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Latin America Report

(FOUO 14/81)

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LATIN AMERICA REPORT

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COUNTRY SECTION

CUBA

ROUNDTABLE REVIEWS WORK IN PORT HANDLING ACTIVITIES

Havana BOHEMIA in Spanish 24 Apr 81 pp 28-31

[Article by Gregorio Hernandez: "Balance and Meditation"]

[Text] It is obvious that the circulation of products in the port-transportation-domestic economy chain has an important effect on the national economy, directly influencing fulfillment of production plans, development tasks and popular consumption.

Based on this reality, there is concern in the party and the state for the maximum operational efficiency of this mechanism because of what it represents for our rate of economic growth.

We can say that all the sectors involved in this port-transportation-domestic economy chain are now fully aware of its significance and work hard. This roundtable is being held in the capital of Pinar del Rio. This province is in first place in the national effort for optimal operation of this chain although problems persist.

The panelists who participated were: Emilio Pimienta, chairman of the provincial committee for this chain and vice president of the people's government; Rodolfo Diaz, vice chairman of the provincial committee; Manuel Morales, provincial director of EXPEDITRANS [expansion unknown]; Nicolas Arronte, director of transportation sector; Victor M. Alvarez, provincial delegate from the western division of the national railroad; Francisco Freiye, traffic chief of the Truck Enterprise of MITRANS [Ministry of Transportation]; Raul Diaz, wholesale trade representative to the provincial operational group; Diego Valdivia from the municipal CEATM [State Committee for Technical and Material Supply]; Blas E. Valdes from the Ministry of Construction in Pinar del Rio; Felix Ramirez, representative from the Fertilizer Factory; and Juan Morera of the provincial CTC [Central Organization of Cuban Trade Unions].

Here, reader, is the roundtable on the port-transportation-domestic economy chain in the westernmost region of the country.

[Question] Pinar del Rio is the province that has done the best work in the chain. To what is this success due?

Pimienta: The work done by the chain can be summarized in two aspects: measurable achievements like bonuses for prompt expedition; and better rotation of the

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equipment that transports the merchandise to the province, from the province and within the province. We have worked and we have achieved since bonuses for prompt expedition are higher than demurrage payments. We have been improving since June 1980 when we began this battle under the guidelines of the Politburo of our party.

[Question] What organizational method are you using?

Pimienta: Daily meetings of the operational group for the transportation chain have given us good results; this group is formed by representatives of the main organizations in the province. At that meeting, we analyze all the problems of the previous day, discuss measures for the enterprises that have paid for demurrage, hear the forecasts for the next day and receive the necessary assurances to avoid demurrage payments. Our battle is to eliminate them. Every week we measure the results of the transportation organizations and each one of the freight transportation users. Also there is a monthly plenary meeting of the transportation chain in which all the provincial offices of the state organisms, the unions, the municipal people's government organs and all the enterprises that have paid demurrage that month participate.

[Question] Are the results of the emulation also determined?

Pimienta: Yes. There has been an emulation organized by the CTC and the unions since June 1980. It has given impetus to all this work that we have developed in the province. We have established similar operational groups in the towns and we are linked with those groups through the vice presidents of the people's government.

[Question] In your opinion, what causes demurrage payments?

Pimienta: From experience we can say that, behind every demurrage payment, there is a situation of disorganization, irresponsibility, lack of supervision and lack of administrative demand. We have seen how the wholesale trade sector has eliminated that payment through organizational measures. That organism which transports or receives thousands and thousands of tons of merchandise only paid for 1 hour of demurrage in a month and that was caused by irresponsibility. The guilty party was sanctioned.

[Question] Has this disciplined form of work taken them to first place nationally?

Pimienta: Yes. We could say that, in general, all the organisms in the province have participated and helped Pinar del Rio stay in first place nationally in the transportation chain. As we said, the leaders and workers of the wholesale trade sector have made that task a daily battle.

[Question] Is any other specific organism responsible?

Pimienta: CEATM has had a major role, especially in the main warehouses of the Pinar del Rio Universal Enterprise, the Fertilizer Factory and the Petroleum Derivatives Enterprise. They have done great work and, in general, have a defined criterion on demurrage payments. There are other important organisms even though they have not had better results in the emulation or the internal microemulation in the

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province. Organisms that, before all this process began, had high demurrage payments--as in the concrete case of the Ministry of Agriculture--have already resolved their problems to a great degree.

We also want to recognize the work of the agencies of EXPEDITRANS, the Truck Enterprise of MITRANS and the railroad. They have helped our province maintain these results.

During this period of time, we have seen that there were no economic criteria for demurrage payments. Payments were made automatically by the enterprises; they sometimes did not know what they had paid. It has taken time to make them understand.

[Question] What problem does late notification cause?

Pimienta: The most serious problem in the chain is notification of automotive transportation from Havana. The lack of timely information results in payment of wages for workers who have not worked. This does not help and we are fighting to solve this. Another problem is that the arrival of transportation is announced but it does not come or two come together on another day. This also affects unloading and our enterprises. This was discussed by the national leaders and we hope it will be solved soon.

[Question] The provincial railroad went more than 60 days without demurrage payments. What measures did it take to achieve this?

Victor M. Alvarez: When the situation of the chain began, we started to work on this with our stations which are our production centers. The chiefs, the train crews and the comrades at the more important stations like Isabel Rubio, Pinar del Rio and Los Palacios saw the need to expedite all the train transportation. They were changing the situations in the hauling stations and loading and unloading stations where good work is being done. Since heavy locomotives began to come to Pinar del Rio, we have more trains to haul the cargo to the unloading places and more rotation of empty cars back to their origin to reload them.

[Question] How is the Loading and Unloading Center operating?

Victor M. Alvarez: This is a small center located in the yard of the Pinar del Rio station. The main problem is tracks since it is a small yard with a lot of traffic where several freight and passenger trains are unhitched. We also only had one work shift. Now we have two and the problem is that, at times, we do not receive enough freight for those two shifts. A new center is being constructed; it will alleviate this situation. In the next few months, the construction materials area will open.

[Question] How does railroad notification function?

Victor: We do not have problems with notification. We inform our users directly and, until now, we have not had problems with Havana or with the province. The station chiefs notify the receivers and the municipal committees for the chain about what they will receive the next day.

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Pimienta: It should be explained that the railroads have no problems with notification. The problem is with the trucks, with notification from transportation from Havana. When we say from Havana Province, we are referring to the port of Mariel, the trucks from Artemisa and Havana City which affect notification to Pinar del Rio.

Nicolas Arronte: We want to mention a serious problem that is affecting the province. We could achieve much more if a situation that has occurred for some time, especially in Havana City, were resolved. The equipment is loaded but does not go to its destination then; it remains parked at those truck bases. Then they show up here at their destination, causing "bottlenecks." The workers in the stevedore brigades are left "high and dry" on the day when they expected them.

[Question] It is obvious that the notification system is creating problems in the province. What measures have been taken?

Manuel Morales: The notification system has two aspects: the internal system in the province and the national system. We understand that we do not have problems with notification within the province; they have been overcome. However, they have not yet been solved with notification of equipment from Havana and the Mariel and Artemisa bases. It should be pointed out that the National Expediting Enterprise and the Truck Freight Enterprise are already working on this problem.

[Question] For a long time, the food warehouses in this province paid the most for demurrage. What is the present situation?

Raul Diaz: Here is what happened. Our wholesale trade sector has been working for some time on improving storage capacity in the province, constructing warehouses where practically none existed. Already in the 5-year period 1976-80, we had 25,000 square meters of new warehouses. Other enclosed warehouses are being constructed with basic loading and unloading mechanisms.

The present situation in our warehouses is that demurrage payments have been totally eliminated. For example, in January the results were as follows: the Food Products Enterprise which has three food warehouses in the city of Pinar del Rio alone received 672 vehicles from MITRANS and handled 21,278 tons of merchandise without paying a single centavo for demurrage and collected 1,278 pesos for prompt expedition. The other three enterprises did not pay for any demurrage in January and also collected a considerable amount of money for prompt expedition. In February, the situation remains the same; that is, we have not paid a single centavo for demurrage nor delayed any vehicle in the province.

Rodolfo Diaz: We also want to mention the meritorious work of the Food Products Distributing Enterprise in the province. This enterprise had a quarterly average of about 1,500 pesos in demurrage payments in 1978-79 and at the beginning of 1980. In the fourth quarter of 1980, that enterprise paid 1,056 pesos and in January 1981 it did not pay a single centavo.

[Question] How is this savings divided into the number of trucks?

Rodolfo Diaz: The Food Products Enterprise receives an average of 650 trucks a month. Of these, about 8 remained loaded from one day to the next at their warehouses.

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[Question] The Ministry of Construction is one of the main users of the railroad for the transportation of sand to the capital. What measures have been taken to load the trains without demurrage and with prompt expedition?

Blas E. Valdes: We have established two work shifts at the railroad terminal; that is, they work 24 hours a day with two hoists. There is also one comrade responsible for verifying that all the guidelines for railroad freight stored in the yards are met. If there is any problem, he immediately informs us in order to coordinate more rapid movement of vehicles. Also the provincial delegate of the ministry issued a provision empowering the representative to the operational group of the chain to take immediate measures when there is demurrage in the railroad or highway transportation.

We have a central warehouse where all the merchandise that arrives at night is unloaded by a stationary crane and a group of stevedores who, when the merchandise is not for that center, direct it to its destination and unload it when it arrives.

[Question] The CEATM warehouses belonging to the Main Chemical and Rubber Enterprise located in Bahia Honda have the highest demurrage payments in the province. What about this situation?

Diego Valdivia: We first want to mention the measures that have been taken to eliminate this problem. These are: appointment of an establishment chief, approval of new workers to meet the needs of the work force, increased shipment of merchandise to achieve greater capacity, organization of the warehouse and national coordination with the port and transportation workers so there is no massive arrival of merchandise or trucks but this has not materialized. Now we are working with the comrades in the town to find a site for an accounting center and the administration of the establishment as well as to solve the communications problem--that is, have a telephone.

So far in February, there has not been a single hour of demurrage like last December when 14 cars arrived on one morning, twice what we should receive, and it was practically impossible to avoid demurrage. We are taking steps so that that congestion will not occur again.

[Question] Whose fault was that?

Valdivia: It was due to the fact that merchandise from different ports and the main warehouses came and all those trucks arrived the same morning. Our warehouses are not adapted for massive reception.

[Question] The measures taken by the chain have increased the rotation of transportation vehicles. Nevertheless, there are problems with trucks that transport fertilizer for the tobacco fields. What is happening?

Francisco Freiye: Unquestionably, agriculture in general has made a great effort. Nevertheless, there are some organizational problems that we hope to solve in the near future to eliminate the delay that has occurred in this activity.

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[Question] Is this the answer or is there some example of how that situation is changing?

Rodolfo Diaz: The problems that occur with the fertilizer for the tobacco fields are as follows. In the first place, the fields are scattered throughout the province. Secondly, there is no place to store that fertilizer although it has minimal use when the tobacco harvest begins. This situation means that transportation goes from the factory to the tobacco house. This makes it hard for the agricultural workers to unload the truck because of the dispersion of the agricultural-livestock cooperatives, the tobacco enterprises and the tobacco fields. This keeps the agricultural sector from exercising true control over the unloading although the situation has improved.

The Ministry of Agriculture has taken very positive measures through the Peasant Sector Insurance Enterprise. It is necessary to point out the effort that has been made in training the comrades who receive the merchandise. They frequently did not know when the truck arrived or returned. This let some drivers put down the hour they wanted and not the correct one.

In January, agriculture faced some problems, mainly in the livestock enterprises. However, there has been a consistent decrease in demurrage. At the end of the tobacco harvest, improvements can be seen in the Enterprise for Attention to the Peasant Sector.

[Question] The Pinar del Rio Fertilizer Factory receives its raw materials directly from the port of Havana by railroad. Is the unloading of these trains suitably assured?

Felix Ramirez: Definitely not. There is no suitable system that permits us to guarantee efficient unloading. Nevertheless, we have made the commitment to not have demurrage for any reason. Unloading the cars that bring raw materials for our factory is difficult because it must be done in a very short time and with equipment that is in very poor condition. Therefore, there is more human effort. We have a workers collective that really responds to this activity and retains the award for best provincial unloading brigade. They unload day and night, with or without equipment.

We have planned the construction of mechanized unloading equipment that will permit us to shorten the time for this task and increase the amount of raw materials unloaded. This will help rotate the vehicles and use the installed storage capacity better. This will be a step forward and a way to eliminate demurrage.

[Question] How does the special microemulation within the chain operate and what results have been reported?

Juan Morera: We can call it a macroemulation because it covers an extraordinary number of workers. From the very instant when we people of Pinar del Rio took on the task of loading and unloading the merchandise, we drew up emulation indices where it was not necessary to use a lot of people. We began to apply these and we reached the conclusion that it was necessary to hold plenary sessions monthly,

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quarterly, every 9 months and yearly. At the beginning, we evaluated the following: best brigade, stevedore, driver, shop worker, repair shop and train crew. Not content with that, we proposed to expand the emulation and included the best enterprise, organism and town. In that way, we encompassed all the links of the chain; soon we will add another basic sector, the agencies of EXPEDITRANS.

We also received an emulation challenge from Las Tunas which we accepted confidently. Our efforts had reached the receptive ears of that eastern province.

Rodolfo Diaz: BOHEMIA can tell all the people of Las Tunas that we people of Pinar del Rio are involved in the tobacco harvest as they are in their magnificent sugar harvest. However, we are ready to receive them in April and be victorious here in Pinar del Rio as they were in Las Tunas in the first half of January. We also want to state that the operational group and the Pinar del Rio CTC have agreed to institute an award for "enterprise with zero demurrage." Starting with the review for the first quarter of the year, this will be presented to each state or provincial enterprise that has not had any demurrage during the quarter. Everything seems to indicate that our CTC comrades will have to print a lot of awards to fulfill this agreement.

[Question] Knowing these operational achievements, what are the economic results of the work of the chain in the province?

Rodolfo Diaz: I would say that the main result is improvement in the rotation of the transportation vehicles as a consequence of the decreased time for loading or unloading.

This makes it possible to exploit the available national and provincial transportation capacity more. This plus lower demurrage payments and bonuses for prompt expedition are the main economic results of the work of the organisms in the chain.

We have examples. During the fourth quarter of 1980, the enterprises and budgeted units of the province paid only 8,024 pesos in demurrage while they collected 36,579 pesos for prompt expedition, a favorable balance of 28,155 pesos.

In January, the province recorded only 308 hours of delay which represents 1.93 percent over that established for all vehicles; this makes it first nationally. These 308 hours equal 1,981 pesos. We hope that when we reach the end of the first quarter of 1981, the figure will be much lower than in the fourth quarter of 1980.

Pimienta: We want BOHEMIA to tell all the readers in the country that we people of Pinar del Rio are working to maintain this effort in the fight against demurrage, to rotate equipment and to work efficiently in the transportation chain. We are doing this without affecting the tobacco or sugar harvest.

Conclusions of the Roundtable--After listening to all the speeches on the work of each of the organisms, enterprises and units that form the links of the port-transportation-domestic economy chain of Pinar del Rio and without failing to recognize the praiseworthy balance, we want to meditate on the cost that the additional work force mobilized for this task at the points of origin or destination of the freight represents.

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We ask whether the economic mechanism of costs in correspondence to operational efficiency is being used.

In other words, is the wage fund of those organisms and enterprises of the domestic economy being affected more as a result of the serious problems in notification?

How many thousands of pesos are paid in wages to workers who wait for trucks that do not arrive and how many thousands are paid when they arrive without notice and it is necessary to contract additional personnel so as not to have demurrage?

Also when a transportation enterprise pays for prompt expedition, does it really use the time gained to increase rotation of its equipment or to give them maintenance or do they remain idle at their bases or in other places?

The answers still leave a lot to be desired.

We understand that, in general, the work of the Pinar del Rio chain is a start on the road to efficiency in this whole system which affects the economy of the country.

In future articles, we will again discuss this topic that is of interest to all.



Emilio Pimienta, chairman of provincial committee and vice president of people's government



Victor M. Alvarez, provincial delegate of western division of national railroad

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Nicolas Arronte, director of transportation sector



Manuel Morales, provincial director of EXPEDITRANS



Raul Diaz, wholesale trade representative to provincial operational group

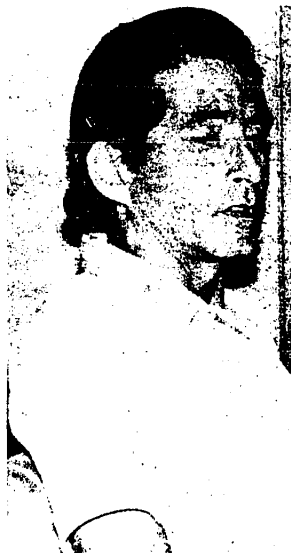


Blas E. Valdes, Ministry of Construction representative



Diego Valdivia, provincial CEATM representative

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Francisco Freije, traf-
fice chief of MITRANS
Truck Enterprise



Felix Ramirez, Fertilizer
Factory representative



Juan Morera, provin-
cial CTC representative



Rodolfo Diaz, vice chair-
man of provincial committee

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COUNTRY SECTION

CUBA

PROBLEMS IN MOA LIVING CONDITIONS CONTINUE

Havana BOHEMIA in Spanish 17 Apr 81 p 89

[Article by Alberto Pozo: "Moa: Tenth Reply"]

[Text] Once again, in order not to break with our readers' habits, colleague Pablo Velazco from the newspaper EL NIQUEL at the Pedro Sotto Alba plant in Moa takes over this column, bringing the tenth reply to the campaign that both organs have been waging in order to improve socioenvironmental conditions in the laterite belt in northern Holguin. Velazco, who remained quite quiet for some time, was apparently piqued by the activity of our colleague CARONI in Nicaro, which entered the fray to defend its native soil through its spokesman in this space, another colleague, Alexis Rojas.

Today we shall take up certain areas in which improvements must be made, and from here on, the voice will be that of Pablo Velazco. We turn, first of all, to the situation of the ambulances. Out of the seven that exist in the municipality of Moa, five belong to organizations and only one of them seven is in operation, due to the lack of spare parts. At least, this is the reason given. Another problem to be solved is the recruiting of doctors for the area because those already working are overloaded.

The barber shop is now air-conditioned, which improves the atmosphere. However, the shop does not have the material resources it needs to meet demand.

It was announced that the new bus terminal would be opened in April. It will have mail service, a room for nursing mothers, pharmacy, self-serve snack bar, bookstore, culture center, telephone service and autostop. These are the announced plans and if there are not carried out, there will be great frustration because enthusiasm is growing in Moa.

The cafeteria service continues to be a very weak point in the area. Of the 36 new administrators needed, it has been possible to hire only 3. On the other hand, 18 processed administrators continue to work. It is hoped that refreshment supplies will be improved with the opening of the new plant in Holguin. However, because of repairs at the Holguin beer bottling plant, supplies are being received from Santiago. Even though the quality is not the best, the famous Pru Oriental is being sold. The El Rancho recreation center has been remodeled and it now has air conditioning. It is an attractive place for couples, although service must

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be improved. At the same time, the well-known restaurant El Balcon is closed for repair. It will open with air conditioning in its enormous surroundings and will have a new bar. The Patio Espanol serves beer with hors d'oeuvres, but fine wines are not available. Service personnel are lacking. Because of the absence of spare parts, 42 cold storage units at commercial and eating establishments are out of service. Work is underway to improve the quality of break and the supply and selection of candy are better.

Because of higher wages, local bus drivers are moving into other activities, especially construction, where they earn more. In addition, out of 20 buses, only 6 or 7 are operating because of the lack of spare parts. Concerning the drivers, 20 young people have been trained and have pledged to remain on the job for at least 3 years. This would seem to be the beginning of an improvement in transportation, which will also affect recreation. because previously, given the difficulty of going from one place to another, the people remained at home.

In the so-called Old Town of Moa, the old pier has been rebuilt in anticipation of the arrival of the boat that was to arrive from the Gibara Shipyards in March. As it did years ago, the boat will provide transportation to Cayo Moa, where the best beach is found. It is time to outline the responsibility of the eating services during the beach season and the boats purchased by the People's Government must now go into service.

We would also stress the need to speed up work on the Baracoa-Moa highway because of the solution it would offer the workers from that city now in Moa. It is also important for the people of Moa themselves, who would like to visit the tourist sites and attractions of the oldest city in our history.

Finally, 300 new mercury lights have been installed in Moa, there are 400 new telephone numbers and mailboxes and telephone booths will be set up in the Rolo and Las Coloradas districts. We are on the way in Nícaro!

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COUNTRY SECTION

CUBA

TORRAS SPEAKS ON THIRD WORLD ECONOMISTS MEETING

Havana BOHEMIA in Spanish 24 Apr 81 pp 48-49

[Report on interview with Raul Leon Torras, party central committee member and minister-president of the National Bank of Cuba, by Raul Lazo of BOHEMIA]

[Text] Only a very few hours remain until 26 April and as the day scheduled for the inauguration of the Second Congress of the Association of Third World Economists [ATWE], which will be held at the convention center of this capital approaches, news reports accumulate and interest increases, in Cuba and abroad, for learning different details on the holding of such an important event, which will hold work sessions until 30 April.

The recent presentation at a press conference of the Cuban delegation to the meeting, has aroused curiosity about it, a meeting which should gather hundreds of participants to discuss the problems of the international economic crisis and their effects on underdeveloped countries.

Heading the Cuban delegation is Raul Leon Torras, member of the party central committee and minister-president of the National Bank of Cuba, who affably granted us this interview.

"The Second ATWE Congress, said the interviewee, "assumes the nature of an event of great international importance. This can be deduced from the large number of participants it will bring together, nearly 1,000 people, among whom are direct delegates to the meeting, special guests and a large attendance of economists, primarily from Latin America, who will come to Cuba as part of a program of tours which will give them the right to participate in some meetings of the Second ATWE Congress and the inaugural and closing ceremonies.

"Together with the members of the delegations from each country, some agencies of the economic area of the state central administration will have the chance to visit so that they may become acquainted with some aspects related to our economic and social development and to familiarize themselves with the process of application of the Economic Management and Planning System [SDPE]."

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Replying to a question on the level of the delegations, Leon Torras says that a large number of ministers of underdeveloped countries will attend, which will contribute to enriching the Second ATWE Congress, since this will make it possible for speeches and discussion to be evaluated not only from the theoretical and economic viewpoint, but will make it possible to have the valuable experience of those who are responsible for the formulation and execution of economic development policy.

After emphasizing that the Second ATWE Congress will be taking place at the very moment when international reaction is increasing its aggressive policy on all fronts, including in international economic relations, the leader of the Cuban delegation says that it is also very important to point out the significance of this meeting taking place in Cuba, a country which represents the hopes of the so-called Third World and which has maintained, maintains and shall maintain a determined struggle for obtaining a new, fair and equitable international economic order.

Therefore, it offers a very favorable climate for holding these types of discussions on the phenomenon of underdevelopment and the strategy for overcoming it, independently of any type of political and ideological conditions imposed by the imperialist centers of power.

"It is anticipated," says Leon Torras, "that the number and quality of position papers will be very high, reaching nearly 100. The problems of underdeveloped countries in their struggle to face the consequences of the world capitalist economic crisis and the establishment of a new international economic order will be dealt with in them."

He then says that Cuban economists will take a large number of position papers to the meeting, which will deal with the following subjects, among others:

The role of multinational companies.

The present evolution of international trade.

The problem of financing development.

The capitalist crisis and its effects on the Third World.

The role of the International Monetary Fund and underdeveloped countries.

Prospects and possible strategies for development to the year 2000.

We learned that a group of young Cuban economists will attend the Second ATWE Congress as part of the Cuban delegation. They will have the chance, for the first time, to participate in a scientific forum of that scope. Our interviewee says: "The holding of an event of specific content such as this, offers young economists the exceptional opportunity to come into contact or to learn more about the principal trends in the field of social sciences, and very particularly the economic, supported in academic and professional circles of the so-called Third World.

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Further on Leon Torras says that the organization of the congress itself provides an idea of the dimension of its topics and the scope of its discussions, for which purpose four work committees will be created to study and discuss the basic aspects, which are:

international strategies for development including the negotiations of the so-called North-South dialog;

development of the New International Economic Order, which will also deal with national strategies for development;

the international economic crisis and the Third World;

examination of the experiences of the ATWE and the best way for organizing its work for projecting itself toward the future in accordance with its bylaws.

In addition to the work of these committees, several round tables will be organized to discuss more specific subjects and in which the participants will have the opportunity to express their opinions on the international monetary crisis, the multinational companies, structural changes in world economy, the energy problem, disarmament, development and other subjects of great interest. Finally, we asked him if the results of this congress, despite the fact that it is not of an official nature, could serve as a source of study and consultation material for the delegations of underdeveloped countries to international economic meetings, thus serving as one more instrument for breaking another link in the chain of dependence on the industrialized capitalist countries, Leon Torras answers: "The conference is going to contribute proposals of a high scientific level, which will serve as guidelines for the formulation of proposals by countries of the so-called Third World in international conferences, where the problems the Second ATWE Congress will deal with are objects of discussion and negotiation, for which reason this event should provide a significant contribution in this respect."

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COUNTRY SECTION

CUBA

COMPARISON MADE OF TWO MINAS SUGAR MILLS

Havana BOHEMIA in Spanish 17 Apr 81 pp 82-84

[Article by Andres Rodriguez]

[Text] We are continuing our investigation into sugar yield. It now moves to the municipality of Minas in Camaguey Province, where the Sierra de Cubitas and Noel Fernandez mills are located.

With the Reader's Forgiveness

This article must begin with the following table showing the comparative situation of the two mills with respect to the factors which, according to informed sources, have a decisive influence on sugar yield.

	Noel Fernandez	Sierra de Cubitas
Out of phase (%)	35	15
(Cane cut when under 12 mos. old)		
Foreign matter	8.19	8.60
Deterioration	Under 24	Under 24
(Average, in hours, of cane cut and delivered to reception center)		
First day of harvest	25 Dec 80	7 Jan 81

Inferences From Table

At first glance, a reading of the factors shown would place Noel Fernandez at a disadvantage compared with Sierra de Cubitas. In other words, the former should have a lower sugar yield than the latter. And yet, this is not so. At least, it was not so on 31 January of this year, when we began our research.

Let us take a look at what is revealed by that decisive indicator on the date mentioned, which will be the pattern we shall follow:

	Yield on Basis of 96
Noel Fernandez	10.82
Sierra de Cubitas	9.63

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Could industrial efficiency be the cause of this difference of 1.19? Let us then look at a simple indicator that measures efficiency precisely, called the pol-yield difference -- that is, the difference between the sugar (pol) that was supposedly contained in the cane and the sugar that went into the bag at the conclusion of the industrial process.

	Pol-Yield Difference
Noel Fernandez	1.20
Sierra de Cubitas	1.55

Without any doubt, Noel is more efficient than Sierra, but this fact does not cover the difference in the yield shown. What is important is that according to the universal system of sugar accounting, the former received cane higher in pol than the latter did, as the figures show:

	Pol in Cane
Noel Fernandez	12.02
Sierra de Cubitas	11.18

In short, Noel's cane brought more sugar from the field, despite the results shown in the opening table which we provided, with the reader's indulgence.

In Search of Other Factors

	Cane Milled (%)	
	Burned	Green
Noel Fernandez	45	55
Sierra de Cubitas	5	95

Despite the sizable contrast that can be observed, it is possible that this has no effect if we go by the level of freshness with which the cane was delivered in both cases. It is possible....

But even if one assumes that such indicators of freshness are totally reliable, one would then have to analyze the harvesting systems used in both cases, for which purpose we refer the reader to the following table entitled "System of Harvesting":

System of Harvesting

	Noel Fernandez	Sierra de Cubitas
Mechanized harvesting (%)	46	38
Cane processed at collection center (%)	78	76
Manual harvesting (%)	54	62
Mechanized loading (%)	100	100
Direct loading into dump trucks	22	29
Loading into railroad cars	78	71
Total collection centers	8	9

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A 5-minute break so that the reader may read the table. Now, what are the conclusions?

Cane processed by mechanical means (combines and collection centers) and which is suspected of greater possibilities of deterioration because of being cut into small pieces, shows no significant difference in the case we are examining.

And yet, does it turn out the same to mill nearly equal volumes of cane with a burn range of 5 percent in one case (Sierra) and 45 percent in the other (Noel Fernandez)?

Let us then take a look at the difference in varieties.

However, before taking up this factor, it is worthwhile to give a preliminary warning. There are no significant advantages in the varieties of the two enterprises. At both, the predominant variety is Mayari 5514, whose optimum harvesting season is beginning during the last 10 days of March, which is when it reaches the highest concentration of sugar.

If it is the predominant variety, it is obvious to infer that in both cases, harvesting was done up to 31 January, with the resulting out-of-phase effects, which was also the case with another variety that matures late, the resistant Puerto Rico 980.

In the final analysis, how great was the phase variation?

	(In %)		
	Mayari 5514	PR 980	Total
Noel Fernandez	32	8	40
Sierra de Cubitas	43	16	59

Would the greater variation of Sierra de Cubitas have a significant effect on its notable drop in sugar yield compared with Noel Fernandez?

One should take a look at other factors that we shall unfortunately have to leave to future research.

One of them, inadequately defined as yet, is that relating to the flowering of cane plantations.

"A year of flowers is a year of ruin," Alvaro Reynoso told a plantation-owner friend.

The famous Cuban thinker, whose work continues to be a kind of "Das Kapital" for sugar cane, devoted space in it to the phenomenon of blooming cane.

In his "Essay on Sugar Cane Cultivation," written over a century ago, he said the following:

"Blooming cane will yield very little sugar. Its sugar may be very difficult to process, and so on. We would add that it is best to mill cane that is very mature and well developed but not in flower. Juice from cane that has bloomed is always somewhat altered."

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The effect of blooming on sugar yield would appear obvious and undebatable, but as we have already pointed out, this phenomenon requires further study and evaluation to determine the degree of the effect.

We shall also have to leave another important factor for the future: the proper application of balanced, nitrogen fertilizers, both with respect to proper doses and time of application. We must study this aspect further, but inasmuch as we are not yet sufficiently prepared, it is better to leave it for another time.

Final Notes

For many, the main "sugar thief" in the mill is foreign matter, the undesirable impurities in the form of straw, leaves, shoots and dirt that get into the industrial process.

No one actually questions the effect of such impurities on sugar yield. Their possible incidence has been established as a drop in yield of .2 percent for every 4 percent of the undesirable presence.

Throughout our research at the mills in the municipality of Minas, we closely studied the problem and on 13 February, observed the following phenomenon:

On that day, Noel Fernandez milled nearly 58 percent of burned cane with an average of 5.27 percent of foreign matter, obtaining a yield of 11.82.

Sierra de Cubitas only milled 8 percent of burned cane with an average of 5.07 percent of foreign matter and still achieved a yield of 11.16 — that is, .66 lower than its neighbor.

Epilogue

We have received the following message:

"My friend: I have closely followed BOHEMIA ECONOMICA's research into sugar yield and, given its enigmatic interest, offer to contribute my modest grey matter in order to further your study. Do not despair. Have great confidence and faith in Hercules Poirot."

Where Are We?

Minas Municipality has an area of 928 square kilometers and a population of 34,000. Its basic economic activity is agricultural production, especially sugar.

It has two mills (Noel Fernandez and Sierra de Cubitas), which are also the only two active mills in Camaguey Province, both built during the 19th century. In addition, it has the only violin factory in Cuba.

A place with great revolutionary traditions, it should be remembered that in the Noel Fernandez Mill, the old Senate, a workers soviet was set up in the 1930's.

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PHOTO CAPTIONS

1. p 83. [not reproduced] Mills studied: Sierra de Cubitas (two tandems) with a normal potential of 600,000 arrobas [1 arroba = 25 pounds] per day, Noel Fernandez (one tandem) with a potential of 450,000 arrobas of cane per day.
2. p 83. [not reproduced] Foreign matter; Many believe it has a drastic effect on yield. How could one then explain the fact that the two mills in Minas have great differences in yield while milling with nearly the same percentage of foreign matter?
3. p 84. [not reproduced] Crossed with Mayari 5514. Is the fact that the varieties are out of phase, as a result of crossing with Mayari 5514, the essential cause of the drop in sugar yield at Sierra de Cubitas, compared with Noel Fernandez?

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COUNTRY SECTION

CUBA

COST EFFECTIVENESS OF SUGAR INDUSTRY TO BE EMPHASIZED

Havana BOHEMIA in Spanish 24 Apr 81 p 31

[Interview with Emilio Loo, representative of the Sugar Industry Ministry [MINAZ] in Havana Province by Andres Rodriguez of BOHEMIA; date and place not specified]

[Text] Among the handful of subjects we discussed with Emilio Loo last week, prominent places were occupied, not only by the results of the present sugar harvest in Havana Province, but also by those subjects having to do with the policy of varieties, drainage, and an indicator of vital importance for the efficient operation of socialist enterprises: cost effectiveness, which means covering the costs of production with something left over.

It was precisely to this last subject that we gave specific attention because of its obvious importance, as well as because of the symptom that it is of the progressive advance of the Economic Management and Planning System [SDPE].

"It is more and more understood," emphasized Loo, "that the materialization of the true economic efficiency of our enterprises resides in the results of compliance with the technical-economic plan in all its categories. That is why it is our firm purpose to achieve the cost effectiveness of all our enterprises in the next 18 months by means of an effective reduction in costs, a suitable use of productive means, efficiency in the investment process and the development of byproducts and other marginal productions.

[Rodriguez] Are you aware of what that commitment means?

[Loo] Of course. In that respect we invite you to follow our course in that endeavor. We shall call on you to witness the first steps which in this respect we shall take in May.

Needless to say we accepted that invitation with pleasure.

[Loo] What did you think about drainage?

The MINAZ representative in Havana then deals with a subject of great importance for increasing the productivity of sugarcane plantings. Drainage is a key element for preventing water, the vital lifeblood of agriculture, from becoming a negative aspect.

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We replied: "The drainage systems being carried out in the enterprises which have mostly low-lying and impermeable soils such as the Hector Molina, Gregorio A. Manalich and Osvaldo Sanchez are very interesting. We saw them with our own eyes in the coastal areas of the Hector Molina."

"Follow that subject closely also," Emilio Loo invites us again, "so that you may check their benefits in sugarcane yields."

From what can be seen, the Havana representative has an interest in having us delve deeply into his province.

[Rodriguez] All right, Loo, let us talk about varieties. Our attention has been greatly drawn to the way you are accomplishing your spring planting campaign without being excessively reliant on one single variety, no matter how great its yield.

[Loo] At the time of the sudden attack of smut [roya] on the Barbados-4362 variety, we became committed to our main variety, the Jaronu 60-5. In these two years, however, we have been developing some new varieties, in keeping with our specific conditions.

"We have obtained two very good varieties, particularly for low-lying land, to replace the diseased Barbados 4362: the Cuba 187-68 and 323-68. Neither of them produces much foliage, both have a long harvest cycle and show resistance to our main diseases. Their progressive development in our areas will allow us at the end of the 5-year period to reduce considerably the significant dependence we had on the Jaronu 60-5 at the end of 1980.

[Rodriguez] What will happen to the Mayari variety in the province?

[Loo] It will be discarded. It is not a sugar producer. The policy has to be to seek sugarcane which not only has agricultural benefits but also has a high degree of polarization and in that way we shall grind cane for producing sugar.

[Rodriguez] In the visits we made to the enterprises in the southern part of Havana we noticed that the people do not like to work with the Jaronu 64-11. What is your policy with respect to that variety?

[Loo] At first sight this is an impressive sugarcane from the agricultural angle. You see a field of it and think it is going to yield 120,000 arrobas, but later you find out it did not exceed 90,000. Actually, it is not liked because it is a cane of little weight which also has a great deal of foliage and becomes spongy, characteristics which do not make it very desirable.

[Rodriguez] Let us now discuss the subject of the harvest. What are its main achievements up to now and in which aspects should efforts still be concentrated?

[Loo] We believe there are some obviously significant results in grinding, recovery, quality of sugar, lost time and the consumption of additional fuel. Results in these indicators are outstanding if we compare this harvest with those of the previous 5-year period. I am going to give you some illustrative figures, trying not to bore you, taking the best year of the last 5-year period as a reference point.

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Potential grinding norm (percentage of fulfillment)

1981-91 percent
1976-84 percent

And this despite the fact that in 1976 the grinding norm was smaller than in 1981.

Absolute recovery

1981 87.32 percent
1979 85.95 percent

Total lost time (in percentage)

1981 11.84 percent
1976 19.45 percent

Agricultural lost time (lack of sugarcane at the mills) has been only .5 percent in 1981.

Petroleum use (in gallons)

1981 310,000
1980 2,232,000

"Where should we concentrate efforts in coming seasons?" Emilio Loo asks himself. "Well, in the losses in bagasse, which are still unjustifiably high; in the reduction and subsequent elimination at the end of this 5-year period of consumption of electricity from the system, where our mills are still large consumers; the complete elimination of petroleum consumption in all our mills which produce raw sugar; a much greater improvement in attention to manpower and a solid stabilization all along the line in the work of the harvest itself, which we still accomplish in some places with unnecessary pressures and anxieties.

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END