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Latin America Report

(FOUO 10/79)



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LATIN AMERICA REPORT

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ARGENTINA

ARAUJO ON FACTORS AFFECTING NATION'S FOREIGN ISSUES

Buenos Aires LA OPINION in Spanish 22 Aug 79 p 11

[Article by Estela Araujo]

[Text] In recent months Argentine diplomacy seems to have encountered new setbacks with respect to problems which were thought to have been overcome:

- Difficulties with regard to Yacyretá-Apipe, whose appearance signifies a threat to the confidence placed in the agreements at a time when the parties are experiencing various changes.
- The rapprochement between Brasilia and Caracas, which casts a shadow on the course of efforts to establish more meaningful relations between Argentina and Venezuela.
- The Law of the Sea Conference, which could turn into a kind of boomerang: at the diplomatic level support is being obtained for the Argentine position with respect to the right of the state to exercise full sovereignty over 12 miles and with respect to rights over the entire continental shelf; however, at the U.S. Government level, jurisdiction is recognized over only 3 miles.
- The pressure exercised by Brazil for the construction of the dams in Upper Uruguay, and especially Garabi, in place of the stalled subject of Corpus and the settled subject of Yacyretá.
- The papal mediation, which seems to be taking longer than expected, and which is keeping open the matter of the southern dispute and everything relating to it.
- The difference in styles between the Foreign Ministry and the economic team, which seems to operate on the basis of economic agreements rather than for geopolitical reasons.
- The confusing episode involving British Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs Nicholas Ridley and his "regretful" disclaimers concerning

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opinions on Argentine internal affairs. Despite all this, no progress has yet been made on the matter at issue: the Malvinas Islands.

In contrast to this somewhat discouraging picture, it is worthwhile to take note of some good things and some favorable prospects:

- In its editorial a few days ago, the Montevideo paper EL PAIS said: "Under circumstances involving unquestionable difficulties of various kinds, the countries on either side of the River Plate are offering the world a great example of determination to build, in a spirit of solidarity, a better and happier future for their peoples." The editorial cited some comments made by Argentine Ambassador Guillermo de la Plaza: "This is a perfect example of how two peoples can unite without losing their respective sovereignty, their autonomy and their independence. We have acted, and will continue to act in a fraternal spirit, and this serves as an example to a world currently at conflict. It is what on various occasions I have called the River Plate doctrine."

Relations between Argentina and Uruguay have been marked by success. This involves a coherent policy which has made it possible to implement a diplomacy which is not limited to words, but rather is translated into deeds: the inauguration of the first turbine operating at the Salto Grande, the forthcoming railroad links, the bridges. These are concrete signs of a well thought out integration; they can serve as a model to be developed so that the precarious balance of the overall picture can be translated into other efforts at bilateral integration capable of being incorporated into regional frameworks which are more difficult to bring into harmony.

In the case of the River Plate Basin, this model can only be adopted in connection with Bolivia by means of specific deeds (binational projects) and should be adopted before there are new losses to mourn.

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CUBA

'L'EXPRESS' PUBLISHES FEATURE ARTICLES ON CUBA

Two Cuban Myths Collapse

Paris L'EXPRESS in French 1 Sep 79 pp 36-37

[Article by Jean-Francois Revel: "Cuba: End of the Myth"]

[Text] Cuba is one of the contemporary world's key countries. It first became such as a revolutionary hope. When this hope dismally failed to materialize, Cuba then assumed its present key status as a strategic springboard from which are launched soldiers and offensives, "advisers" and commandos dispatched to Latin America, Africa, and now, even Asia. Where does Cuba stand today? What does Cuba want? What can Cuba do? Without Moscow, it cannot do much. With Moscow, it can do a great deal. In any case, Cuban military expansion is one of the major developments of the past 4 years. How long will this expansion last? How far will it go?

This year, Cuba is celebrating the 20th anniversary of its Revolution and, at the same time, is host to the Sixth Conference of Nonaligned Countries. This conference is to convene in Havana in early September and bring together some 100 chiefs of state and heads of government from all the continents. Hence we have a twofold reason for assessing the accomplishments and failures of the Cuban regime from both an internal and external standpoint.

It has never been easy to make a dispassionate judgment of Cuba. It took 10 years before observers dared to start--about 1970--to suggest that Cuban economic failures were not all due to the American blockade and that, proportionate to population, the Caribbean Gulag was comparable to its Soviet big brother's Gulag and larger than those in many of the rightist dictatorships elsewhere in Latin America. It would be easy and cruel to recall some of the more idiotic dithyrambs written about Cuba's agricultural feats, its "direct democracy," and its advancement of human rights.

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France was especially prolific of spontaneous or less spontaneous missionaries of the Castroite faith. At Havana's January 1968 International Cultural Congress, the largest delegation, among some 500 guests overwhelmed by the regime's hospitality, was the French delegation. It numbered 70 persons while the Soviet delegation had only six. Admittedly shortly thereafter the Castroite myth suffered quite a severe blow when Castro applauded the Red Army's invasion of Czechoslovakia. From that time onwards, connivance became less supercilious. There was less systematic suppression of news about police repression against the opposition or against apathetic persons called "delinquents."

In fact, Castro recently deplored the fact that Cuban prisons and camps are-- I simply quote*--"a veritable paradise for delinquents."

Observers also began to expose the bureaucracy's stifling of the economy, the decline in productivity, shortages, the black market, corruption, and privileges. Castro himself has gone further than anyone in denouncing these conditions. In a speech to the National Assembly of People's Power last July, he wondered "why discipline has disappeared in the railroads, why discipline was better maintained under capitalism, and why a complete air crew can possibly not be present at the time an aircraft is scheduled to take off." And the commander-in-chief concluded: "We must put an end to slovenliness, cronyism, and indulgence in the government service at the national level and in the people's power, provinces, and municipalities." (GRANMA, op. cit.)

Thus the Cuban myth has eroded little by little. This does not mean, however, that Castro has completely ceased being protected by a sort of taboo. His noncommunist devotees have become silent or more circumspect. But while they no longer shower the dictator with fulsome praise or flattery as enthusiastically as they did 10 years ago, their unrestrained criticism of him has not increased. Although there is now an extensive literature of Cuban dissidence, there are so many filters that continue to muffle its voice! The press, even the independent press, the media in both America and Europe, and even Amnesty International, all continue to confound impartiality and credibility on the subject of Cuba. In this connection, one should read Pierre Golendorf's slashing but meticulous analytical introduction to his translation of the poems of Armando Valladares, especially his analysis of the television reporting and hypocritically complimentary or prudent articles inspired by the 1978 Youth Festival in Cuba.** This analysis shows that the myth is still holding its own rather well. But it certainly no longer has the strength it had in the past.

*GRANMA, the main organ of the Cuban Communist Party, 15 July 1979.

**Armando Valladares. "Prisonnier de Castro," introduction by Pierre Golendorf, postscript by Leonid Pliouchtch, Grasset, 1979, 222 pages.

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This decline of the revolutionary myth coincided with the rise of Cuban military power. Like the Soviets, Castro offsets his internal failure by external aggressiveness. In the aforementioned speech, after having denounced worker absenteeism and corruption--"the taxi driver who rigs his meter, the one who bribes the mechanic, the one who unlawfully buys a part from somebody who stole it from a workshop"--Castro exclaimed: "There are hundreds of thousands of persons who want to go to Angola, who want to go to Ethiopia, who want to go anywhere. But there is no apparent conscientious approach to everyday work."

For a large part of the population, the African wars thus definitely appear to be a way of fleeing the society of shortages and corruption entrenched on the island. These wars meet an internal need. But on an international scale, they also meet Moscow's need. In the Cuban army, now being increasingly spelled by the East German army, the USSR has found an intervention force enabling it to solve a problem it had long been unable to solve, namely to take military action in countries with which it has no common border, and to do so without having to dispatch its own troops.

The main question, therefore, is whether Cuba now meets the conditions required to still be included among the nonaligned countries, and a fortiori, to assume leadership of those countries. Are we not currently witnessing a bid to take over and divert an international movement, an act of political piracy? Let us hope that the Third World chiefs of state very clearly ask themselves that question when they land in Havana and get into a brand-new Mercedes, dozens of which Castro bought--specifically for this occasion--in the Federal Republic of Germany, for apparently he does not have as much confidence in the Soviet Union's automobile industry as he does in its armament industry.

The argument that Castro's overseas wars are for the purpose of helping national liberation movements is inadmissible. Admittedly Cubans frequently use authentic nationalist movements as a means of subsequently imposing pro-Soviet leaders by eliminating all other political movements. But it is equally true that the Cubans have also fought alongside the Ethiopians against the Somali who had revolted for their independence. The Cubans also had "advised" the dictator of Equatorial Guinea--recently overthrown--that bloody butcher who executed 50,000 opponents out of a population of some 350,000 persons. In such cases, there is no longer any attempt to keep up even the appearances of progressivism. In addition, the Cuban presence in Africa resembles the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, in other words it is a type of colonialism that operates all the more ruthlessly, and with impunity, in that it masquerades under Third World and socialist pretenses.

Not one but two Cuban myths have collapsed in the past few years. First, the myth of a socialist Cuba, a myth that merely accompanied the myth of all other socialist paradises into the grave. Secondly, the myth of Cuba as a center for the spread of freedom. Castro spreads subversion, agreed, but not freedom.

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Current Economic, Political Situation

Paris L'EXPRESS in French 1 Sep 79 pp 38-41

[Article by Hugh Thomas: "Twenty Years After"]

[Text] Hugh Thomas is a specialist in Hispanic affairs. He spent 10 years studying Cuba in preparation for his book "Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom," published in 1971. In this article, he draws up the economic and political balance sheet of 20 years of Castroism.

[Text] The Cuban Revolution is 20 years old. On the last day of 1958, Batista fled into a golden exile he had been preparing for a long time. In January 1959, Castro entered the capital surrounded by a troop of bearded idealists, a highly fascinating sight at first glance. It is difficult to believe that 20 years have already elapsed since then!

Inasmuch as Castro is so desirous of exporting the lessons of his achievements beyond the seas, it would be interesting to take a close look at what his revolutionary accomplishments are really like. The first question any serious investigator must ask himself is: To what extent are those accomplishments revolutionary?

I have no wish to echo Tocqueville who rejected the generally accepted view on the significance of the French Revolution. I do, however, simply recognize the fact that the major characteristics of the Cuban economy have not changed since the 1950's. Of course, as in all communist countries, the state does play a determining role in the economy. But sugar continues to govern the Cuban economy today as it did in 1957. And if something has changed, it is rather in the direction of an expansion of that monoculture. In 1957, Cuba exported goods with a total value of 818 million dollars. Sugar alone accounted for 654 million dollars or nearly 80 percent of that total. In 1976--the latest year for which I have accurate figures--exports totaled 2.925 billion dollars, with sugar accounting for 2.59 billion dollars or more than 86 percent. The estimate for 1977 is 83 percent.

Early in the regime's history there was much talk about diversifying agriculture. But since 1968, perhaps under Soviet pressure, sugar has received priority attention and the bulk of all capital investment. Nevertheless, there has been no large increase in the amount produced. During these past few years, production has been about 6 million tons. This is a slight increase over average production in the 1950's. But Cuba was producing 7 million tons in 1952 and 5 million tons as of 1925. Modern technology has improved the yield from the some 1.2 million hectares that, today as in the 1950's, are planted with sugar cane. Inasmuch as labor unions have become an integral part of the government bureaucracy, the government has succeeded in introducing the use of cane-cutting machines. This is definitely beneficial to the economy, even

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though officials prefer not to mention this fact too much. There is absolutely no doubt, however, that the Revolution has not only maintained but further increased the country's dependence on the sugar monoculture. And for solely that reason--not to even mention the others--Cuba's foreign policy is just as subordinate to the Soviets as it once was to the Americans.

In 1977, four-fifths of Cuba's foreign trade was with CEMA countries, and the Soviet Union alone accounted for 60 percent. The CEMA countries currently supply Cubans with almost all of their fertilizer, wheat, oil, and other vital imports. It is estimated that Soviet economic aid to Cuba--excluding military assistance--over the past 15 years amounts to 5 billion dollars (approximately 1 million dollars per day in 1970 dollars). Cuba has been a member of CEMA since 1972, and it must be recognized that orientation of the Cuban economy is determined by what CEMA wants and not by what Cuba or the Cuban farmers would like to produce under other circumstances.

Apart from the sugar industry, Cuba is still without any industry. The island's economic development has been the slowest within the entire Caribbean area since 1959. While admitting that it is difficult to compile accurate statistics, it would appear that Cuba's average annual rate of growth has not been above 2.5 percent. Even the Dominican Republic has probably attained a rate of 6 percent.

It is true that a few new industrial activities do enhance this rather dismal picture: particularly steel, cement, and sulfuric acid production. Cuba is now the world's fifth ranking producer of nickel. Half of its output is sold to CEMA countries. Yet even the "new man" cannot live on steel alone: the modest food rations on which the average Cuban has to manage today are definitely the sign of a decline in the eyes of a large number of persons who actually had a much greater variety of food in the past.

Rationing obviously places Cuba very far behind the East European countries that are veritable "lands of plenty" in comparison. East Europeans are the first to recognize this. One of them made a point of telling me so in the 1960's at a time when I could go to Cuba as I pleased. Going from Cuba to Hungary, for example, as I did one year, is like going from a country where people eat as they did during the worst days of World War II into an affluent society.

In turning now to consideration of the political situation, we must not overlook the fact that in place of the Batista regime, Castro founded a state of which he himself is the "great leader," and perhaps for life. The new Cuban Communist Party differs little in its organization from parties in other communist countries. With the important exception of Castro himself, most of the present leaders of that party are men who were communists before 1959. It is worth noting that this is especially true of the leaders who were directly involved in Cuba's recent African ventures.

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The Cuban Communist Party is still to this day smaller in proportion to the population than parties in other communist countries. The party controls certain unusual organizations such as the Committees for Defense of the Revolution. These were formed initially as a sort of neighborhood espionage network with the task of verifying that persons leaving the country were turning their property over to the state, as prescribed by law, and not to friends. The committees ultimately became promoters of civic action in behalf of the party. As for Castro himself, his style of leadership appears to be more lyrical than that of his peers in other communist countries. He continues to have a cohort of old loyal supporters who serve him as confidants or bodyguards. Most of them are men without any ideology who fought alongside Castro during the civil war against Batista.

Beyond the establishment of a powerful state, what has really happened in Cuba? First, the country has been transformed--we could say "with the knout" --into a huge military camp. The military element in the regime's propaganda --in which the leaders probably believe--is much more conspicuous than in any other communist country. Castro no doubt fully endorsed it when he declared on 19 December 1976: "As long as there is one revolutionist with a rifle, no cause will ever be lost."

This military aspect of the regime has steadily gathered strength over the years, despite the fact that the American threat is clearly a thing of the past, that no country in North or South America could attempt to overthrow the Cuban regime by force of arms, and that this regime has no armed enemy inside the country.

The Cuban armed forces--190,000 men, plus 90,000 reservists, 10,000 men assigned to "state security," 3,000 frontier guards, and 100,000 militiamen--are by far the largest in the Caribbean region, with the exception of the American forces. Of the Soviet Union's European satellites, only Poland has larger forces. But Poland's population is four times larger than Cuba's.

Military dictatorships such as those in Chile or Argentina have considerably less men under arms than Cuba. This powerful army is also the nation's most important institution. It has played a key role in the economy, for example, by furnishing additional manpower for the sugar cane harvest.

Military-related financial ties between the Soviet Union and Cuba are obviously secret. But in practice, the Cuban armed forces and police are armed, equipped, and trained by the USSR. In all likelihood, Cuba shares in these expenditures to only a very small extent.

"The more closely we examine this subject," Castro said on 1 December 1976, "the more grateful we feel toward the Soviet Union who has furnished us these remarkable weapons (applause)...and taught us how to use them...Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of Soviet scientists, technicians, and workers, these weapons are constantly being improved."

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One obvious consequence is that the Cuban army is closely tied to the Red Army. And anyone who might expect Cuba to have some freedom of action in Africa or elsewhere, should remember this fact. There are even valid grounds for thinking that the USSR built the Cuban army with the idea of using it exactly as it has.

There are, of course, certain benefits attached to living in a militarized society. The regime's achievements in such fields as public health, social services, and education must be viewed in this light. The Cuban government has succeeded in accomplishing certain things in these fields that no other Latin American government has accomplished. Cuba practically no longer has any illiterates and access to education is universal. Whereas in the 1950's, one-third of the population could neither read nor write and only half of the school-age children went to school. Most Cubans are near a doctor or a hospital. Such a situation was unthinkable in the 1950's, at least in rural areas.

But what are the purposes of these advances, these activities? In the past, slave owners looked after the health of their manpower, just as landowners attended to the efficient management of their properties. They did this for obvious reasons. In Cuba people are educated and looked after in order to serve the cause and carry the torch of the Revolution, to share in the "heroic caravansary" (to quote David Cauter), and to go, shouldering their weapons, wherever the "supreme armorer" orders them to go. Travelers visiting Cuba are sometimes impressed with the morale of doctors and teachers they meet. But such morale is the morale of a nation whose leaders have been able to simulate a permanent war through the expedient of incitement to permanent revolution.

There is one successful achievement of the Cuban revolution it would be very hard to deny. I refer to its propaganda campaign aimed at those, in Europe or elsewhere, who feel it necessary--for a multitude of reasons--to wave an anti-American banner the moment they find one. There were numerous reasons for the unpopularity of the United States, even before the Vietnam War: jealousy played a great part; resentment at the accession of the United States to superpower status in place of Europe; fear of American technology; and apprehension at the prospect of a world state which the United States, unfortunately perhaps, did not even try to establish.

Be that as it may, hatred of the United States led to an incredibly tolerant attitude toward Castro. And this situation continues. There is no need to look very far for a few good examples of this attitude. For example, when the British labor leader Clive Jenkins was visiting Cuba in 1961, he asked a militiaman whether he wanted elections. "He looked at me and shook his machine gun. 'We've got this,' he said. At this point in time," Jenkins added, thus using an old cliché, "I found this a convincing reply."

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It is relatively easy to visit Cuba and conclude that the regime is popular. But countless dictatorships in this century were able to give this same impression. Will we never learn that the persons a traveler meets are most careful not to criticize the system in front of anyone who might either carelessly or purposely betray them? We should also always keep in mind that during the period Cubans could leave their country, 640,000 of them did leave, including some 16,000 persons who fled illegally and clandestinely by boat or by swimming to the American Guantanamo base. The amazing Armandro Socorras is a symbolic hero of this route to exile marked by ordeals and exploits. He hid in the landing-gear well of a DC-8 airliner leaving for Spain and survived his 10-hour Atlantic crossing to tell the story.

It is an easy matter to have a crowd simulate enthusiasm. Here again, we should certainly realize today to what point crowds can be manipulated. The number of independently minded Cubans who were adults before 1959 and who-- providing they can be contacted--ought to rightfully expect some international assistance or at least moral support, is continuously declining. As for the Cuban masses, the government may possibly have regained some popularity among them in the wake of two short and victorious African wars against weak adversaries. But how are families reacting to the news of the death of a father or brother killed far from home in behalf of a foreign cause about which they know nothing whatsoever?

I will reserve my judgment on this point.

To detect among Cubans themselves any vague criticism of their African ventures would require an investigation resembling cryptography more than simple reading. A good number of Cubans with fiery temperament undoubtedly have that same sort of half-moral, half-religious enthusiasm about the regime that Germans had for the Nazis. They are enchanted by Castro's oratorical talents, bewitched by his cleverness, struck with admiration at his survivability, proud of his "machismo" on the international scene, and pleased finally with the thought that Cubans no longer charm the world with their cigars and music, but on the contrary, frighten the world with the noise of their weapons. In short, they are pleased as some Italians were under Mussolini.

Having said this, Cuba does, in fact, appear to me to represent, more than any other regime, the first fascist regime of the left. By this I mean a regime with leftist totalitarian objectives defined and pursued by fascist methods. This fact should probably have been glaringly apparent to me when people who had known Castro as a student recalled that he used to walk around with an annotated copy of "Mein Kampf" under his arm, or when other witnesses recalled that in the Sierra Maestra he used to read the works of Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera.

At his 1923 trial following the Munich "Beer Hall Putsch," Hitler said: "You may find me guilty a 1,000 times, but the goddess of history's eternal tribunal will laugh at you and reduce to a 1,000 shreds the public prosecutor's case and the sentence of this court. For that goddess acquits us."

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At his 1953 trial, Castro concluded his first major speech with a much shorter formula: "Convict me. History will absolve me."

Everyday Life in Cuba

Paris L'EXPRESS in French 1 Sep 79 pp 42-46

[Article by Liliane Sichler: "Day-to-Day Cuba"]

[Text] Visiting Cuba as an ordinary tourist, Liliane Sichler spent several days freely touring Havana. She was welcomed into homes, rode the buses, and shared the everyday life of Cubans. The following is her account of this visit.

[Text] I had been waiting for a half hour, standing in line behind the woman seated in front of me. A young woman on my left stamped impatiently behind a small boy dozing with his head resting on the quick-lunch counter of the "Tencent." The latter was the name of a chain of American stores before Fidel Castro's revolution. The woman smilingly told me: "Be patient, you'll see, you can eat cheaply here, and you don't have to use your ration card. Everyone in Havana does this." She called out: "Hey there comrade!" The waitress she had thus addressed did not turn a hair. The young woman tolerantly explained: "It's 1430 and she's waiting to be relieved at 1445." The fan was not working, so customers were fanning themselves with sheets of paper.

Finally the waitress brought the small sleeping boy a hot crepe which she sprinkled with clear syrup. The boy gobbled it up in two bites, placed 20 centavos in the metal plate next to his glass, got up and left. It was then the young woman's turn to sit down. She ordered six 1-peso (50 centimes) sandwiches, placed them in a small bag, and left. The waiting line moved one step forward.

Outside, palm trees and multiple-trunk trees provided some shade. From time to time, an automobile went by. More often than not, they were old patched-up American cars into which the driver proudly crowded his whole family. One of the most common street diversions is the breakdown: now and then, a car hood raised as a distress signal draws curious bystanders. All of them lean over the rusty motor, study it, and then offer their diagnosis. The fact is that although the average Cuban has no car, he still strongly feels he ought to have been a mechanic. In Cuba, the automobile is the big thing.

Even for Rosario, a tall, thin 35-year-old mestizo, an office worker in one of the ministries and the wife of a communist party member. After having talked to me about the Revolution's benefits, Fidel's speeches, and those dreadful capitalists who think only of money, Rosario--in the same enthusiastic tone--told me the big news: "You know what? We're going to buy a car. That's certainly going to change our way of living! And believe me I'm not exaggerating. I live 10 minutes by car from my work, but to be sure to be on time, I now have to leave the house one hour and a half early if I take

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the "guagua." The "guaguas" are those sort of prehistoric buses that rattle down the streets of Havana like so much scrap iron. They are the pet aversion of the residents of Havana.

"Fridge Allocation"

Rosario's house is pink. Its brown shutters were closed and its small garden was sun-drenched. Rosario and her family live in Havana's fashionable Miramar section. It has nothing in common with the crackled streets in the center of the city full of children playing baseball with pieces of scrap lumber scavenged from some construction site. Rosario's mother greeted us warmly. She was hosing down the front entrance. The kitchen was equipped with a refrigerator and washing machine. All these electrical appliances are officially rationed. Rosario told me she had obtained them with her "merit points." These merit points are awarded in places of work by the labor union of each enterprise. Every 6 months, each enterprise receives a "fridge allocation." The labor union designates the recipient. There are, on an average, some 25 applicants for each fridge. Rosario explained: "You can get merit points in different ways. If you go clean up your place of work on Sunday, if you frequently do voluntary labor, if you prove that you are taking night courses... you eventually are classified as an 'avant-garde' worker and are entitled to a refrigerator."

To help furnish her kitchen, Rosario has planted potatoes, cut sugar cane, cleaned her office, and for 2 years in a row, she has taken part in "the two weeks of Giron [Bay of Pigs]" in April. This involves spending 2 weeks in a rural camp where she does farm work. A file is kept on each worker, and once a year an assembly is held in the enterprise to designate the "avant-garde" workers. Everything in the enterprise is decided on the basis of this system of merit points, such as admission to the party and obtaining housing or a car. Rosario seemed to consider this procedure normal.

"With the American blockade and Cuba's difficulties, we must all unite and help each other. Fidel made the revolution to teach us a new way of life."

I asked her: "But aren't you quite annoyed at having to do this 'voluntary' work?"

"Now that I have everything I need," Rosario admitted, "I do less of it."

Someone slipped a sealed envelope under the door. "Look, it's the electric bill," Rosario explained as she showed it to me. "It's 12 pesos per month, and that's because we have a large house." Water is free in Cuba. As for rents, the system varies as the case may be. In most cases, the state must be paid 10 percent of all wages received by the household.

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"We kept the same house we had before the revolution. Instead of paying rent to the landlord who fled to the United States, we now simply pay it to the state. Furthermore, the rent is cheaper."

In the dining room, Italian and Spanish knickknacks are a reminder of a fact-finding trip her husband had made to Europe. "He stocked up on pants, and shoes also," she laughingly told me.

Clothes, yard goods, and shoes are still tightly rationed in Cuba. Members of each family have an annual individual ration book containing coded coupons. These codes are posted on the few shop windows: E18-50 shoes, I20-30 shirts, etc. Each man is entitled, on the average, to a pair of pants and two shirts per year, plus a pair of sport shoes and a pair of dress shoes. In Old Havana's shopping arcades, lines sometimes form in the morning at 1000, whereas stores open only in the afternoon. When Lazaro, a young engineer, told us about his search for a certain pair of E14 tennis-type shoes, last month, he lost all of his revolutionary zeal. "After I had waited in line for 3 hours, the store no longer had my size, and I was told: 'Come back next year, Comrade.'"

At 1600, the streets belong to the children. Red, yellow, or blue uniforms, depending on their grades. A triangular scarf worn around the neck indicates membership in the Pioneers, the communist children's organization. Nine out of ten Cuban children are Pioneers. To tell the truth, after having discussed rationing and shortages, this street scene was quite heartening. I noticed a poster which read: "Nothing is more precious than a child." And indeed Cuba has done much for its children. Their lot is idyllic in comparison with the situation of children throughout Latin America: free meals are served in day care centers and schools, 100 percent of the children attend school, and racial discrimination has been eliminated. GRANMA, Havana's only daily newspaper, carries pictures everyday of child beggars in the shantytowns of Mexico or Colombia.

Marina will soon be 12. She listens to the Bee Gees on American radio stations and dreams of wearing T-shirts covered with disco badges. But on television, she watches variety shows that systematically deride the tall vicious cowboy with a hideous horse by his side. Each night, she follows the adventures of the "Red Mask," a serial about the prerevolutionary period in France. But, in fact, her father has thoroughly explained to her that the French Revolution was a "bourgeois" revolution. Mirana lives in a very unambiguous world with all the "bad guys" on the same side.

In January, she too went to the countryside to perform her "voluntary" labor. Each year, children over 11 are required to help in the harvest for 45 days. Only those children with a medical excuse are exempt.

Parents are taken by special buses to join their children in the fields every weekend. "I used to return with a pair of pants and a shirt to wash," her mother sighed. "And also with lemons!" Marina protested. In the country they have everything I like, fruits, vegetables..."

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"Cakes, Soup, Porridge"

Havana's grocery stores look more like warehouses. They are odorless and colorless. Everything is sold in sealed boxes or small carefully-weighted bags. Items purchased with a ration book include: sugar: 4 pounds per person per month; rice: 5 pounds per person per month; coffee: 2 ounces per person per week; and milk: 1 liter every 2 days per family of five members, with children under 7 being entitled to 1 liter per day. "Free-purchase" or nonrationed foods include eggs, butter, Czechoslovak crackers, Polish instant soups, and small bags of grain or flour. One mother told me: "We make a lot of cakes, soup, and porridge. My family likes milk, so I exchange rice for it with some neighbors. We manage to get along."

Eugenio Balari is the president of the Institute of Domestic Consumption, an agency established in 1976 and patterned after similar existing organizations in the people's democracies. He buttressed his statements to us with statistics, charts, and graphs. The 40-year-old Balari is an enthusiastic jogger. Wearing a polo shirt, he spoke to us with a mini-calculator and color slides within easy reach. "There is no longer any undernourishment in this country. We have extricated ourselves from Latin America's underdevelopment. We have doubled our number of doctors in 10 years. All medical care is free. Unemployment is now virtually nonexistent. The entire population has a minimum per capita intake of 2,200 calories per day, an amount guaranteed them by ration card."

He then rose to explain, pencil in hand, a chart hanging on his office wall. The population is divided into groups. For example, workers engaged in intellectual pursuits require 2,625 calories per day, whereas sugar cane cutters need an intake of 4,100 calories per day. "On certain work sites, we give the workers milk and cheese," Balari explained.

Technicians of the Institute for Domestic Consumption prepare informational and publicity campaigns aimed at teaching Cubans to eat dry beans instead of black or red beans, to like fish instead of the traditional pork and rice.

A young technician in charge of consumer surveys aggressively assured me: "I swear we will fully implement the 1976-1980 Five Year Plan. A total of 100,000 apartments have to be built per year in order to keep abreast of the population explosion. We are going to double our production of textiles." In the meantime, an official report has acknowledged that in Havana within the space of 1 year more apartments have fallen into disrepair than have been built. And each Cuban is still entitled to only 4 meters of fabric per year.

'Society Is Not Fair'

During the interview, Eugenio Balari's secretary twice served us coffee, even though Balari had earlier explained to me that Cuban coffee had to be reserved exclusively for export. "We must take advantage of the increase in world prices to earn foreign currency." Privilege? He turned on his television set. It

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was a color set. Privilege? Balari smiled: "The socialist society is not fair, but it is fairer than capitalism. We are not an equalitarian society."

Wages in Cuba range from 85 pesos to 700 pesos per month. The prices of rationed products have not changed since 1962 and represent 30 percent of total consumption. The sale of nonrationed ("free-purchase") items at normal prices, and the sale of such items as tobacco and alcohol, classed as "unnecessary," at very high prices, are an attempt to make the market show a profit.

But the port of Havana with some 25 Soviet cargo ships always loading or unloading, and the dignified and long-faced delegations of experts from the East that soberly applaud the Tropicana Club's frenzied revue, are all indications of the fact that the Cuban economy is condemned to follow a one-way street: 80 percent of its trade is with socialist countries, most of it in rubles. "We are not in the hands of the Soviet Union," protested a Cuban Communist Party member. "They are our true friends. They are not to blame for the American blockade." Yet the young woman running the Paseo Marti newsstand burst out laughing when I asked her whether the magazines--LA MUJER SOVIETICA [The Soviet Woman]--piled up in front of her were Cuban. Other than the daily GRANMA and the organ of the Communist Youth Organization JUVENTUD REBELDE, the only periodicals available on the newsstands are FOREIGN TRADE IN THE USSR IN 1978, or in 1979.

Slogans can be seen again and again on walls: "We have been, we are, we shall be optimistic." "What do sacrifices matter when the fate of a people is involved." Nowhere are there pictures of the "maximum leader," but those of Jose Marti, and especially, of "Che," are everywhere.

Mambo of Nostalgia

Nights in Cuba are quiet and somewhat dull. They do not have the excitement of the tropics. On Saturday nights, home-made flouncy dresses or lacy short-sleeve shirts for men crowd the streets for a few hours until the 0200 "guagua." Only the Cubans from Miami continue carousing in the clubs for tourists: chewing gum and wearing flowery hats, they spend their last few dollars while dancing the mambo of nostalgia.

With Castro's authorization, they have been coming to Cuba on charter flights from the United States, for the past 6 months. The 10-day family package tours cover air transportation, hotels, and access to special stores. The lobbies of Havana's four deluxe hotels are the scene of tearful reunions, and fans bought with good U.S. dollars change hands. "These tours are not simply a good-hearted gesture on Castro's part," a Frenchman living in Cuba commented derisively. "The 'Separated Families' program must have yielded Cuba 100 million dollars."

During the week, Havana resembles a provincial city that is asleep by 2000. A few persons drag their chairs out onto the sidewalk so as to enjoy the cool of the evening. There is no noise. A few youths pass by looking for cigarettes. Everyone is well-mannered.

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An old communist gentleman proudly pointed out to me: "Look around you. Here you will find none of Latin America's colorful beggars and prostitutes."

In a yard, a car raised on wooden blocks and an old man working on the motor; on the wall behind him there was one of the very few pictures of Fidel I saw in Havana. Close by was La Bodequita del Medio, Hemingway's old bar and a former favorite hangout of all leftist intellectuals. When I visited there, it was full of laughter, embraces, and music. Alvarez, the owner before the Revolution, has become the Bodequita's "public relations man." Government officials meet in this small cellar and continue to read and reread the graffiti placed on its walls back in the days when men gathered here and dreamt of revolution while drinking their "mojitos." "Now it's an accomplished fact," a woman told me with a tinge of nostalgia in her voice.

"We Have Only Our Conscience"

Outside the Bodequita everything was quiet. Here, a former bank now closed; there, a former brothel now converted into a CDR (Committee for the Defense of the Revolution) office. On each street in Havana, lights burning brightly and wide open doors indicate the block CDR. Unarmed men and women patrol the streets every night. Each Cuban performs one night of guard duty per month. Women take the 2300 to 0200 shift and men get the 0200 to 0500 duty.

"We have no weapons," emphasized David Duran, a member of the CDR's national directorate. "We have only our eyes, our voice, and our conscience." Some 80 percent of all persons over 14 years of age are members of the CDR. Its offices, decorated with Cuban flags, cover the entire country like a web: One office per street in the cities and one per every eight houses in the countryside. The CDR's perform all kinds of tasks. They handle preparations for elections, distribute bags of cement for the repair of houses, administer vaccine, and organize blood donors for the hospitals. They also handle other "matters," because when I asked a Cuban journalist whether the CDR system did not inordinately hamper him, he told me: "Not significantly. For instance, assume that I like to live with several women. The CDR on my street will probably report it, but that will change nothing. It's not prohibited." He laughed and added: "Besides, my turn will come when it's my night to pull guard." Everyone checks and reports on everyone.

Yet those persons known here as "bandits," in other words those who have no "conscience," also exist. To realize this, one need merely listen to Eduardo's complaint: "Before the Revolution, it was money that gave a person everything. Now, it's cronies and the party. If you have a good position, are in high favor, you get cement, you get a house, if not..." He then told me stories about bunches of bananas that are hung in the offices of supervisory personnel in the factories, and about trucks loaded with contraband vegetables that stop in front of fashionable homes. Yet, oddly enough, he concluded his denunciation by assuring me that he, unlike others, was a true revolutionist "and even the son of a martyr."

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Before leaving Cuba, I was able to visit the Lenin School. Its students are indeed sons and daughters of Castroism. This school is only a short distance outside Havana and resembles the most fashionable English school anyone could possibly imagine: lawns, fountains, swimming pools, airy classrooms, and shade. Sonia Romero Alfán, the principal, described the scale model of her school with all the pride of the head of a large firm: "Here we train future revolutionists in behalf of the Revolution," she explained. The Lenin School is a boarding school. Students wear a uniform consisting of a Pioneer scarf, white shirt, and blue pants or skirt. They enter this secondary school at age 11. To be admitted, a student must have an academic average of 90 to 95 percent and be rated as a "good Pioneer." A very neatly dressed young girl served as my guide through the school's museum of national history. Outside the museum, a group of 12-year old guitarists were spiritedly singing "Fidel came down from the mountain." In workshops attached to the school, students assemble radio sets or operate sewing machines while others work in the vegetable gardens surrounding the school.

Model Children

The principal explained that "students are required to do 2 hours and 15 minutes of production work per day. At a general assembly held each month, they familiarize themselves with labor union organization and procedures and analyze the results of their work." The radio sets made at the Lenin School are sold in Havana, the sports clothes produced there are worn by the students, and the vegetables grown in the school gardens supply the school cafeteria. Every Saturday, 39 shuttle buses take the 4,500 students back to Havana.

These model children will all eventually attend the University of Havana. The latter is housed in a huge building in the center of the city. It is a rather strange sight to anyone familiar with the variegated and loquacious Western universities from Berkeley to Bologna: bare, dreary walls like those surrounding a factory, not a single poster, and no graffiti whatever. Apparently 20 years of age is not the age of revolt in this university.

Conference of Nonaligned Countries

Paris L'EXPRESS in French 1 Sep 79 pp 46-47

[Article by Branko Lazitch: "Wolf in the Sheepfold"]

[Text] One of the many ironies of this waning decade is the fact that the Sixth Conference of--so-called--Nonaligned Countries is meeting in the capital which--along with Hanoi--is no doubt the one most completely aligned with Moscow. I refer, of course, to Havana.

What exactly, in fact, are the nonaligned countries supposed to be? The idea of nonalignment emerged during the Cold War at a time when several countries rejected having to side with either the American or Soviet bloc. The leaders

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of those countries included some of the period's strongest political personalities, Nehru, Sukarno, Nasir, Nkrumah, and Tito, all of whom are now dead except one. Since its foundation, the international movement of nonaligned countries has made considerable progress. It has become larger as evidenced by the steady increase in the number of nations attending the movement's successive conferences.

Crazy-Quilt Assemblage

There were 25 countries represented at the first conference in Belgrade in 1961, 47 countries at the second conference in Cairo in 1964, 53 members and 9 observers at the third in Lusaka, 75 delegations and 23 observers at the fourth in Algiers in 1973, and 86 full-fledged member countries plus 22 observers at the fifth conference in Colombo in August 1976. As for the sixth conference about to open in Havana on 3 September, some 100 delegations are expected to attend, not to mention some 15 observers, including such Western developed countries as Switzerland and Sweden. In addition, seven countries are requesting admission to the movement: Pakistan, Iran, Surinam, Grenada, Djibouti, Bolivia, and since the end of July, Nicaragua.

There is no denying that the nonaligned movement has always been more anti-Western than anti-Soviet. Most of its member countries are former colonies of Western powers. Moreover, the main thrust of their economic development and diplomacy is formulated through the interplay of their everyday relations with those same powers. Hence, in reaction, the prominent role of such pointedly Soviet sympathizers as Boumediene or Qadhafi, who became the new "stars" of the nonaligned countries, after the two major Arab-Israeli wars and the start of the oil crisis. Hence also the increasingly pro-Soviet shift that characterized Indira Gandhi's government. Nevertheless, the international movement of nonaligned countries, though quite a crazy quilt, remained approximately true to its basic principle of not falling into a state of unconditional allegiance to one of the two blocs, and of never swelling the ranks of those countries that are mere satellites of the Soviet Union.

Tito Detects Danger

It is evident, however, that Cuba is no longer simply a neutral country having special or preferential ties with the Soviet Union. Cuba is a genuine Soviet satellite. In any case, there has no longer been any doubt about its satellite status since 1968 when Castro spectacularly took a position in favor of the Soviet Union's invasion of Czechoslovakia. Cuba is an economic and political satellite (see Hugh Thomas' article [translated above]). Cuban intelligence agencies and secret police are under the control of Soviet agencies, both with respect to internal repression as well as foreign intelligence. Lastly, and above all, Cuba is also a Soviet military satellite. An alarming element has been added to the international picture over the past 4 years by Cuba's warlike military operations conducted on behalf of the USSR in Africa, and even in South Yemen, and by the very recently reported presence in Cuba of a Soviet jungle guerrilla-warfare training brigade.

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Cat's-Paw

If, after all this, Cuba continues to be considered nonaligned, then the movement of nonaligned countries will henceforth have license to serve as cat's-paw for Soviet expansionism and the Soviet Union's spirit of conquest. This prospect is especially dangerous in that the conference's host country retains, as is customary, chairmanship of the movement until the next summit that will not convene until 1982. Thus for the next 3 years Castro will be able to conveniently shape and manipulate the movement of nonaligned countries according to the Soviet Union's global objectives.

Tito detected this danger. Whenever it comes to sniffing an attempt to pack a movement or conference in favor of Moscow, his sense of smell has been unerring for more than 30 years. Furthermore, he considers himself the custodian of the legitimacy of the movement whose central figure he was for many years. As we mentioned earlier, the other "greats" of the nonaligned movement are dead. Consequently Tito feels he is entrusted with the mission of defending their legacy.

The old marshal, who is now over 87, took the matter in hand. He had himself appointed chairman of the Yugoslav committee charged with making preliminary preparations and, therefore, with counting the votes of the countries that will be present in Havana. He made two extensive trips to countries scheduled to attend the conference. One trip was to the Middle East, the other in the Mediterranean basin.

Both trips were successes in his offensive designed to counter Castro's bid for supremacy. The leaders with whom Tito spoke were thereby put on guard against the Cuban leader's intentions. On the other hand, when Marshal Tito visited Moscow in an effort to dissuade Leonid Brezhnev from his intention to manipulate Castro within the movement of nonaligned countries, this negotiation failed. Leonid Brezhnev refused to repudiate Fidel Castro and curb his activities.

Castro, for his part, has not remained inactive. For several months now, his emissaries have been visiting the 87 countries that are currently members of the nonaligned movement.

At the same time, delegations invited to Cuba are being received by Fidel Castro and his lieutenants who tirelessly attempt to indoctrinate these visitors.

The Cubans argue that there is a division within the nonaligned movement between the "progressives"--a label Castroites bestow on themselves--and the others, in other words, Tito and his friends. PRENSA LATINA, the official Cuban press agency, has of late frequently stigmatized "certain theoreticians who are attempting to set the nonaligned countries against the socialist camp." GRANMA, the official Castroite daily, has followed suit by, in turn denouncing "certain theoreticians of the nonaligned movement who are playing into the hands of American imperialists."

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Situation Becomes Complicated

According to Castro, nonaligned countries must determine their action on the basis of four criteria: anti-imperialism, anticolonialism, antineocolonialism, and antiracism. These simple principles justify the indictment of one superpower, the United States, two former colonial powers, Great Britain and France, and three "agents of imperialism and racism," Israel, Rhodesia, and South Africa. This situation becomes complicated, however, due to the fact that Cuba and its friends demand that communist China also be denounced. And this confusion reaches its peak when the Havana government insists that its own military interventions in Africa must be considered compatible with nonalignment, and likewise Vietnam's intervention in Cambodia.

At all events, one certainly does emerge from all this: the equivocation of a "nonaligned Castro," already transparent at the Colombo conference, is no longer defensible today. Hence the Sixth Conference of Nonaligned Countries is a decisive turning point.

How many of these countries will accept Cuba's claim and chairmanship as a nonaligned country? How many will reject this claim and chairmanship? Will there be a split? The movement's very significance and its political future will depend on the answer to these three questions.

Cuban Presence in Africa

Paris L'EXPRESS in French 1 Sep 79 pp 48-49

[Article: "Cubans in Africa"]

[Text] From the battle maps in his Havana headquarters, Fidel Castro followed the advance of his troops in Angola. He had not slept for days. The expression on his face betrayed his voiceless anxiety. The first contingents of "barbudos" who had been airlifted to Angola 3 weeks earlier--11 November 1975--were now supported by mechanized units. The "maximum leader" maintained permanent communication with the Angolan high command. The smallest locality and slightest terrain irregularity in that part of Africa were known to him by heart. Cuba had just exported its soldiers for the first time.

It was in the secrecy of the Palace of the Revolution on 5 November 1975 that Castro made his decision, with Moscow's approval, to dispatch an expeditionary force to Luanda. This intervention was designated "Operation Carlota," the name of a slave who led an uprising against the Spanish occupier in the 19th century. Some 48 hours later, the first contingent left Havana by air. The long-range Antonov transport aircraft made service stops at Barbados in the Caribbean, in Guinea-Bissau, and in the Congo. At the same time, cargo ships--their holds crammed with arms--transported Cuban brigades to Angola in 3 weeks. The Colombian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez related how "on some days there were so many Cuban ships in the Bay of Luanda

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that President Agostinho Neto, upon counting them from his window, was assailed by a feeling of shame and said to one of his friends, a government official: 'It's not fair. At this rate, Cuba will ruin itself!'"

It was the West, however, that was to suffer the losses. The United States, paralyzed by its presidential campaign and its Indochinese experience, could only deplore--with resignation--the formidable Soviet-Cuban bluff. China had backed, with the "imperialists," the wrong side, the FNLA [National Front for the Liberation of Angola], so--humiliated--it quietly withdrew. The South African Army column, caught in the "bush," was mortified and retreated. The field was now cleared, so Moscow and Havana occupied it and in the upheaval raised a Marxist regime to power.

Henceforth nothing would be the same as before. The Angolan shock wave shook the continent from Bizerte to Cape Town.

This victory was the fruit of 20 years of effort during which Cuba never stopped patiently spinning its web. Who still remembers how Che Guevara tirelessly trekked through Zaire and the Congo, a notebook in his pocket, making a topographical survey of the territories he crossed? Africans had nicknamed him "Armadillo" by analogy with that small toothless, tropical-region mammal that can curl itself up into a ball to protect itself.

But the hero of the Sierra Maestra was to meet a tragic death in October 1968 while leading a Bolivian guerrilla band. His death dashed, for a time, the hopes of a revolutionary uprising in Latin America, and also any reinforcement of the armed struggle in the Portuguese colonies of Africa. It would take several more years before Castro--"having seen all the harm capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism have inflicted on a large part of mankind"--started dreaming anew about transplanting his revolution.

"Operation Carlota" would serve as a test. While moderate Africa cried wolf, progressive Africa, in contrast, expressed satisfaction, as Mozambique's Samora Machel did at noting that "countries of the socialist bloc are showing their solidarity with the anti-imperialist countries of the Third World."

Stony Ogaden Desert Region

As the Warsaw Pact's spearhead and the Soviet Union's proxy from 1975 to 1979, Cuba sealed new alliances, armed peoples in search of liberation, and strengthened its already existing ties. Some 42,000 to 45,000 Cubans are on the African continent at the present time. At least 18 countries--see map below--have signed civil and military cooperation agreements with Havana. Two of these countries--one on the South Atlantic (Angola), the other on the Red Sea (Ethiopia)--profess to be the vanguard of an ideological dismemberment of the Black Continent. Cuba was, nevertheless, obliged to pay a stiff price for its 1975 and 1977 intervention in those two countries: hundreds of dead and wounded in the Angolan swamps, and nearly as many in the stony Ogaden desert region during the Somali-Ethiopian conflict.

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How can a small country of 9.5 million people, subjected to the American blockade since 1961, possibly sustain such an "export" effort without some gnashing of teeth? Soviet aid is not the complete answer.

"We need volunteers determined to do their internationalist duty. Those who agree to volunteer, raise your hand." Members of the CDR's--Committee for the Defense of the Revolution--that cover villages and city neighborhoods like a net, muster young men of military age at their places of work. The "volunteers" fill out a 1-year enlistment form and undergo 10 weeks of special training. They are given absolutely no information about their overseas destination. A Cuban deserter, Lieutenant Manuel de Quesada Caballero, 33, admitted: "They never told me where I was going to fight, but I assumed it was somewhere in Africa."

A person must have cogent reasons--illness, death of next of kin, large family--to justify his refusal to volunteer. Article 12 of the Cuban Constitution categorically states: "Cuba is a socialist state that embraces the principles of proletarian internationalism." Helping those peoples fighting for their liberation is a right. To be more exact, it is a duty.

Yet this has not prevented the Cubans--in the name of proletarian internationalism--from combating the Eritrean rebellion which only yesterday they were supporting unreservedly. "Romanticism is quite out of place today," Somalia's Siad Barre told us in denouncing the Soviet-Cuban "conspiracy" in Africa.

In any case, "Operation Carlota" has left deep traces behind it on the African continent, the new arena of East-West rivalry. "In my opinion," Fidel Castro told the American reporter Barbara Walters, "all Africa will be socialist. It will be so because there is no other alternative."

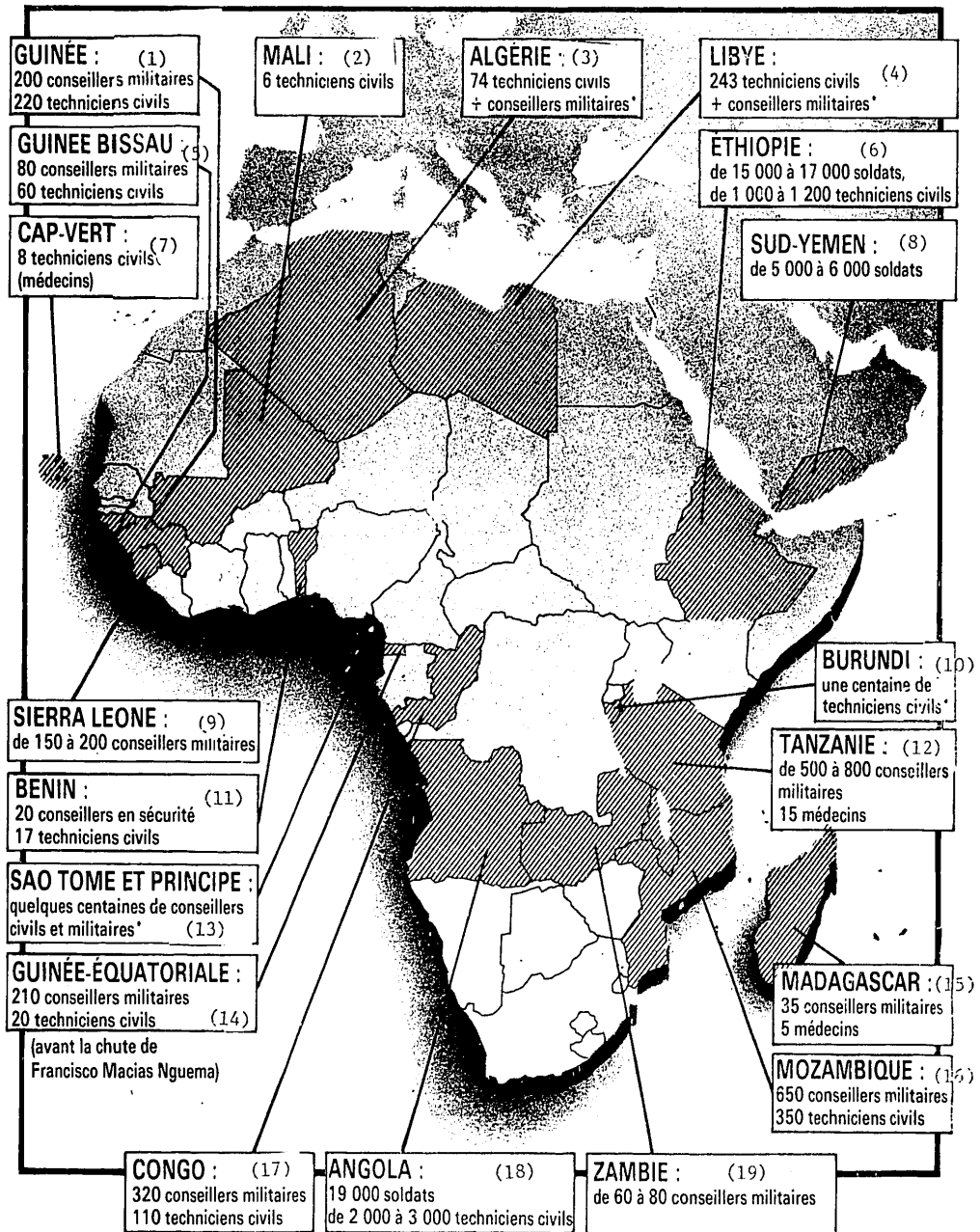
Almost every night--discretion so requires--activity quickens at Havana's airport as "volunteers" depart to relieve their comrades in Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania, or elsewhere. They are unaware of their specific destination.

Key:

1. Guinea: 200 military advisers, 220 civilian technicians
2. Mali: 6 civilian technicians
3. Algeria: 74 civilian technicians & military advisers
4. Libya: 243 civilian technicians & military advisers
5. Guinea-Bissau: 80 military advisers, 60 civilian technicians
6. Ethiopia: 15,000-17,000 soldiers, 1,000-1,200 civilian technicians
7. Cape Verde: 8 civilian technicians (doctors)
8. South Yemen: 5,000-6,000 soldiers
9. Sierra Leone: 150-200 military advisers
10. Burundi: some 100 civilian technicians
11. Benin: 20 security advisers, 17 civilian technicians

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12. Tanzania: 500-800 military advisers, 15 doctors
13. Sao Tome and Principe: a few hundred civilian and military advisers
14. Equatorial Guinea: 210 military advisers, 20 civilian technicians (before overthrow of Francesco Macias Nguema)
15. Madagascar: 35 military advisers, 5 doctors
16. Mozambique: 650 military advisers, 350 civilian technicians
17. Congo: 320 military advisers, 110 civilian technicians
18. Angola: 19,000 soldiers, 2,000-3,000 civilian technicians
19. Zambia: 60-80 military advisers

Estimates from different sources indicate the total Cuban presence in Africa to be 42,000-45,000 men (1979). This figure includes combat units, military advisers, and civilian personnel, notably doctors. In any case, it is almost impossible to determine their exact number.

Barbarous Treatment of Political Prisoners

Paris L'EXPRESS in French 1 Sep 79 pp 50-52

[Article by Arrabal: "The Last Sanctuary"]

[Text] Arrabal is a playwright whose works are performed throughout the world. He is also a brilliant chess commentator and reporter. He was imprisoned under the Franco regime. He is active in movements supporting political prisoners in Cuba and has intimate knowledge of the Cuban refugee community in Europe and America.

[Text] For many years, silence and self-censorship were the refuge of leftists whenever they had to confront the Castroite taboo. When they began to expose the Soviet Gulag, they still refused to consider Cuba's Gulag, despite the fact that it holds all records for barbarity. According to a recent Amnesty International statement, Castro's political prisoners currently have the greatest number of years in prison.

To force acceptance of this de facto situation intimidation took the most ridiculous forms. For instance, Rene Dumont, K. S. Karol, Goytisoló and Semprun were accused--unadulterated delirium--of being CIA agents. Now that such men as Jean-Paul Sartre, Norman Mailer, and Phillippe Sollers are condemning Castroite crimes, the last sacrosanct sanctuary of Muscovite totalitarianism is starting to crumble: that ultimate sacred cow which for so many years compelled so many brilliant minds to lie deliberately so as not to drive Billancourt or its West Indian equivalent into despair.

It is interesting to transpose known statistics about the "pearl of the Caribbean" to the scale of a country like France. Imagine--in your wildest nightmares--that more than 7 million Frenchmen have fled to escape governmental terror and that 120,000 to 200,000 political prisoners crowd our jails.

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And yet Cuba remains hermetically closed, no one theoretically being able to get out of his own free will. Any attempt to escape is near suicidal. In this connection, you may recall the exploit of the poet Miguel Sales who crossed minefields at night, like a man flirting with death, plus the courage of Armando Socorras who hid in the landing-gear well of an airliner and arrived in Madrid nearly frozen. Nor should we forget the "lancheros, those people who, day and night, climb aboard small makeshift boats in an effort to escape the Cuban hell, notwithstanding the Cuban Navy's machine-guns and the shark-infested waters. A cynical embassy official admitted privately to me, a smile on his lips: "If Castro were to let people out, he would be the only one left."

The very high number of political prisoners--proportionately the highest in the world, according to "Of Human Rights"--does not stop Castroite propaganda--not conspicuous by its finesse--from claiming that the country operates through "direct democracy" and rarely is any decision made other than unanimously. For example, it was "unanimously" that Cuban mothers recently asked to have the authorized milk ration for their children reduced so that the savings obtained thereby could be used to help build a "palace of conferences." In similar fashion, Cuban adolescents--sons worthy of their Spartan mothers--ignored the motto of today's youth, "Make love, not war," and requested, in a "unanimous" burst of enthusiasm, that they be allowed to wage war in Africa. Who could possibly be amazed when the country's sole party wins election by 99.97 percent (thanks to the votes of the entire population, including prisoners, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and others deemed "pestiferous" by the regime).

"Soul by Soul"

Despite this show of harmony, the "Little Father" of the Cuban people does not trust his fellow citizens at all. Not satisfied with having a colossal police establishment, he instituted the Committees for Defense of the Revolution (CDR's) who, neighborhood by neighborhood, block of houses by block of houses, soul by soul ("cuadra por cuadra"), observe and report on the activity of all residents, ferreting out any revolt hidden beneath the silence, stifling the salvos of the future.

One question remains: How is it possible that Cuba continued to resound for so many years to the old exuberant songs so full of promise and sung by the bearded rebels who came down from the mountain 20 years ago to overthrow a tyrant of evil memory?

First, because nobody wanted to accept the fact that Castroism, like Chronos, has devoured its children. Most of the visionaries--from Carlos Franqui to Hubert Matos, from Eloy Menoyo to Pedro Luis Boitel--who sprung from the Sierra as from a springboard, to overthrow the tyrant Batista, are now in prison, or in exile, or have been executed. Secondly, because a leader ("the Horse") who seizes an island and annexes it to make it his domain exercises a fascist type of spell over people's minds. Castro runs Cuba like a business of which he is the sole owner. Professor Mardique of Harvard holds

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that the island's economy ought "to run smoothly," protected as it is by planning which is implemented without any possible challenge, but the supreme leader's ludicrous decisions and the bureaucracy's galloping corruption are steadily making the budget deficit climb, and rationing is getting worse and worse, in fact, nearly disastrous. Cuba lives under the extravagant dictatorship of a man who claims to be a Marxist but is content with a vague paternalistic type of control by workers, control that has a smack of Naziism. The historian Hugh Thomas draws our attention to the fact that as an adolescent, Castro complacently read and annotated Hitler's "Mein Kampf," and when in the Sierra Maestra, the works of Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, leader of the Spanish Falange. Hence his imagination was capable of meandering through the ins and outs of the absurd and of phony charisma.

As had to be expected, Fidel surrounded himself with the usual party "hacks" and underworld characters formerly devoted to Batista and now supportive of Castroism for the greater glory of their pocketbook. There are few countries where the wealthy enjoy as many privileges as Cuba's rich.

Castro has made Castroism into a grandiose and ridiculous machine designed to justify--or attempt to justify--and legitimate the conflicts that arise in the country. According to the regime's mythology, the leader is opposed by the anti-Castroite or "worm" (gusano) whose fabulous evil power is such that it threatens to bring down the entire revolutionary edifice. "Culprits" cannot justify themselves without aggravating their case: courts sit on a moment's notice--when they do sit--and most political prisoners saw and made the acquaintance of their lawyer for only a few moments, at the time of the pleadings. Moreover, the defense counsel limits himself to acknowledging the counts of the indictment and requesting the court's leniency.

A Very Small Bible

The regime's almost preternatural fear of dissidents has transfigured rebels into martyrs or heroes, and for the potentates, these dissidents have become fair game for torture.

The poet Valladares has been in prison for almost 20 years now. He was 21 years old at the time of his arrest. He does not enjoy even the few rights extracted from Franco in the last years of his reign: the right to receive mail and visits, obtain medical assistance and legal counsel. From his cell, he succeeded in having a letter reach Amnesty International. In it he asked for a Bible, "but a very small" one so that he could keep it hidden from the guards. The poet knows full well that in the superstitious and preternatural world of Castroism, a Bible can, like a cyclone, shake the regime's very foundations and shatter the wilderness into pieces.

A corpse can do the same. The student leader Luis Boitel, a revolutionary enemy of Batista, was sentenced to 42 years in prison with all the arbitrariness one could expect. He was tortured a great many times. This first

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paralyzed him and later led to his death in the Boniato penitentiary. Here is what his mother said, by telephone, after her son's death: "They are still afraid of him even after his death. My dear, the Free World must be told about it, if indeed such a world really exists...You know how afraid they must be if they buried him and only informed me about it 3 days later: 'Your son is dead and we have buried him.' And I too was detained. They kept me down there. They did horrible things to me. What a mess! I asked for help, even from the Pope. But what good did it do me to be so Catholic? The day before yesterday, 12 of us women tried to bring him wreaths and nearly 300 militiawomen barred our way. Can you imagine what it's like not to turn over a dead son's body to his mother? Me, I demand the firing squad. Let them put me against the wall. They killed my son! They are the ones who killed him! The order came from a high level. The order to liquidate him. There are still a lot of prisoners behind the walls. You have to see what they are doing to them. What a mess! Because they are dying. What a mess! Because those prisoners there were his brothers. Human rights, that famous Red Cross, and that OAS: all those people are but a facade. And meanwhile, those poor men are dying in prison. They are dying behind the walls of Boniato without anything being done to help them. What a mess!"

Castroism has raised concentration camps to a principle of government, the first and last word of its cultural policy. In trying to cope with such an embarrassing "monument," the government resorts to contradictory subterfuges. Sometimes it claims they are rehabilitation camps. Sometimes it pretends they do not exist. Neither Amnesty International nor the Red Cross can visit them freely. The most recent tactic employed is to consider them sacred: they are hard-labor camps for heretics and paradise-like camps for those desiring a radiant future.

The official periodical BOHEMIA informs us that in the period of 1 year, the prisoners having recognized the excellence of Castroism completed a whole series of construction projects. Moreover, the magazine has no scruples about listing these projects province by province: "In the province of Havana, they built 3 secondary schools, 155 farms, 6 stock-raising center, 344 housing complexes...In Pinar del Rio, they built 48 housing complexes, 8 secondary schools, 1 prefabricated materials plant, 2 framework construction facilities, 4 official buildings..."

This volume of work worthy of the Pharaohs is understandable when one considers the enormous number of political prisoners available in the camps.

Torture is the standing operating procedure in these camps. The poet Valladares has lost the use of his legs, his torturers having made him a paralytic. This witness of Christ, this fervent Catholic, this martyr continues to exude hope from his cell: "One day, my paralytic's chair will grow wings. I shall then be able to soar above the parks carpeted with children and violets."

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Here is one of his poems:

"The prisoners were led out one by one
Then herded into the far corner
With the bludgeonings and kicks
The walls were spattered with blood
Skull after skull broke open
The soldiers fell back a few paces
Raised their rifles
Fired in volleys.
They continued to fire for the sport of it
Many were those who fell
Smoke and powder turned into
White clouds.
In three months, people will celebrate
The First Cuban Communist Party Congress
The Boniato garrison
Will hail the event
With flags red with tortured blood."

Officers of the first Cuban revolutionary army have not escaped this torture: Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo, Antonio Lanas, Cesar Diaz, the labor leader Lauro Blanco, the student leader Jorge Valls, Doctor Marta Frayda, a woman who had fought against Batista since 1953, etc. One more example is that of Hubert Matos who was stoutly opposed to Batista and joined Castro from the start. Appointed a guerrilla leader by Castro, he participated in the siege of Santiago and the attack on the Moncado Barracks. After Batista's downfall, Matos was appointed civil and military head of the province of Camaguey, and was also assigned to other very high-level duties. But when he perceived that Castro was establishing a Soviet type of socialism, he submitted his letter of resignation to the supreme leader and asked to be reinstated as a primary school teacher, a position he had held before joining the guerrillas. He was arrested and sentenced to 20 years in prison. He will complete his sentence in November 1979, but his imminent release has given rise to all sort of apprehension because so many others have been assassinated on approaching the end of their prison terms. Matos, like others, spent years without receiving mail or visitors. He, like others, has been tortured and, as a result, has lost the use of one arm and is nearly blind. Whenever he can elude the vigilance of his guards--about once a year--he writes a letter that is almost heroic in its dignity and courage.

Pierre Golendorf, a Marxist whose faith in communism led him to Cuba, has also had first-hand experience with Castro's prisons. He has related to CAMBIO 16 that he saw persons tortured, among them Eloy Guterrez Menoyo, another one of the initial guerrilla leaders and an uncompromising fighter. Menoyo is currently on a hunger strike. In his two remarkable books, "Seven Years in Cuba" and "Prisoner of Castro," Golendorf shows how Castro wove an immense web over the island, with his informers, spies, secret police, prisons, and camps.

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Golendorf quotes the following passage from Montaner: "Some day, the full story of Ismael Madruga's death must be told without omitting any of the details. He was asleep in his cell when Sergeant Porfirio pierced his abdomen through his rectum and pulled out his intestines with the tip of his bayonet."

In "Informe sobre la revolucion cubana" [Report on the Cuban Revolution], we read: "I personally saw--I swear I did--a guard yell abuse at an old woman and her pregnant daughter-in-law who had come to the prison to visit a son who had been shot without the family having even been notified. The guard shouted: 'That filthy worm, we shot him yesterday. Tell her (the pregnant wife) to look for another husband or come see me if she needs a man.' I repeat, I swear I saw it. Monsters also live outside of our imagination."

Endorsement of Many Humanists

To build the "veritable" Castroism, entire classes of the population have to be sacrificed: free men and libertarians. The radiant future recedes daily toward a mythical future, while the immolation of so many victims becomes increasingly intolerable.

But would Cuba still hold that record for barbarity if it had not received the endorsement of so many great "humanists?"

Listen to the incensed words of the Cuban poet and novelist Carlos Alberto Montaner: "What would be the fate of a Mitterrand or a Palme in Cuba, if not prison, the firing squad, or exile? The excesses of the Revolution would not be proper for Swedes or Frenchmen, but they are perfectly acceptable for those imbeciles of the Antilles. Castro's embrace of Mitterrand and Castro's embrace of Palme are explainable only as follows: Mitterrand and Palme assume that these creatures of the Caribbean are inferior to or different from Swedes and Frenchmen."

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