

FA-99

Expanding Agriculture in Cuba

The idea of March ushered in the Revolutionary Offensive and one of the driest springs on record. In spite of unfavorable climatic conditions there is great optimism about the perspectives of agriculture for the next few years. This is one of those "years of agony" of which Fidel spoke in 1967, a necessary prelude to an economy of abundance. The prolonged drought brought perhaps more agony than could have been expected. The millions of new coffee seedlings were threatened; the sugar cane was of low yield and 300,000 cattle faced slow starvation. In his May 1st speech, Fidel Castro announced that if it didn't rain within the next few days the government was prepared to sacrifice sugar in the form of rations to feed the cattle. By May 5, the ~~monsoon~~ rain began to fall in the three western provinces, which means that the spring planting can now begin in earnest.

The recent speeches of revolutionary leaders since Fidel's mid-March speech have given a clear understanding of the path to economic development over the next few years. The targets have not been presented as targets which, or spontaneously achieved. The days of economic stagnation are dead in Cuba. The plans presented to the public are concrete and include a conception of the tremendous work necessary for their fulfillment. — This consciousness is part and parcel of the ideological offensive; the realization that the road is hard and that the people's spirit is still in a state of suffering and deterioration.

among a large minority of the population and is what explains why workers voluntarily work extra hours to produce more without expecting material gain in the form of more pay. Skeptics, who often base themselves on the experience and conditions of other countries insist that the Cubans are idealists and have departed from the materialist conception of history: that ^{there are} ~~their~~ economic laws that reign during the period of socialist construction.

The Cuban's answer is that many of the so-called textbook economic laws are not that at all, rather they are individual experiences inflated into the status of "laws." The Cubans quote Marx: ~~for~~ that when an idea penetrates in the masses it becomes a material force. It is that kind of material force that Cuba seeks and not that of monetary reward.

All this is part of the Cuban Communist Party's theory. Socialism and communism are constructed simultaneously. Cuban leaders see an organic unity, a subtle dialectical interweaving between the two processes. That is why the University's political economy and dialectical materialism courses no longer speak of two separate and distinct stages in the building of a classless society. Fidel's conception is that in Cuba the conscious ideological struggle for communism, and against the ideology of the small business mentality, begins with the victory of the revolution, and that the State must give at the earliest date possible, the greatest number of "communist" benefits, instead of stimulating avidity through personal material incentive. This means eliminating money values at the earliest possible date. This is the significance of the free public telephones, free admission to all sports events, free school textbooks on all

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The Young Communist League has just called for 50,000 young people to go to Camaguey for an extended period to work in agriculture. They say in Cuba that the battle for ten million tons of sugar will be ~~won~~ won or lost in Camaguey. But Camaguey is the least populated province in Cuba and needs manpower to fulfill the proposed plan. Within a week after the call for volunteers, more than 20,000 had signed up. Tens of thousands of young people are already working for at least ~~for~~ a two years period in the Isle of Pines which is now called the Isle of Youth.

Tens of thousands of city workers are among the "permanentes" ~~---~~ those cane cutters who stick with the harvest from beginning to end. Thousands of women take part in special agricultural plans like that of Mango in Las Villas province and in the Green Belt of Havana.

The incorporation of women in agricultural tasks is one of the prerequisites for success of economic plans. On the other hand, thousands of young men have ~~handed over~~ handed over their non-productive jobs in the cities ~~incorporated~~ women in order to join the back-to-the-farm movement.

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This epic national endeavor that is transforming the countryside is at the same time transforming man. There is something of the "new man" in all these people that have put social welfare above their immediate individual comfort. Capitalism breeds a cynicism that makes it difficult to understand the motive force behind this willingness to work in the still backward conditions of the countryside, for a day, a week, a month, a year, or permanently, but hundreds of thousands of Cubans are doing it to build their economy and to consolidate their socialist revolution.

heatedly against the Cuban theory of economic development. They say that only through a system of material incentives can a nation pass from poverty to affluence. This was one of the major ideas attributed recently to the "microfaction." The government ^{however} insists that material incentive at this stage will only create greater problems for the future because of its ideological implications. They contend that material incentive means stimulating the small business mentality which is contrary to communist morality. Even if initial gains could be attained by the use of material stimulus, its consequences in an ideological sense would be negative. The Cuban Revolutionary Government believes that the people's consciousness of the necessary revolutionary task is the only way to gain the war against poverty and at the same time to create the "New Man" who does not work for personal material gain, but rather for the social good. For this reason the entire conception of piece-work is rejected in Cuba as something degrading and corrupting.

It is an important victory for the moral incentive idea that men and women in many spheres of the economy have been working extra hours and have rejected extra pay. As inconceivable as this might sound to an American worker who has long fought for overtime pay, for the Cuban worker it is understandable and necessary. The idea has taken hold that the State belongs to the workers and the economy of the country can only be built by them. Their children receive free schooling and scholarships, their families receive free medical care, the rents are minimal, and there is no unemployment. A struggle is underway to build total identity between the aspirations of the worker and the aims of society. This has already been achieved

program six months in school and six months working in a factory or shop, often related to the repair or manufacture of agricultural equipment. The University of Havana has its own agricultural region for which its students and its employees are responsible.

One of the major achievements of the Revolution has been the integration of small farmers in voluntary productive work on state lands. Las Villas has had great success in this respect which is a reflection of the success of the worker-farmer alliance that has been carried into practice by the revolution.

The Army is also used in agricultural tasks on a large scale. In a country building communism, military defense and defense of the economy are two sides of the same coin. The outstanding work of the Che Guevara Mechanized Agricultural Brigade in the clearing and preparation of land, and the building of hydraulic works and roads has become an example for the whole country. The men in the Brigade work two shifts of ten hours each. During the other four hours maintenance and repair work are carried out. The work is (see Guardian) planned like a battle and the communiqués of the Brigade's success are phrased in military language. Driving bulldozers and heavy trucks are seen as a way of developing and maintaining skills necessary for the defense of the country.