President Dorticós and expressed concern over the lengthy detention of Rodríguez in La Cabaña. That visit, the bearded premier recalled, made him very angry: "I was really indignant to learn that Comrade Ordoqui showed an interest in this man... I was really angry at his naivete, at his lack of perspicacity."

Prisoner's Letter Is Mystery

Going further into the reasons for the unforeseen turn the case had taken, Castro mentioned a letter Rodríguez had written from prison to Ordoqui on September 10, 1962 (and smuggled out by his father) of which he (Castro) had heard of only when it was read by Chomón during the first trial on March 16. (At the close of his testimony, Castro added further to the mystery of the letter by saying that a copy of it had been given to Interior Minister Ramiro Valdés to be delivered to him but it never reached him: "I don't know where it went, what happened to it.")

Following the testimony of Chomón in the first trial, Castro continued, "statements which, by their nature and political character, of necessity had to cause a discussion of the problem," the case was thrown wide open to the public, proceeding were broadcast and residents of Havana flocked to the courtroom in large numbers.

Inadvertently, Castro revealed the operation of censorship within his government, declaring that the summarized text of Chomón's testimony published by Revolución and the weekly Bohemia had not been reviewed first by Chomón and was a "deficient" (i.e., uncorrected) version. (Both publications attributed political motives to Rodríguez in his denunciation of the student leaders to the police.)

This situation, the Maximum Leader explained, which occurred because both he and President Dorticós had been away from the capital and "the comrades responsible for the press" had to rely on their own judgment, "in itself transformed the trial into a public trial... the problem was simply posed in that way and then the worms' nest (of 'counter-revolutionaries') and the schemers got busy.

"They had been provided with a magnificent culture medium, that kind of medium which certain parasitical elements, schemers by nature, creators of problems, individuals who do not care a whit about the

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Revolution, could use as a magnificent, wonderful, formidable culture medium as of that moment. That is the story of how this problem actually slipped out of our hands."

Castro read long paragraphs of the letter written from La Cabaña to Joaquín Ordoqui in which the accused admitted having informed the Party leadership of DRE plans and activities (reiterating that the DRE was anti-Communist) but denied his participation in the Humboldt 7 affair.

Castro described as "blackmail" a phrase in Rodríguez' letter: "It is necessary to establish precisely the difference which exists between the man who gives information to the Party and the man who supplies information to the police."

Earlier, Rodríguez had written that "I am assailed by a question taken from reality: How is it possible for a Marxist-Leninist party to make a clean sweep of all its foundation in the matter of no less than an alleged charge of treachery against one of its members"? and went on to charge that he "is smothered in ostracism, deprived of speaking and denied the right to discuss or answer."

"Better Journalists than Revolutionaries"

This letter, which "unquestionably should have been discussed in the inner circle of the leadership," and other testimony, Castro admitted, "provided weapons for the enemy." And possibly indicating strong internal dissatisfaction with the predominant role played by the Communist Old Guard, Castro reported that "certain intriguers" had established a "liaison between the university and the CTC (the Cuban central labor organization)" to agitate the issue.

Castro was bitterly outspoken against the director of both Bohemia and Revolución, Enrique de la Osa, and generalized an attack against all journalists of a "certain mentality" who are not careful in expressing their opinions and who, he warned, might be "sent to a granja (farm) to produce material goods." (Concentration camps of the Castro regime are often referred to as "granjas de rehabilitación".) He complained that Cuba has few competent newspapermen and revealed that he had discovered "the university journalism school has been closed."

Not that Cuba has no good journalists, Castro continued. Some of them are "brilliant but they are better journalists than revolutionaries." He spoke marginally on the arts in Cuba, referring to the factional fight over film-making of last December, but "it is not the same to provoke a fight between intellectuals and artists as it is to provoke revolutionaries into a fight."

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Another newspaperman strongly criticized by Castro was Segundo Cazalis, author of the "Siquitrilla" column in Revolución, who wrote that the Humboldt 7 trial was "the talk of the town" and the statement by Chomón was talked of "on all street corners."

Also displeasing to the bearded premier was a Revolución editorial which "threw more wood on the fire" and the publication by the same newspaper of a front-page photograph featuring, "by coincidence", Faure Chomón in company with two former anti-Communist 26th of July stalwarts, José Llanusa and Faustino Pérez.

Hostility Exists Toward Communists

Commenting on the furor spread all over Cuba by the trial, Castro admitted that "we ourselves, facilitated conditions. We have been responsible for this shakeup and we have not been equal to circumstances... The comrades of (DRE) origin -- let us speak of origins because we have been actually speaking here of factions -- committed the mistake of turning this trial into a political trial."

He described Chomón's second testimony as "a serious, firm, Marxist exposition," and declared that "the antagonism" between himself and Chomón in the early days of his regime had been "solved." He himself, Castro said, had ceased to belong to his 26 of July Movement and became a part of the "movement of the people." He pleaded for all to forget their original organizations and to form part of a single united party.

Making a final analysis of the trial, Castro agreed that Rodríguez had been connected with the Party since his youth, even before he worked for the Sociedad Nuestro Tiempo. He attempted to justify Rodríguez' espionage activities for the Juventud Socialista by recalling that the 26th of July Movement itself had infiltrated its men into other organizations to obtain weapons. He also conceded the "hostility" of the Communists toward other revolutionary groups, a development he said was "the fruit of bourgeois propaganda."

Castro tacitly admitted that an anti-Old Guard atmosphere exists in Cuba, probably as the result of the Party's collaboration with the Batista dictatorship: "There is still much bourgeois propaganda which falls on the old Communists... the enemy tries to divide (the Communists) into one type or another... They (the Old Guard) also have the right to commit errors because they began first and have many years of fighting behind them."

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What the Cuban premier considered an error of the Old Guard was the admission of Marcos Rodríguez to the Party while in Mexico, "that seems to be true." He also expressed his displeasure with the Ordoqui's idea of a "confrontation" with Rodríguez, a situation he described as "embarrassing."

In spite of the fact that Rodríguez kept changing his story about his confession to Edith García Buchaca, Castro "completely exonerated" her, an exoneration based not so much on facts as on the "unanimous impression" that witnesses at the "confrontation" had obtained and on the "general principle that the word of an informer cannot be put against the word of a revolutionary." There seems to be considerable reason to doubt that Castro really considers Dr. Buchaca as guiltless as he proclaimed her to be.

Ordoqui, the revolutionary chief, blamed on three counts: for having sponsored Rodríguez for Party membership, for not having delivered Rodríguez' letter to him to the PURS leadership immediately, and for permitting Rodríguez to leave Cuba in 1959 for Czechoslovakia.

"Had he (Ordoqui) proceeded correctly," Castro shouted, "we wouldn't have to go through all this of which we are so much ashamed when we hear Rodríguez' narrations of his activities, his informations, his knowledge even about armaments and all, his contacts with all delegations and visits to different diplomatic missions."

"Had this man not been given entry, or re-entry, into the Party this would not have happened. The attitude of Comrade Joaquín deserves criticism and censure."

Castro observed that "it is possible that Comrade Joaquín has passed more bitter moments than anyone... but from an old militant it is correct to demand... that he does not commit errors of this type."

But the Revolution is not going to be too harsh with those who commit errors, Castro declared. It will be "not tolerant but not implacable... the law that the Revolution, like Saturn, devours its own children will be rejected... We prevented revenge when (in the Aníbal Escalante case in 1962) the reaction against sectarianism, vengeance and resentment wanted to impose themselves."

Proclaiming that he is "a consequent, indomitable Communist and Marxist-Leninist," the Cuban premier reassured his partisans that they need not fear a purge: "The men of the Revolution, whatever their rank, should feel safe." And he ended his long harangue with an effort

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to give Cubans a psychological boost, declaring that in Cuba "the forces of union" are stronger than those which want to divide the country's unity but unity "must be fought for."

The immediate reaction to Castro's lengthy speech was the elimination of Segundo Cazalis as a collaborator of Revolución (but whether he has been sent to a granja de rehabilitación is not known).

The Party's principal press spokesman, Hoy, in an editorial on March 29, repeated Castro's call for unity, scored Joaquín Ordoqui for his errors and admitted that its own sub-director, Raúl Valdés Vivó, had "struck a discordant note" in the trial. The same edition of Hoy carried the abject confession of his mistakes by Ordoqui and the promise not to repeat them.

Trial of Marcos Rodríguez Ends

On March 30, Rodríguez trial came to an end with closing arguments by prosecuting and defense attorneys. His attorney argued that it had not been shown that Rodríguez had been paid for his treachery (reinforcing the general belief that his motives were political), that he had been under 21, the "age of responsibility" in 1957, and that he had been temporarily insane while carrying out the betrayal.

On the prosecution's side, the fiscal declared that he could add little to the testimony of Fidel Castro, which showed the guilt of the accused clearly, and asked the Supreme Court to uphold the verdict of death.

On April 1, the Supreme Court justices rejected Rodríguez' appeal and confirmed his sentence of death before a firing squad "according to Article 100 of the Law of Procedure of Cuba in Arms." As of this writing, on April 6, news of Rodríguez' execution has not been broadcast from Havana, although Juan de Onís, New York Times correspondent in Havana, reported a rumor that the sentence had been executed on April 2.

The most important conclusion derived from the unusually long trial is that strong internal tensions and harsh rivalries exist within the Communist dictatorship of Fidel Castro in Cuba.

His testimony and that of other witnesses who, especially during the second trial, were under obvious pressure to strike as solid a note of unity as possible, revealed that these corroding cross-currents not

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only exist under the façade of what the regime's propaganda calls "monolithic Marxist-Leninist unity" but also to be gaining in strength.

Far from uniting into the single and homogeneous United Party of the Socialist Revolution, the three factions that compose it -- the 26th of July Movement, the DRE and the old-line Communists -- have clearly demonstrated that they are still very much apart in spite of the constant reiteration of slogans and catch-phrases.

Visibly, the trial brought to the surface the latent antagonism and distrust which still separates the Old Guard Communists of the PSP and the new wave of the younger Marxist-Leninists, many of whom are purely opportunists, who have joined up since 1959. Castro's speech confirmed the existence of still another division in his regime, that of the ex-members of the DRE and 26th of July Movement who, although nominally Marxists, have never proclaimed their new faith with much conviction or sincerity.

Members of this group, reported to be quite numerous, composed of secondary figures of the regime's civil and military hierarchy, have never been enthusiastic about the communization of Cuba and the increased participation of the Old Guard in the government's front line of activity. Such men are believed to have remained faithful to Castro because of personal loyalty, or because of expedience or ambition, and an unidentifiable nucleus because they find it easier to conspire against Communism from within the regime.

The fact that the trial of Marcos Rodríguez "got out of hand" is, in part, confirmation of the opinion-forming power of that group within his government which, as Castro admitted, initiated a strong campaign of rumors (with the assistance of "counter-revolutionaries") which forced the regime to reopen the Humboldt 7 case.

The trial has shown conclusively that anti-Communist and anti-Old Guard sentiments are widespread in Cuba. As both Castro and Edith García Buchaca admitted, the anti-Red hostility was perceptible in the courtroom atmosphere. The change in Rodríguez' testimony to a new accusation of Dr. Buchaca was attributed by the Cuban strong man to "the anti-unitarian attitude" of the spectators at the trial.

With its near-endless statements, accusations, denials and counter-charges, the trial of a Communist police informer became a trial of the regime itself in which the most important governmental

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figures either accused each other of wrong-doing or tried to justify their associations with the convicted traitor.

Party Condemned on Moral Basis

That the unsavory details of the trial were damaging to the regime can hardly be questioned. But more important still, the open and mutual hostility frequently expressed by important witnesses put a big question mark on the much-advertised "consolidation" of Castro's regime. At the end of Rodríguez' trial the "unity" of the PPRS looked more like the ebbing tide than the wave of the future.

The cardinal issue which emerged from the trial of Marcos Rodríguez (his guilt was never disputed even by himself) is a moral question pertaining to the tactics and strategy of the Communist Old Guard and of Communism as a system: Does the Party condone any method possible to gain its ends, including the penetration of other organizations and the denunciation of its opponents to the police?

That the Party did actually engage in espionage activities among groups with presumably the same revolutionary purposes, use agents provocateurs and encourage police informers was amply demonstrated by the trial. The presumption remains that the Party still informs (perhaps to the Soviet Ambassador in Havana or to Moscow) on all those within the Cuban government who do not follow the official Soviet line of political conduct.

Another issue, unmentioned in Rodríguez' trial but which seems to give rise to suspicions between the New Communists and the Old Guard, is the sometimes expressed opinion that the allegiance of the veteran comrades is primarily to the Soviet Union, not to Cuba.

Although Fidel Castro made a sweeping exoneration of Edith García Buchaca of the guilt of concealing knowledge of treachery and of the Communist Party of its moral blame in the affair, many questions still remain unanswered after the trial.

1. How many arrests and murders were caused by Communist informers, still uncovered, during the revolutionary fight against Batista?

2. How was it possible that, with the strong circumstantial evidence which existed against Rodríguez in 1959 -- more than enough to keep a prisoner in jail indefinitely or condemn him to death under the regime's legislation -- he was released from custody and escaped arrest for more than two years?

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3. Who at La Cabaña fortress ordered the speedy execution of the witness who had identified Rodríguez as the man who betrayed the hideout at Humboldt 7 to Batista's police?

4. Who in the Castro regime -- in addition to Joaquín Ordoqui and his wife -- helped to cover up the guilt of the Communist informer?

5. What was the involvement of Blas Roca and of Aníbal Escalante in the Rodríguez affair?

Old Guard Cooperation with Batista

In a broader historical sense, the main question raised by the Rodríguez trial concerns the relations of the Communist Party with Fulgencio Batista since 1933, when the former sergeant became Cuba's dictator for a generation and a dominating figure in Cuban politics. The political alliance of the PSP with Batista in 1938 is still remembered in Cuba as well as the fact that the Communist press consistently praised him in glowing terms and that Carlos Rafael Rodríguez and Juan Marinello were ministers of his brutal government.

Although ostensibly outlawed in 1952, after a golpe de estado returned Batista to the presidential palace, it was common knowledge in Cuba that the PSP maintained its cadres intact with a passive program of "resistance of the masses" and resistance to the armed insurrectional activities of the DRE and the 26th of July Movement.

Cuba's Communist Party changed its opposition to insurrection only late in 1958 when Batista's downfall was plainly evident to all.

(In his recent book, "Un Pueblo Crucificado," Dr. Eduardo Suárez Rivas, former president of the Cuban Senate, charged that no Communist Party member was killed by Batista's notoriously heavy-handed secret police during the 1952-58 revolution.)

The political opportunism of the Communists is believed to be a major cause of the persistent bitterness which exists between younger members of the Castro regime and the Old Guard of the PSP, which not only did not feel a need to apologize for its mistakes of the past but also tried at times to push its way into the top levels of the government. Alleging "twenty years of Party service," the Old Guard came close to dominating the Cuban government early in 1962, replacing many of the followers of Castro as "lacking in political (i.e., Marxist) experience."

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Although Anibal Escalante and some of his followers were separated from positions of power in March 1962 and accused of "sectarianism," enough old-line Communists remained entrenched to initiate, after a prudent period of waiting, a sectarian come-back.

That reaction against the Old Guard must be a powerful influence in Castro's government was evidenced when Major Faure Chomón (who described Marcos Rodríguez as "a bitter fruit of sectarianism") was accused by a veteran Communist witness as being guilty of "anti-sectarian sectarianism" or "neo-sectarianism."

Communist Party Placed on Trial

One point which emerged from Castro's "testimony" is the fact that the Party and its youth organization had always been numerically insignificant and were generally disliked and distrusted by other revolutionary groups. In their testimony, although denying charges of having spied for Batista, members of the PSP made no attempt to claim any active participation in the revolutionary struggle between 1952 and 1956.

Therefore, another question which was not answered by testimony in the trial is whether the "hatred" and "envy" expressed by Rodríguez for the betrayed DRE leaders was the result of an inter-group rivalry or was part of a sub rosa understanding between Batista and the Communist Old Guard.

Thus, as more than one witness stated, Rodríguez' trial became the trial of Cuba's Communist Party and, by extension, of Communist parties everywhere. Undertaking the defense of the Old Guard in his appearance in court, Castro not only appears to have failed in his effort but also to have become tarred with the same stick.

In his desire to smooth over the divisions which have appeared in the upper levels of his regime, Castro seems to have managed to spread the guilt evenly over all members of his government, the Old Guard directly and the younger Fidelistas-Communists by association.

This may explain why Castro admitted that the Rodríguez trial "got out of hand" and could not be controlled as far as its results were concerned.

From a simple, though sordid, police case, the trial became a scandal of major magnitude and unsavory details began revealing the negligence and even the criminal involvement of many of the Old Guard

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and some of the younger Communists. Castro himself seemed genuinely upset by some of the testimony. Although in his letter to Blas Roca directing full coverage of the trial he called for those who were guilty, in addition to Marcos Rodríguez, to be condemned "not only morally but also legally," before the shower of mud which was being thrown he apparently decided to forego any further indictments. Or he may have gotten word from Moscow to dampen things down a bit.

The Cuban dictator's lengthy declaration, far from clearing up the morass of obscure details, opened up new areas for possible exploration as to the possible complicity of other important figures of his regime in the Humboldt 7 affair.

One example of possible involvement is the activity of Industries Minister "Ché" Guevara who was, early in 1959, the commander of La Cabaña fortress where a material witness against Rodríguez was "conveniently" (for the Communists) placed before a firing squad despite an official order to keep him alive. Also the disappearance of important evidence from police files was mentioned but not explained by Fidel Castro.

Public Interest in Trial Is Strong

Pointing to the unquestionably low moral standards of the Communist Party and its Fidelista partners, if not to the moral decay of the entire structure of administration in Cuba, is the fact that a police informer, about whose guilt suspicions arose immediately after the Humboldt 7 murders in 1957 and of which Castro was undoubtedly aware, could have been appointed to a highly sensitive diplomatic post in the Cuban legation in Prague and have remained there for almost two years.

As a result, the net outcome of the trial and its incriminating testimony appears to be thoroughly negative for the Castro regime.

Almost all witnesses showed an acute awareness that public interest in and reaction to the trial were strong and that the moral stain on the Old Guard and on the supposedly "pure" younger leaders of the Cuban Revolution will not easily be removed.

Suggesting the tone of public comment, Castro himself mentioned "the theory of (Communist) concealment" of guilt and "intrigues, lies and rumors" which must be spreading widely among the usually politically perspicacious Cubans.

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He also seems to realize that, after the spectacle of public confession and simultaneous summons to revolutionary unity, occurring moments after acrimonious exchanges of accusations, things can hardly remain the same between the feuding factions of his regime.

This awareness was underscored by the Cuban prime minister in a private interrogation of Marcos Rodríguez when he reported that he pleaded with him to tell the truth so that his "false testimony" would not continue to cause damage after his execution.

There is little doubt that the trial, which offers a wealth of opportunities for the development of anti-Castro propaganda, is going to have a long-lasting effect on Cuba's internal, and possibly external, politics.

Castro Emerges Badly Tarnished

If nothing else, countless man-hours of productive work have gone down the drain as the entire nation listened to the quarrels of the regime's leaders. Even more seriously damaging might be a deepening of the currently prevailing feeling of apathy which, as Castro recently admitted, is causing him great concern. The pronounced division into factions within the government, revealed at the trial (Castro said everyone is talking as though they still belonged to their former organizations), is expected to increase rather than lessen.

The fact that Castro repeatedly used the words "shake-up" and "division" to describe what was happening as a result of the trial is another indication that its resulting wounds may be difficult to heal.

Although, without question, Fidel Castro has demonstrated that he still remains in full command in Cuba, he seems to have come out of the experience badly tarnished, largely as the result of his poorly justified but sweeping exoneration of the Communist Old Guard when, in fact, a well based suspicion of its complicity in the Humboldt 7 case still remains.

As the affair "slipped out of" his hands and beyond his control, Castro's usual mastery of political developments appeared to failed him in this instance and he is undoubtedly aware of the political and moral damage occasioned by the case.

Politically, the cohesion of the United Party of the Socialist Revolution has to be seriously questioned now. Already weakened by Aníbal Escalante's "sectarianism," it is now suffering from what has

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been called "neo-sectarianism."

The position of Joaquín Ordoqui, as Armed Forces vice minister, and of his wife, executive secretary of the National Council of Culture, are believed to be morally untenable in spite of the former's public acknowledgment of his errors and the latter's exoneration. Other Old Guard leaders will have little alternative but to remain inconspicuous and to appear as unconditionally allied to Fidel Castro as possible.

At the same time, opponents of the Old Guard's predominance in the Cuban government have drawn public attention to their existence and they seem to be enjoying a certain degree of popularity which might make Castro hesitate to punish them harshly.

The bearded revolutionary, counting on the proverbially short memory of the Cuban man in the street, is probably hoping that the Beholdt 7 affair will die a quick and unpublicized death.

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