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FIGHT AGAINST BUREAUCRACY

By Lionel Martin X

"A locomotive that works on 25% of its steam." That is how Fidel Castro described a public administration bogged down in the morass of bureaucratic practices.

One of the lesser known facts of Cuba's recent history is the emphasis that has been placed on the eradication of bureaucracy in the State apparatus and in other spheres of political and economic life. Public analysis of this problem involving the masses is a unique aspect of this ~~new~~ socialist revolution on America's doorstep.

In early 1963 Che Guevara, then Minister of Industry, in an article in Cuba Socialista launched the slogan of "War against Bureaucracy."

Guevara stated that bureaucracy was, in part, an inheritance from the past and in part, a consequence of the revolutionary regime's own development. He noted that the administrative free-for-all of the revolution's first year was countered by the introduction of a highly centralized bureaucratic apparatus. This was due, he said, to the lack of both efficient intermediate-level functionaries and an adequate control apparatus for detecting and curbing bureaucratic practices.

In July of the same year, the president of the Republic, Osvaldo Dorticos, also spoke on the growing problem of bureaucracy. He stressed as the most important contributing factor to this phenomenon

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the inadequate organizational structure of governmental bodies. A few days later, Armando Hart, then Minister of Education and now Organizational Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba, broadened the analysis of bureaucracy to include the mass organizations, whose full time personnel had grown by leaps and bounds. He said that professionalism in these mass organizations was the twin brother of bureaucracy in the state.

During 1964, the state apparatus became increasingly top-heavy. While Cuba fought to develop its production in the midst of a shortage of manpower on many fronts, there was arising in Havana, the "hydrocephalic" center ^{atop} of Cuba's still underdeveloped countryside, a growing number of unproductive administrators, technical personnel, office workers, chauffeurs, etc.

A corollary to this development was the growing amount of paper work, as public officials invented, as if to prove correct Parkinson's laws, thousands of forms, questionnaires, applications and duplicate copies that had to be filled out by workers in the lower echelons of the state apparatus. These superfluous papers were added to the already bulging files of some Havana office. Bureaucratic ~~xxxx~~ styles of work characterized by functionaries operating from behind closed doors, communicating with the outside world by means of telephones and "selective interviews" and oriented by a small circle of confidants became the order of the day.

A master satirical job against bureaucracy was "Death of a Bureaucrat" produced by Cuba's young film industry. The plot tells of the burial of the head-of a typical Cuban family; the robbery by night of the cadaver by the family to get his social security card that had been buried with him and which the family needs to obtain a pension for the widow; and, finally, the trials and tribulations of the family to get the cadaver reburied, ending in the murder of a bureaucrat and the insanity of one of his victims.

It was notorious that at times lower-level initiative was punished by short-sighted superiors, jealous of their authority. Thus, popular ~~initiative~~ creative energy was dissipated, restrained or squashed by bureaucratic practices in many spheres of Cuban administrative life.

Fidel Castro, Prime Minister of Cuba, in his January 2, 1965 speech in the Plaza of the Revolution, announced that bureaucracy would be fought "with the masses and with the Party." In July of the same year he analyzed the question of bureaucracy at length. He declared that it is the result of the petty bourgeois spirit in a revolutionary administration.

"The petty bourgeois spirit in the public administration has been responsible not only for failing to take advantage of all the creative and dynamic energies of the people, but also for the entronement of bureaucracy. In the thinking of the petty bourgeois the only revolution is the bureaucratic

revolution; they do away completely with the masses."

Fidel announced the coming reorganization of the administrative apparatus of the nation and the "rationalization" of personnel. Commissions to Fight against Bureaucracy were set up all over the country, composed of representatives of the Party, the Young Communist League, the trade unions, the ministries of Labor and Education, and the institutions concerned.

The purpose of these Commissions was to make an on-the-spot survey of each national government body, analyzing the work force and its most rational utilization. They were also responsible for finding jobs for the surplus workers (who continued to receive their old salaries) in schools or productive work.

The first "rationalization" of personnel removed almost 10,000 workers from the national administrative level. However, the new Commissions left the door open for a resurgence of bureaucratic practices. They were accused by Castro of having themselves become bureaucratic. It was discovered, for example, that immediately following the rationalization of personnel many functionaries had replaced them with new employees.

This was an indication of the difficulties inherent in uprooting the bureaucratic weed. On February 20, 1967, the Prime Minister reiterated the determination of the government to carry on the struggle.

"The Revolution has again taken the offensive in the fight against bureaucracy. It does not resign itself lightly to losing such an important battle. We are certain that the battle will be won and without bloodshed. But there will be sanctions. And possibly there will be hundreds of administrators who will be removed from their posts; who will have their salaries reduced, and who will be transferred to non-administrative jobs. If they think that this is just a simple slogan, they will find out that the Revolution means what it says."

At the same time, Castro pointed out that the aim was to establish "administrative discipline."

Commissions composed of Party and Ministry of Labor representatives have, up to September 1967, removed more than 1000 administrative officials from their jobs *for violation of anti-bureaucratic norms* and prohibited them from occupying other administrative posts for periods ranging from one to five years.

In the first nine months of 1967 the jobs of 21,750 administrative or non-productive workers were abolished in Havana. This, added to the first rationalization, gives a total of 31,500 workers. The Ministry of Education, for example, that had more than a thousand workers on the national level, has been reduced to only a few hundred.

The reduction in personnel has been accompanied by a streamlining of the administrative apparatus, and the abolition of all unnecessary paper work. This transition is still in process. A great deal of responsibilities that were handled on the national level

before, are now dealt with by lower administrative bodies. This is part of the conscious attempt of the Cuban government to decentralize economically in order to make better use of the people's initiatives.

What has happened to the 31,500 ~~men~~ men and women removed from their jobs? The following table gives an idea:

Re-employed in industry

Crafts workshops	3,380
Cigar factories	1,110
Other	9,840
	14,330

Studying

University of Havana..	1,570
Technical courses.....	2,100
Preparatory schools for the university and other studies	820

Elementary & junior high	2,010
	6,500

Retired	810
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No longer within plan because of various causes (health, death, leaving country, or withdrawal from labor force)	5,990
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Total	27,630
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The 3,870 of the 31,500 not represented in these statistics are men and women who are neither studying nor have agreed to accept the jobs offered them by the government. For these the government has applied the policy of "patient persuasion." These, like those working or studying, are receiving the same monthly salary they did

on their previous jobs.

The struggle against bureaucracy in Cuba has already gotten off to an auspicious start. However, it is widely recognized that these are only the pioneer steps along an unexplored road. The honest and above-board approach of the revolutionary leaders of the Cuban government toward the problem of bureaucracy has raised the level of popular comprehension of this problem. This fact should in itself help to assure the continued and ever more profound, struggle against the bureaucratic weed.