

CUBA CELEBRATES RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Sent Oct. 30,
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Cuba Celebrates Russian Revolution

By Lionel Martin

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During the week preceeding the anniversary, the major newspapers are devoting at least a half page daily to the history of the Russian Revolution or to Lenin's writings.

TV and radio have programmed special commemorative shows.

All major radio stations will stage dramatizations of Russian history and plays; there will be programs of Russian folk and classical music, as well as round table discussions.

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CULTURAL SEMINAR

By Lionel Martin

A giant one-week Seminar in the final days of October kicked off Cuba's preparation for the International Cultural Congress about the problems of Asia, Africa and Latin America to be celebrated in Havana on January 4 - 11 of 1968.

The primary purpose of the Seminar was to initiate a free-for-all dialogue among Cuban intellectuals of all the major themes of the Congress.

Since its triumph, the Cuban revolution has consciously shied away from imposing a monolithic line on the cultural activities of the country. Observers have often been surprised to find all points of view about art and literature and the role of the artist and writer openly expressed. A vast amount of critical and theoretical material on the subject of culture has appeared in Cuba over the years reflecting all shades of opinion. Radio, television, newspapers, art, movies, novels and short stories, etc. have encompassed a great diversity of form and content.

In his last theoretical writings before going to lead the guerrillas in Bolivia, Che Guevara pointed out (Man and Socialism in Cuba) that Cuba had never fallen into the narrow dogmatism of some socialist countries in regard to art and literature, but that the "tendency to escape was the hidden meaning behind the

term artistic freedom." "This attitude," he said, was a "reflection of bourgeois idealism." Cuban leaders do not underestimate the complexity of the problem of culture under socialism and have decided to let it develop in a somewhat spontaneous way, controlled by the general social milieu, rather than by decree. Jx

For these reasons the Seminar is a historical landmark in Cuban history. It is the first time that so many Cuban intellectuals have met to discuss with complete frankness all the problems concerning the complex relationship between the intellectual and society. T

The Cultural Congress of January will, in a sense, have the same transcendental importance on an international level. It will be the first time that intellectual figures from all over world will meet to debate the concrete problems of intellectual life in the Third World. X

Hundreds of intellectuals of the capitalist and socialist worlds, from the colonial and neocolonial countries, have been invited to the Havana gathering. Bertrand Russell, Luigi Nono and others have already expressed their intention to participate.

The national preparatory committee for the Cultural Congress is presided over by Jose Llanusa, the Minister of Education.

Among its members are all the leading lights of Cuban culture:

the poet Nicolas Guillen; the writer Alejo Carpentier; the artists Portocarrero and Wilfred Lam (who resides in Paris); the Ballet dancer Alicia Alonso; the documentary film-maker Santiago Alvarez; the specialist in African-American history, Fernando Ortiz; and a host of talented young writers and critics, Edmundo Desnoes, Ambrosio Fornet, Jesus Diaz, Lisandro Otero, and Jaime Sarusky.

Opening the Cuban Cultural Seminar, Jose Llanusa said that Prime Minister Fidel Castro had suggested that the concept of culture be interpreted in its broadest sense. For that reason they were inviting to the Seminar and to the Congress scientists, technicians and teachers. In fact, around 50% of those in attendance at the Seminar are scientists and technicians, participating side by side with figures of the artistic and literary community.

Llanusa stressed that the Seminar was originated with the idea of creating a dialogue and not of imposing a single view on the participants in regard to the complex problems of culture. He touched this theme in relation to the Congress.

"The foreign delegates to the Congress in January should not come with the idea that they will have to commit themselves to some future international organization. Nobody is proposing that, nor even resolutions of condemnation or of unity of criteria..."

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Presumably these remarks do not preclude resolutions if the Congress delegates desire to make them.

The Minister of Education told the delegates that they should feel free to discuss all the problems of Cuban culture "even though they might not appear on the agenda."

He stressed the importance that the Seminar and Congress would have for the better understanding of cultural problems and announced a wide-spread campaign within Cuba to interest the people in the theme and to disseminate information.

The January Congress has as its general theme: Colonialism and Neocolonialism in the Cultural Development of the Peoples.

It will be divided into five commissions, each with a number of subcommissions. The just completed Cuban Seminar followed the same pattern:

Commission I - Culture and Independence. Can a national culture develop under colonial or neocolonial domination?

Commission II - The Integral Formation of Man. Is it possible to contemplate the integral formation of man without a radical transformation of society?

Commission III - The Responsibility of the Intellectual in the Problems of the Underdeveloped World. What is the responsibility of the intellectual in relation to his own surroundings and to the rest of the world?

Commission IV - Culture and Mass Communications. What should be the role of the mass communications media in the formation of an authentic national culture?

Commission V - Problems of Artistic Creation and Scientific and Technical Work.

For the first time in Cuba the theme "The Liberation of Women" was raised for discussion at a national conference. A subcommission of Commission II discussed all the facets of this knotty question with no holds barred. Quoted by several participants was Castro's remark that the first and principal revolution had been made; now women had to make a second revolution to fulfill themselves as human beings.

The responsibility of the intellectual in the underdeveloped world was another theme that aroused active interest. The point of departure for the discussion was the statement by Cesar Lopez of the Writers and Artists Association:

"... it doesn't mean that you ask the intellectual of the colonial countries to grab a gun and rush into the nearest mountain. This would be another responsibility: first if he wants to and independent of his condition as an intellectual. It means that an intellectual acts as an intellectual."

This formulation was sharply criticized. The majority

intellectual where armed struggle exists, is to take up arms as an example to the rest. Also that the intellectual under these conditions should play the role of propagandist of the struggle, disseminating information about its causes and creating consciousness to draw others into the struggle.

Judging by the national seminar, the Cultural Congress in January should be one of the most vital and polemic of its kind. The idea of encouraging an absolutely uninhibited exchange of views without resorting to narrowly formulated theoretical conclusions will, without doubt, help to achieve the real goal of the Congress: to begin to study and define the problems of culture in the underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and to make culture a weapon against imperialism and for progress.

The Cultural Congress will serve as a clearing house for the exchange of information between countries of the Third world. One Cuban writer, Jaime Barusky said that he is certain regions with vastly different cultural traditions will find how similar are their problems: illiteracy, the cultural influence of the metropolis, the lack of definition of national culture, the lack of material resources for publications, the tendency to develop an intellectual elite, and so on.

Another Cuban intellectual figure compared the coming Cultural Congress with the Bandung Conference held more than a decade ago. "That represented the beginning of consciousness of a political identity ^{among} ~~between~~ the former colonial and semicolonial nations: this one, an identity in the cultural sphere."

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