

FA-87 ✓

Guantanamo N.Y.

CUBA/EDUCATION
By Lionel Martin ✓

"Epic" and "revolutionary" are two words that sum up the accomplishments and future perspectives of the Cuban revolution in the field of education.

Cuba has become one big school. Of a total population of over 7,500,000, more than two million Cubans are studying under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education plus tens of thousands more in specialized courses given by other government agencies. Spending for education has risen from 79 million pesos in the last year of Batista's rule to 330 million during the past school year.

Before the Revolution more than 800,000 youngsters of school age in the poverty stricken countryside didn't even have a school in their vicinity. Since the Revolution schools have been established in every nook and cranny of rural Cuba and there is not a child who doesn't have the possibility of becoming educated.

In 1959 the revolutionary government established compulsory elementary education (grades 1 - 6). This year a law will be passed making junior high school education

obligatory for all Cuban youth. Junior high will be extended by one more year (grades 7-10).

School curriculums have undergone drastic changes. There is a greater stress on scientific and technical subjects. Underdeveloped Cuba, so deficient in technological know-how and application, is laying the basis for a technological revolution of grand proportions.

Many of the junior highs and high schools created by the Revolution give specialized training in industrial and agricultural fields to assure an intermediate level of experts for the nation's farms and factories.

The opening of educational opportunities presented the Cuban government with a serious teacher shortage. This problem however has not deterred the Ministry of Education from going full steam ahead. How Cuba went forward in education without a sufficient number of qualified teachers is one of the keys to understanding achievements in this field.

One solution was the incorporation in rural schools of thousands of persons, mostly youths, who were not qualified teachers, but whose scholastic level permitted them to teach

those of lower grades. These "people's teachers" were given systematic improvement courses and many have become excellent educators. They filled the gap while the country was training more highly qualified teachers.

The plan for the "Training of Elementary School Teachers" begins with a two year course in Minas del Frio situated in the Sierra Maestra mountains of Oriente province. The government considers that the rustic conditions of the school give the youth strength of character and fortitude. The majority of the students are themselves of rural extraction, and would not have had an opportunity for any kind of education before the Revolution.

From Minas del Frio the youth are sent to a second phase teacher training school at Topes de Collante in Las Villas province for two more years. The final two year phase is at Tarara on the outskirts of Havana. Here the students not only receive courses but also practice teaching in Havana elementary schools.

Junior high and high school teachers are being trained in the Pedagogical Institutes of the three Cuban universities: in Santiago de Cuba in the east, Las Villas in the middle, and

Havana in the west.

One of the decisive initiatives of Cuban education is the compulsory, once-a-week improvement courses given to all elementary and secondary school teachers, most of whom have shown an active interest in raising their scholastic level. These weekly courses have guaranteed a constantly growing quality in education.

The teacher shortage on the secondary level is also being solved in some schools by allowing the best third-year students to give classes to a single group of first-year students.

To stimulate interest in the teaching profession among students every junior high and high school group has "monitors" for each subject. The "monitors" give occasional classes under the guidance of their teachers.

These revolutionary methods have allowed Cuban education to forge ahead at an impressive rate and at the same time, to train increasingly qualified teachers. Cuban educators state frankly that quality must still be improved in education and they are confident that this goal will be achieved in a few years.

Within the concept of quality, the question of a revolutionary pedagogical philosophy is all-important. The vast practical experience of the last years has led to an ever clearer definition of this subject.

The officially stated policy of the Cuban socialist government is to educate revolutionary experts whose spirit of selflessness, sacrifice, social duty and international solidarity prevails. They do not want dilettantes, theoreticians divorced from reality, or a youth spoiled by the very benefits they derive from a socialist society.

The key to achieving this educational goal is a combination of work and study. This principle has already been put into practice on all levels of education in Cuba.

Junior high school and high school students go off to "school in the countryside" for a six-week period during the spring. This year more than 150,000 youth participated in the plan. They live in rustic conditions on the state farms and spend a half-day at work and a half-day attending classes. These young people are making a substantial contribution to the nation's economy by weeding, picking fruit and vegetables,

planting trees and spreading fertilizer while the major part of the agricultural workers are harvesting the sugar cane crop. Fidel Castro has said, however, that even if the students' work were not so important to the economy, the idea of physical labor combined with study would prevail as a necessary method of creating the kind of man and woman Cuba desires.

Students of the industrial institutes participate in a plan called "six by six," which means six months of formal study and six months of work in industry.

Uni University students also go off to the rural areas for

Not only do they
six weeks of every year. ~~xxx~~ participate in productive labor but also
~~xxx~~ in practical studies and investigations related to their specialties.

The entire geography department with its student body of the University of Havana have temporarily moved to the mountainous area of Oriente province to make a profound investigation of the forest cover, erosion, possible water resource plans and the economic conditions of the farmers.

The students, professors and workers of the University of Havana were recently assigned a zone of agricultural development in nearby Ariguanabo. A first contingent of 3000

week-end volunteers went off to work on August 4. Fidel Castro spoke to them just before their departure and challenged them to make a veritable garden of their assigned zone. He stated that the students will be a positive, cultural, educational and political influence on the farmers of that area and at the same time, they themselves will deepen their revolutionary understanding.

The dynamic and ever advancing educational plans of the Cuban government are projected toward the future. They are the basis of the technological revolution that Cuba needs and will play a decisive role in the creation of the socialist man.

Sent August 21 1967

CUBA AND THE NEGRO

By Lionel Martin, Havana

Via
Mexico

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More than 60,000 ebullient black and white Cubans, standing in puddles left by an early evening downpour, demonstrated their militant solidarity with the struggle of the Negro people of the United States. The outdoor meeting, held under a monument whose crowning bronze American Eagle has been removed by the Revolutionary government, was transmitted by radio and television to the entire nation.

The meeting was the culmination of an officially proclaimed week whose slogan was "Our Solidarity with the Negro Fighters who Strike at Imperialism within the United States." Prior meetings were held in work centers and neighborhoods. Sound trucks, leaflets and posters were used extensively to popularize the week and its political message.

A bit of people's propaganda by the workers of the Ministry of Sugar had two hooded Ku Klux Klansmen (one a Negro) chasing two Negroes (one a white) through La Habana, one of Havana's main business districts. Suddenly, to the demonstrative approval of the spectators, the two Negroes wheeled around and turned on their pursuers. The Klansmen, to the delight of the crowd, ran like hell back down the street with their former victims on their heels.