

CUBA - PIONEER AND LEADER.
Impressions from Two Brief Visits.

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No national revolution can serve as a model for another. Each local situation must shape its own form of revolution.

And yet, there is something to be learned from each revolution. For India, Cuba is more important a source of learning than China. In China the revolution has already been betrayed. With the uncivilized, immoral and totally unjustifiable attack on Vietnam, and the opportunistic alliances with the forces of imperialism which preceded it, China has ceased to be a beacon light for World Revolution.

The Cuban Revolution is only 20 years old. The Chinese is more than 30 years of age, but it began going off the tracks already with the so-called Cultural Revolution of this decade.

What are the lessons which India should learn from the Cuban Revolution? That is the question to which this paper seeks a tentative, not too well-informed answer. The author has been to Cuba only twice; he has travelled widely in Cuba but not exhaustively. He has read much on Cuba and talked to many in Cuba, but is not expert. He has no claims to speak authoritatively on the subject of the Cuban Revolution, but is anxious to learn from the Cuban experience, and this paper is only an invitation to discussion. Let me mention seven elements which have impressed me in the Cuban Revolution.

1. A People Conscienticized.

It takes a long time to prepare a people for revolution. Cubans were more fortunate than Indians in having writers and leaders who conscienticized the masses.

Jose Marti was the not non-violent Gandhi of Cuba. He died on May 19, 1895, decades before Mahatmaji had become a great force in India. Marti was the architect of an early independence movement, much older than the Indian National Congress. It was on July 20, 1882 that Jose Marti wrote his letter to fellow revolutionary General Maximo Gomez, that "Cuba has reached a stage where reconciliation of any kind (with colonial Spain) is futile, and the

need of an armed revolution has become imperative". We Indians thought right through 1947 that reconciliation with the Colonial Master was possible; the Cubans knew, thanks to Marti, that the Colonial masters' interests can never coincide with those of the colonized people. We are still under the neo-colonial yoke. The Cubans are free.

Marti was a poet, a writer and a revolutionary; he was, like Gandhi, formed and shaped outside Cuba - in the U. S. A. in fact. He laid down his life as a revolutionary fighter, fighting the enemy. His blood, as well as his ideas, nourished the Cuban Revolution.

Marti, born in 1853, was already at the age of 16, condemned to forced labour by the Spanish colonial authorities; at 18 he was exiled to Spain, and there from within learned how the colonial system of exploitation functions; in 1873, at the age of 20 he published his first book on the Cuban Revolution. He went back to Cuba in 1878 when there was temporary peace with the colonial masters, but was condemned to exile again, and then moved to New York in 1880, from where he organized the independence movement of Cuba. In 1891 he founded the Cuban Revolutionary Party, which was the main instrument of his armed insurrection against the Spanish Colonial master. He landed in Cuba in 1895 (April 11th) and became an ordinary soldier in the armed uprising; his example of discipline and self-sacrifice made him an unquestioned leader and Major General within a few days. On May 19th, Spanish bullets took his life.

We in India had leaders like Gandhi - who showed us the way by their own personal life and sacrifice, with a universal vision for the emancipation of the whole of humanity, free from all narrow chauvinisms and parochialisms. But these days India languishes without a universal vision or a charismatic leader. The conscientization of our people has also become stagnant: less than 30% of our workers and peasants in India are aware of their predicament of oppression and exploitation, or ready to sacrifice their personal interests in the interests of the social whole, and armed with the structure and ideas needed for a successful revolution. Here, where we are not yet ready for the revolution in India, we need to do much more work.

2. A Leader with a Dedicated Team.

It is perhaps facetious to compare leaders, but it may be useful to look at the differences between Jawaharlal Nehru and Fidel Castro. Both were educated men, with a world-wide vision, determination and courage. Nehru was the leader of three to four hundred millions. Fidel was the leader of only less than 10 millions. Yet both are international figures; Fidel, through blacked out by the mad media of the west, has begun to emerge as a great leader among the non-aligned. Future historians, I believe, will place the right value on Fidel's courageous, self-sacrificing, self-effacing leadership, both as he led ~~the~~ the Cuban struggle for emancipation from U.S. neo-colonialism, and in his leading the socialist construction of the years 1959-1979.

When Fidel led the first attack on the Moncada Garrison in Santiago de Cuba (one of the military strongholds of the neo-colonialist Batista regime) on July 26th 1953, Nehru was well ahead in planning for India's industrial and economic development; today Cuba is ahead of us in social construction. The military attack of 1953 was unsuccessful; but Fidel survived and escaped to Mexico. The famous Gramma landing on the south coast of Western Cuba, again of 82 men under Fidel's leadership, happened on December 2nd, 1956. It was a team of half a dozen people, hounded by Batista's guns, that survived and escaped into the mountains of Cuba, and from there organized the people to rise up against their oppressors.

We in India had no such wide-spread or large-scale organization of the masses for an armed struggle, which was the major instrument of conscientization for the Cuban people. We had no leader in the early years of our national construction who had lived in the woods with the people, dwelt in caves and were fed by the villagers before the revolution. Fidel knew his people in a way that Nehru could not have known his. Fidel was toughened in battle, and lived to build a socialist nation with the same toughness-not with the liberal wishy-washyness of a well-born Cambridge intellectual with high ideals, who spent a few years of British Indian prisons. Fidel is still a real leader with a team of dedicated workers whom he holds together by allowing their creativity to function.

3. A Movement the Learns from the People.

Fidel was an intellectual, a good lawyer who could have been a enormous success in his profession. Instead he set himself to know his people, to live with them, to learn from them, and to lean on them for support and inspiration. If Fidel had stayed in his middle class society, in the company of the Latifundist feudal barons, the sugar bourgeoisie, and the importing merchant and trade bourgeoisie, who all benefited from the connection with foreign and local feudal-capitalist interest, he would never have become the people's leader that he now is. The Government of Batista, whom the Americans had installed in 1952, was the instrument of these vested interests, alienated from the people who were the victims of oppression and exploitation.

When Fidel was arrested after the Moncada attack and tried by the Batista regime, Fidel did not employ a lawyer but made his own defence. "History will absolve me", said Fidel with confidence, because he knew that his fight was the fight of his people against their oppressors and exploiters. Their kind of justice could only be injustice, for the judges were not from the people or for the people.

One can trace the development of the relationship of this group of intellectual leaders to their people through the four main struggles - Moncada (1953) Granma Landing (1956) the Sierra Maestra Uprising (1959) and the Bay of Pigs Invasion (Giron - 1962). Through these four incidents the link between the revolutionaries and the people became complete.

The first armed attack on Moncada Garrison took place a year after Batista the Dictator staged his military coup on March 10, 1952. When on July 26th, 1953, a small armed band attacked a strongly fortified military garrison, it was not expected that the revolution would succeed with just that one blow. The revolutionaries' total capital was less than 20,000 pesos (at the then rate of exchange about one lakh rupees). Their revolutionary army consisted of 165 men, and they had less than that many pieces of arm - rifles, hand grenades and so on. There were thousands willing to fight, but arms were available only for 165. Where did they get the money? As Castro said in his "History will absolve me" speech,

"with the greatest pride I tell you that in accordance with our principles, we have never asked a politician, past or present, for a penny. Our means were **assembled** with incomparable sacrifice. For example, Elpidio Sosa, who sold his job and came to me one day with 300 pesos 'for the cause'; Fernando Cherard, who sold the photographic equipment with which he earned his living; Pedro Marrero, who contributed several months' salary and who had to be stopped from actually selling the very furniture in his house; Oscar Alcalde, who sold his pharmaceutical laboratory; Jesus Montane, who gave his five years' savings and so on".

The attack was a total failure, in terms of immediate results. The attackers were nearly all killed or taken prisoner. Of the wounded who were taken prisoner, only five survived. The torture was inhuman. Prisoners were made to dig their own graves and then shot. Their eyes were plucked out and their testicles **crushed**.

But it was this suffering and sacrifice that drew the people to their side. When Castro and his small band escaped to ~~Mexico~~ and organized themselves to come back in a small yacht which travelled for weeks and weeks (1500 miles) with limited supplies and a haggard and worn out crew, it was again the people's support that made it possible for them to land and go into hiding in the mountains of Oriente province. The landing was supposed to coincide with a general revolutionary **strike** by the people; but somehow the timing went wrong; and the revolution failed **for** the second time. The few survivors from the Granma landing escaped into the mountains and from there organized the people's revolt that put down the dictator on January 1st, 1959.

The Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba by Cuban mercenaries armed by the C.I.A. in 1962, under Kennedy, would have succeeded in beating back the revolution if the people had not stood as one to repel the reactionaries and to defend the revolution.

This people's support belongs to the essence of the Cuban Revolution. The revolutionaries learned continually from the people, living with them, sharing in their poverty and squalor, listening to their simple, honest aspirations, drawing inspiration from their **suffering** and struggle.

In India our revolutionary leadership is too often tempted to become politicians, and to be embroiled in the petty wranglings in the corridors of Government power. We will not have a genuine revolution in India so long as the revolutionary leadership plays politics and forgets the people for whose emancipation they are supposed to be struggling.

It is not inconceivable that India will soon have a leadership that is as bad as Batista's. Whether that happens or not, the important thing is for our revolutionary leadership to take their eyes off the plums of immediate political power, and to concentrate on working with the people and learning from them.

4. A Strong Friend Outside.

It is a lesson which I have learned only rather lately - that no social revolution in any small country is able to succeed without massive support and help from the Soviet Union. And I have also learned that no socialist revolution can count on any of the western capitalist countries or Japan or China as a reliable friend. Direct military interventions by the Capitalist countries have always been to support the oppressor and exploiter - never to support the oppressed. Let me give a sample list of western military interventions in 15 years from 1956 - 1971.

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| 1. Egypt | - 1956 | (Anglo-French invasion) |
| 2. Jordan | - 1957 | (U.S.Fleet moves to protect King Hussein) |
| 3. Cuba | - 1961 | (Bay of Pigs invasion by U.S. sponsored mercenaries) |
| 4. Dominican Republic | - 1961 and 1965 | (U.S.inspired coup against Juan Bosch and actual invasion in 1965) |
| 5. Lebanon | - 1958 | (14,000 U.S. troops in "peace-keeping" mission) |
| 6. Africa | - 1964 | (Gabon, French troops, Congo U.S. troops, Tanzania, British troops) |

- 7. Vietnam - 1965 (U.S. troops crushing national liberation movement, and waging undeclared war against the People's Republic of Vietnam)
- 8. Cambodia - 1970 (U. S. Invasion)
- 9. Laos - 1971 (South Vietnamese/U.S.invasion)
- 10. Guinea - 1970 (Abortive intervention by Portuguese troops)

We have seen also the recent military intervention by China in Vietnam and Laos. China has acted in favour of reaction in Zaire, South Africa, Ethiopia, Chile and the Middle East. She cannot be a reliable friend, even when formally a socialist country. Only the U.S.S.R. has been consistently reliable in supporting progressive movements - in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Ethiopia, Vietnam, Cuba and so on. The Cubans know this and are not inhibited by western anti-soviet propaganda from relying on the Soviet Union. Without the Soviet Union's direct help in military support trade concessions, credit supply and technical help neither Cuba or Vietnam could have survived. Chile was afraid to acknowledge publicly their need for Soviet support, and when they decided to ask for help, it was too late.

The struggle of the poor today is a world struggle; we fight our own oppressors and exploiters in India; they are linked to the world Capitalist - military system; and if we are to be truly freed, we must fight both the national enemy and the international enemy at the same time. This is hardly possible today without the massive support and assistance of the most powerful socialist nation - Soviet Union.

We in India are just beginning to learn this lesson; but the propaganda dinned into our ears by the mass media for several decades inhibits us from acknowledging the fact that a socialist revolution in India also cannot succeed without full Soviet support. Our socialist parties and even more revolutionary parties go wrong in not understanding this fact realistically. Chile thought first that it could do without Soviet help, then sought that help

when it was too late, and the revolution was betrayed because of anti-Soviet inhibitions and mis-understandings about the international and militaristic nature of imperialism.

5. A Strategy that Knows who one's Friends and Enemies are.

The Revolution cannot afford to be naive or polite. It must know realistically who the enemies of the people are, who are likely to betray the revolution, who are anxious to defend their own interests rather than the peoples'. There will be opportunists who are prepared to pay big money and buy off the revolution. In Cuba too, the vested interests sought to buy off the revolution; but Fidel was wise and astute, and successfully withstood their blandishments.

The Chilean and the Chinese revolutions were both betrayed by failure to know one's friends and enemies. In Chile, it seems, they trusted their enemies to be reasonable and tried to negotiate with them. The latter took advantage of the negotiations to sabotage the revolution. In China too, a series of groups of adventurers took over the leadership of the revolution, under the nose of Mao Tse Tung, though it was a senile, and blind Mao that they used - it was Lin Piao first, then it was the 'gang of four' and now it is Deng Xiao-Ping.

Cuba had one single revolutionary leader who was astute enough to dis who was seeking power for oneself and who was genuinely committed to the revolution. The example of other leaders like Raoul Castro and Che Guevarra, who worked in team with Fidel, ensured the revolutionary character of the leadership.

In India, we are a patriarchal society; every political party is patriarchal in structure; the patriarchs seldom consult the lower ranks of leadership; the middle group of leaders are often afraid to criticize or question the leader. So the only thing we can do is, when a group of people are in disagreement with the leader, they just leave the party and form one of their own.

As a result we have no system of constant consultation and reappraisal of strategy, with regard to chosen goals and stated objectives. We soon forget the objective of the movement or the party and soon are seduced by our enemies. We are easily fooled by our enemies the vested interests. We seek their support and cooperation, and before we know it we have become tame and non-revolutionary.

This is the hardest task for us in India today - a) to keep our revolutionary objectives always in view, b) to constantly be in touch with the people; c) to frequently re-evaluate our strategies and objectives, and d) to keep up the revolutionary spirit and tempo by refusing to compromise with our oppressors and their allies.

6. A Strategy that puts the People First.

Our strategies are always about political power and its manipulation; how to get into Government; how to increase our influence and power through use of the decadent state apparatus of a corrupt society. Power came to Fidel and his colleagues, not because they sought it; but because they had mobilized the masses and overthrown the oppressor.

We put our own interest in power before the interest of the people. All our political parties do this. Even the people who talk about the third front of leftist forces, seem to be primarily concerned about political power and not about a genuine socio-economic and political liberation of the people from the hands of their oppressor.

If we do not do this in a truly people-based way, even if the revolution succeeds in ousting the oppressor, there is the danger to which Fidel Castro pointed in his speech at the constitutional meeting of the National Assembly of People's Power of the Republic of Cuba (December 2, 1976):

"I have always believed that the founders of a socialist revolutionary process acquire such authority and prestige among their fellow-citizens, such far-reaching power, that the unrestricted use of that authority, that prestige and that power can lead to serious error and incredible abuses".

Power is a great seducer. Even today that is what often misleads even Communist parties. What is dependable is People - not Power. A revolution must seek to be close to the people and serve their interests - not seek power. This is the secret of Cuba's success.

7. CONCLUSION

7. The Continuing Revolution.

The seventh and most important elements is the Revolution that goes on after the initial success in overthrowing the oppressor. In 1979 Cuba celebrates the 20th anniversary of her revolution. The American sponsored dictator Batista fell from power on January 1st, 1959, ending a period when Imperialism tried every trick in its bag to divide the revolutionary forces. One of these tricks of Batista was to form alliances with selected opposition groups. Another was to make reforms that would be acceptable to some and opposed by others in the opposition.

Like our 1977, Cuba had a 1944 when the Dictator Batista's opponents won an election, and there was a euphoria of liberation; the Cuban people like us, had to learn that mere change of Government does not emancipate the oppressed and the exploited. The regime of Grau San Martin was more reactionary than Batistas', more corrupt ~~xx~~ and more anti-socialist. A kind of McCarthyism became dominant around 1946. Revolutionary leaders like Jesus Menendez were assassinated. Reactionaries captured the trade unions by brute force and with Government assistance. A new regime in 1948 was equally corrupt and reactionary. Many more brutal murders of people's leaders took place.

It was the people's disgust and frustration that fed the revolution. I feel confident that our situation today is similar to Cuba's in the fifties. People are dissatisfied, disgusted, frustrated, angry, bitter - but they do not know what it is that makes things so bad. There is a longing for fundamental change, but few know in which direction or how to effect that change.

The most important task of the revolutionary forces was to make people aware of what was keeping them down, to lead them along the path that leads to revolution and to help them organize themselves for radical change. Just as this process began, American imperialism hit back with the 1952 military coup which made Batista the dictator. The army now became the official agent of repression, and of catering to the interests of U.S. imperialism. The army's role was not to defend Cuba or her interests, but to defend the interests of the U.S.A. and the Cuban big businessmen and of the planters who were their allies. Do we in India have to go through a stage like that yet, before we become mature for revolution? The Cuban revolution had to

fight an army before it could wrest power from their oppressors and exploiters. Only military action, starting from small groups in mountain hide-outs, gradually spreading to draw the people into its onward sweep, could take the Cuban revolution to its first major success in 1959. The organization of guerilla work went hand in hand with the conscientization of the peoples. The ordinary people became acquainted with the ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin, and had their eyes opened to understand what was going on around them.

The Communist party was small and powerless. Its leadership came from the ranks of the poor, though some had a middle class background. They were dedicated and disciplined, willing to sacrifice themselves, not looking to power or leadership, but willing always to work and serve. If the Marxist-Leninist Party of Cuba had sought merely to win some seats in the assembly or parliament, probably it would never have achieved very much. What really galvanized the party was the decisive assault on Moncada Garrison in 1953. The assault was not victorious, but it made the party more alive and action-oriented.

During the next 5½ years the struggle was more determined and disciplined until it finally led to victory. The actual involvement in a highly risky, well-planned armed attack on a military garrison was the spark that set the fire going until it burst into flames in 1958. The revolutionaries met with defeat at Moncada and later at Alegria de Pio. But the struggle was not given up. It began again in the mountains of Sierra Maestra. They had only 7 pieces of armaments when they began; but in two years, the people gained access to 80,000 rifles and the invincible army of Batista was broken, because the people were armed and at war with the Government. The revolutionaries paid a high price in blood; but victory was there because the Rebel army was actually "the people in uniform".

What counts most, for us here now, is how the revolution was pursued, in Cuba and how the struggle continued for socialist construction.

II. The Revolution Establishes Itself.

As soon as they came to power, Fidel Castro and his associates did not think that their task was finished. No, Che Guevarra may have lost interest in the constructive side of the revolution, but for Fidel and friends, Socialist construction ~~was~~ was all-important.

1) First, the tissant Batista's associates who had plundered and pillaged for years, had to be given exemplary punishment. It was a hard task - to execute the main offenders, to confiscate their property, to disband the old army, to punish the elements which were corrupt to change the leadership of the civil service, of the trade unions and of other people's organizations, to nationalise foreign-owned companies (U.S. owned Cuban Telephone Company, e.g.) and so on.

2. Second, the oppressed people had to experience some relief immediately. Reduction of Urban rents by as much as 50% and re-allocation of large land holdings were among the first steps. The first Agrarian law was passed in May 1959. In August electricity rates were reduced; a huge literacy programme was immediately taken up and thousands of teachers were sent to rural areas, hospitals began to be constructed in remote rural areas; slums were wiped out and new housing constructed for the slum-dwellers. Homes were built for beggars and employment was found for them. Gambling, drug peddling and struggling were stopped. Measures were taken to eliminate prostitution.

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3. Third, a vigilant self-defence by the people had to be organized to defend the revolution from imperialist forces within and without the country. Among the tactics to be overcome were the following:

- a) the U.S. Government recognized the revolution and sent an Ambassador to the Revolutionary Government; the Ambassador's job was to subvert the Government to which he was accredited.
- b) the monopoly enterprises, landowners and the bourgeoisie, who controlled the media, had indoctrinated the people against socialism and communism. Political colonialism ended; spiritual and intellectual colonialism continued even after the Revolution. A mass anti-communist propaganda wave spread, immediately after the Revolution, to divide the people, to divide the Revolutionary army, and demoralize the civil service. It failed, because the people already had confidence in their revolutionary leadership; of course a strong programme of political education of the masses had to be mounted by the Revolutionary Government.

c) economic acts of aggression used by imperialism included trade boycotts and embargoes which could cripple the economy. Cuba was economically dependent on the export of Sugar to the U.S. market, for almost a hundred years. The Cuban sugar quota was given to other Latin American countries which were loyal to imperialism. The Cuban economy could have collapsed from that one measure alone. The U.S.A. was the major supplier of machinery and spare parts for Cuba. The spare parts supply was cut off. This could have brought the Cuban industry to ~~xxx~~ a total standstill. Petrol delivery was also cut off. There was a U.S. blockade or ban on trade with Cuba.

If the Soviet Union had not taken care of all these problems, Cuba would have collapsed. Only when one studies this feature one realises how impossible it is to have a socialist revolution without the aid of the Soviet Union. That country took care of the market for the Sugar and helped with the supply of new equipment as well as spare parts and maintenance of the old wherever possible. They also supplied the oil and monetary credit necessary.

d) The U.S.A. threw open its doors to as many Cuban refugees as wanted to emigrate, thus draining away a very large number of doctors and engineers and other technicians, architects, teachers, and other professionals from Cuba, again dealing a big blow to the machinery of production in that impoverished country. Fidel was too proud to impose any restrictions on emigration. He said that those who did not want to cooperate in the task of socialist construction could go - and many went.

e) The C.I.A. began organizing several counter-revolutionary groups within every province of the country for subversion and sabotage. A pseudo -revolutionary movement was paid and organized by the C.I.A. operating out of the Escambray mountains, in imitation of Castro's revolutionary group which operated from the Sierra Maestra. The U.S.A. openly supplied them by air and sea. This counter-revolutionary group killed young boys engaged in literacy work and teachers sent to the villages. Finally the people rounded them up and routed them.

f) The mercenary attack of the Bay of Pigs was then organized by the Kennedy regime. On April 15, 1961, U.S. aircraft bearing Cuban emblems attacked Cuba and their mercenary troops landed on the Playa Giron. They sought to set up a provisional Government. It was again the people that routed them and drove them out.

The Cuban Missile Crisis.

It was in this context that Fidel felt it necessary to get ready for a U.S. attack on Cuba, in the style of Vietnam. Cuba could not, by herself withstand such an attack no more than Vietnam could do so without substantial Soviet Aid.

This led to the signing of the Cuba-U.S.S.R., agreement leading to the placing of Soviet warheads on Cuban territory. It was a sovereign decision of the Cuban people to sign this agreement, and were it not for that agreement, Cuba would have been another Vietnam, or another Puerto Rico. This led to the so-called Cuban Missile Crisis between U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. The U.S.S.R. agreed to remove their warheads from Cuban soil on condition that U.S.A. would not invade Cuba. It was the momentous and historic decision to place Soviet warheads on Cuban soil that saved Cuba from a U.S. invasion.

The U.S. continued to harrass Cuba with little pirate attacks on the Cuban Coast, but the heroic Cubans were able to refuse such attacks.

The C.I.A. then organized innumerable plots to assassinate Cuban leaders. The Cuban Government had organized an excellent security force which could foil these attempts.

Economic Measures.

As the intensity of U.S. sponsored counter revolutionary activities became greater, the Revolution set itself to socialist economic reconstruction with determination and courage. The following measures could be specially mentioned.

- a) the organization of people-based (not bureaucratic) national revolutionary organizations: e.g. the National Revolutionary Militia (October 26, 1959), Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (September 28, 1960)
- b) the nationalization of major industries and means of production - e.g. oil refineries, telephones, 36 U.S. owned Sugar mills (August 6, 1960), all banks and 383 big economic enterprises (October 13, 1960)
- c) legislation for social reform to release the burden on poor (e.g. Urban Reform Law - October 14, 1960)

- d) Scientific organization of labour and wages in Industry and Farming.

The Heroic Literacy Campaign.

Cuba's most brilliant and herculean achievement was the wiping out of illiteracy in one year. We in India have much to learn from this campaign. When Fidel Castro announced in the U.N. General Assembly that the people of Cuba would wipe out illiteracy in a few months, the nations laughed. When it was actually achieved less than a year later, the world press suppressed the brilliance of this herculean effort and achievement.

1961 was the year of Literacy in Cuba. The Cubans did it themselves without much help from outside. The only outside help they got was from China, ~~the~~ and Fidel Castro insists that everybody should acknowledge this help - in the form of thousands of Chinese made petromax lamps which were widely used in the campaign.

The Lamp became the symbol of the campaign. Each province offered a certain number of boys and girls to be volunteers in the campaign. From the province of Havana alone 36,673 youngsters offered themselves as volunteers. But in the province around the capital only 2880 volunteers were needed. The Oriente province, where literacy was lowest, the province offered 32,758 volunteer boys and girls, but the work in that province took 65,574 volunteers.

Altogether there were 105,664 volunteer boys and girls and 125,522 popular teachers (mostly untrained) 13,610 workers and 34,814 teachers engaged in the campaign - a total force of 270,000. Of the 105,664 boys and girls some 10,000 were unable to carry on. When the campaign ended there were still 95,777 boys and girls in the Courado Benitez Brigade.

The whole operation was organized as a military operation. There was one teacher's manual and one pupil's manual, as well as lamps, blackboards and other equipment. When the work in a village was finished, often in a matter of 6 to 7 months, the brigade put up a flag - "territory liberated from illiteracy" (territorio libre de analfabetismo). The girls were usually more hard working than the boys, and more productive; they knew much better how to handle the villagers with respect and sensitivity.

The population in Cuba in 1961 was around 7 million. About 25% were illiterate i.e. about 1.75 million. At the end of the campaign illiteracy was reduced to 3.9%. These consisted of some very old people, some deaf and dumb or insane, some with retarded minds, and some 25,000 Haitians who spoke no Spanish but a kind of French patois. Now in Cuba education up to Sixth Grade is compulsory and provided.

It was a nation-wide campaign. Women's organization Trade Unions, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Revolutionary Armed Forces, the National Association of Cuban Small Farmers, Association of Rebel Youth, (later Young Communist League) the Organisation for Revolutionary Integration (later the Communist Party of Cuba) the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, all cooperated.

In the beginning there were many problems. Illiterate whites refused to be taught by blacks. Peasants made excuses like "I can't see". The campaign set up optometric units and provided glasses for those who claimed that they could not see. 200,000 eyeglasses were distributed. Each village, as they finished the campaign, wrote a collective letter to Fidel Castro.

There were more serious problems - especially from reactionaries. During the Bay of Pigs invasion the mercenaries attacked also the literacy campaign. In the Museum of Literacy you can still see the blackboard used in Playa Giron - riddled with bullets.

Even a peaceful literacy campaign had its roll of martyrs. Conrado Benitez, a young boy of 16 was assassinated by the reactionaries. Another boy Delfin Sen was killed. Manuel Ascunce, a 16 year old boy and Pedro Lantigua were hanged by counter-revolutionaries. Leonte Guerra - Castillas was stabbed 40 times before he was hanged. Altogether there were 41 casualties - killed or died in accident or sickness.

When the educating brigades marched back in triumph to Havana they were received by Fidel. They asked for no reward or recognition. They said, "Fidel, we have done what you asked us to do. Now tell us what we should do next". It was an inspiring hour. Fidel told them "I want you to go home. When you get home, send me a telegram and say what you would like to do next".

Many said they would like to build schools for those who had been made literate. Construction brigades were organized and school construction began. By next year (1980) it is hoped that everybody would have completed at least a sixth grade education. Peasants and workers' adult education campaigns were also organized as a follow-up programme.

The literacy campaign of 1961 started something. The revolutionary fervour generated by that campaign is still going strong. It was that fervour that united all revolutionary forces, under the guidance of the Marxist - Leninist Party, and put an end to all liberal-bourgeois deviation.

The Organisation of the Economy.

It was after 1961 that Fidel and his team could set themselves to the social and economic reorganization of labour. On October 3rd, 1963, a new Agrarian Reform Law was enacted. All farms larger than 67 hectares were nationalized. 70% of the land thus became the common property of the people, and the remaining 30% was encouraged to farm on a collective basis.

Sugar, the main crop received a lot of scientific and technical attention. They set a target of 10 million tons of sugar by 1970; it could not be reached; there were many hitches about availability of labour, mechanization of harvesting etc.

Economic growth in general was slow in rising. 1961-1965 it grew at the rate of 1.9% a year. 1966-1970 the rate was 3.9% a year. 1971-1975 it reached the phenomenal rate of 10% a year. In the 1975-1980 period it will necessarily be less, for a 10% growth rate is impossible to sustain over a long period.

Cuba is poor in natural resources. They have no coal deposits, no large quantity of oil, not enough sources of hydro-electric power; the iron ore available is of the laterite type and the technology for extraction is yet to be fully developed.

Steel and Petrochemicals are the necessary bases of modern industry. In both Cuba is unfortunately deficient. Nickel is available. Large investments are necessary for extraction and

markets have to be found. Management personnel is in short supply, the best trained elements having emigrated in the sixties.

Despite these serious handicaps, Cuba has some great achievements to record in managing her economy. The following figures give some idea:

	1958	1975
Oil refining	3.6 mill.tons	5.9 million
Electric Power	2550 mill.kwh.	6500 mill.
Steel	24,000 tons,	240,000 tons.
Fertilize	195,000 tons	1,002,000 tons
Cement	743,000 tons	2 million tons
Wheat Flour	190,000 tons	510,000 tons
Tractors	9,000	54,000
Irrigation	160,000 hectares	580,000 hectares.

Nickel output doubled in the 17 years from 1958. Paper and Cardboard output increased 150%, Textiles also 15% increase. Footwear 200%. Fish Catch increased 500%. Citrus crops 800%, egg production 500%, 17,000 kilometers of roads and highways were constructed.

These are not inconsiderable achievements. But the main achievements of Cuba, according to my personal thinking is in the task of socio-economic organization.

Organization of Production and Elimination of Unemployment.

In 1958, one-third of the working population was unemployed. The population was 6.7 million, the number of unemployed 700,000. 45% of unemployment was in rural areas. This is very

similar to our situation in India, except that our rural unemployment is possibly greater. We have more than 8 million registered unemployed of whom at least three million have a secondary education. As percentage of total work force perhaps our unemployment problem is smaller than that of Cuba in 1958. About 10% of the total population of Cuba was unemployed then. About $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ of our total population is unemployed now.

What did the Cubans do to wipe out unemployment?

First they concentrated on increasing agricultural production, construction, and industrial production. Second they gave a big boost to the services sector - in education, public health and social services. Third was defence, and the personnel employed in military forces participate in all the sector of production - agriculture, industry, construction and social services. Fourth, as the situation began changing, and there was a dearth of workers women were employed on a large scale in the production and services effort. Then, even prisoners were recruited as fully paid labour force.

Labour was invested with new dignity by example on the part leaders and social education of the masses. Reform of the wage structure was important.

The wages in 1962 were as follows:-
(Calculated at Rs.10/- to the peso)

Rs. 1.80 an hour	0.09%
Rs. 1.80 to 3.90 "	7.17%
Rs. 4.00 to Rs.5.20 "	35.97%
Rs. 5.30 to Rs. 7.00 "	29.74%
Rs. 7.10 to Rs. 9.60 "	19.7 %
Rs. 9.70 to 12.20 "	5.39%
Rs. 12.20 to 17.30 "	1.8 %
above Rs.17.40 an hour	.14%

100.00%

People work different number of hours - from 6 hours a day in mines and some chemical plants to 10 hours a day in the construction industry.

Today the wages have both increased and levelled out. The Sugar-cane cutters, who got very low wages before the revolution, have had their wages doubled; they are also now provided with employment throughout the year whereas previously they were seasonal workers. The teachers of the country voluntarily agreed to have their salaries reduced by half. But subsequently their salaries were increased. The average monthly salary in 1976 was Rs. 1360. This was a 21% increase over 1970.

Salaries and wages are now standardized in 14 categories, according to the degree of skill and training required. Additional bonuses are given for difficult conditions of work (e.g. mines). An average mine worker today gets Rs. 819.60 as salary and Rs. 750/- as bonus. Category 8 - the middle one of the 14 categories, has Foundry workers, carpenters, general mechanics, welders, masons, plumbers etc. Their salary varies from Rs. 1770 to Rs. 2500 a month. Technicians with University training get about Rs. 2500 to 2750 (engineers, economists, senior accountants etc.) A doctor gets about 3500; a specialist Rs. 4000, a University Professor Rs. 4500.

The minimum wage is now Rs. 26.40 a day and is to be raised to Rs. 34.40.

Expenses are low. Housing is subsidized and Government owned. You pay 6 to 10% of one person's salary for rent; but after living for 20 years in a house; you stop paying rent. The majority thus do not pay any rent at all.

Health services are free; so is education. There are day-care centres everywhere; you can leave your children there if father and mother both want to work. Sports facilities are free - so are funeral services. Maternity Care is provided free. Men retire at 60, women at 55. All are guaranteed a pension for life. When a man dies his wife and children get a pension until they are employed. University students get a subsidy from Government of Rs. 2000/- a month. Working mothers get 6 weeks leave before giving birth and 6 weeks after - on full pay.

In 1975 there was a 3 million work force divided as follows:

Agricultural	975,000
Industrial	472,000
Construction	208,000
Transport	184,000
Commerce	251,000
Communications	24,000
Services	900,000

3,014,000

By 1966 unemployment was eliminated. Today there is something of a labour shortage. Housing projects have moved the labour force to rural areas, and the villages are now flourishing with activity.

There is a Committee for the Scientific Organization of Labour. Most labour is now organized on a piece-work basis, wages based on out-put rates.

Average monthly income of a family unit in Cuba is Rs. 2030. Half the Cuban families have only one member working. 30% of the families have two working. 12% have 3. 8% families have 4 earning members.

Workers are organized in Trade Unions. The Central Organization of Cuban Trade Unions had a membership of over 2 million in 1975. The Trade Unions exist, not to bargain for higher wages, as they would in a Capitalist society, but to increase production, to improve quality, to mobilize the people for socially useful work, and to improve the mind and living conditions of the workers. The trade unions help in the organization of mini-brigades for construction projects (schools, day-care centres, public-owned factories etc). There were 1150 mini-brigades for construction in 1975, with over 27,000 workers.

Outstanding workers are honoured as National Heroes of Labour. This title is given to the best workers in 34 different fields each year.

The workers participate in the discussions about national plans goals and objectives for the nation etc. I had several conversations (through an interpreter) with several workers in different factories. I was impressed by their level of awareness and their commitment to socialist construction.

The workers and peasants thus form the bulwark of the national economic effort. I have visited several construction projects, factories, and other places of labour. What impressed me was that they were all concerned more about what they could do for the Cuban people than about what Cuba could do for each one personally.

I had only limited direct contact with the Peasants' organization ANAP (National Association of Small Farmers), but there too the achievement is impressive. It had a membership of about 240,000 (1975) grouped in 6162 small farmers' units. Of these 162,126 owned their own farms, and the others are their family members.

The organization exists to increase production in the agricultural field, and to make farming a socially cooperative activity. Cuba has only 8 million hectares of arable land, and the area is, if anything, likely to be reduced as economic development advances. The population is increasing and the land per capita is decreasing. In 1958, it was 1.04 hectares per capita. In 1975 it became 0.76 (one hectare is about 10,000 sq. metres or more than two acres). We in India have only 160 million hectares of arable land for our 700 million people. That is about 0.23 hectares per capita.

The Cubans ought to be able to become self-sufficient in food. Cooperative farming and public sector farming are fairly efficient in Cuba today. I visited a "genetic dairy farm" near Giron, where cows are bred in such a way as to combine maximum yield of milk and maximum resistance to tropical conditions at the same time.

Both in Agriculture and in Industry, the work has been so organized as to promote both maximum efficiency and a high degree of social commitment on the part of workers and farmers.

The Health Care and Delivery System.

Cuba's health delivery system is reputed to be one of the world's best. Before the revolution 61% of the beds available in the country were in Havana, and one had to have a politician's recommendation to get a bed. Health was the money-maker's racket. Doctors and pharmacists, manufacturers of medicines and builders of hospitals conspired to fleece the people. 70% of the drug market in U.S. hands.

Mental hospitals were even worse than in any country. Up to 15 patients died in one large mental hospital every day. Bacillary dysentery and malnutrition was endemic even among hospital patients.

I visited this mental hospital just outside Havana near the airport, which today is truly impressive. It has 3500 beds or places on a 330 - acre campus. Directed by a psychiatrist who is also a Major in the Revolutionary Militia, the main emphasis is on occupational therapy. They have factories, workshops, farms, chicken-farms and everything else connected with a normal community.

Patients are in wards with about 140 places - at least 100 are always occupied. The patients are not enclosed or locked in, but the beds are in open cubicles with 6 patients in each, one of whom is always an improved patient who looks after the five others as well. The nurse has no uniform, and cannot be distinguished from the patients by dress. There are 1700 workers in the hospital; they eat the same food as the patients. The patients can walk about freely on campus; they make their own beds; clean the wards; do the gardening; improved patients help in the kitchen and in the laundry.

The patients participate in national sports; I saw dozens of national trophies the patients had won. Their orchestra is one of the finest amateur orchestras in the country and Havana people flock to the Hospital to listen to their music and singing. They have a theatre and a 5000 seat open air stadium.

The patients run a first class chicken farm with 35,000 birds. They are divided in 7 coupes of 5000 chicken each, 4 patients being in charge of each coupe.

The psychiat~~ric~~ hospital has a budget of 6 million pesos a year (60 million rupees), but they produce saleable and consumer goods worth 2 million pesos a year (20 million rupees)

What is even more impressive is the achievement in public health and rural health delivery. 56 rural hospitals and 118 dispensaries/^{were}constructed by the revolutionary Government; all doctors are required to serve for two years in a rural area. 336 modern polyclinics with preventive and curative facilities/^{were}established.

In 1959, 3000 of Cuba's 6000 doctors had emigrated. Now Cuba has 10,000 well-trained doctors. In addition 500 nurses graduate every year; 2000 nurses aids. About 60,000 intermediate level medical workers and technicians were trained after the revolution.

They have now eradicated diseases. Polio in 1963 (previously about disablement or death to about 300 a year); Malaria (previously 3000 cases a year) in 1968; Diphtheria in 1971.

97% of childbirths now take place in maternity hospitals. Each expecting mother gets an average of $8\frac{1}{2}$ medical examination.

Medical services are completely free; 140,000 health workers now serve the people.

Small wonder then that the World Health Organization regularly sends visiting teams from all countries to Cuba to study the model health care system that this small country has built up.

Education and Child Care.

The central importance given to education in Cuba is symbolized in the fact that 69 military garrisons were turned into schools, accommodating 40,000 children.

The revolution launched an impressive adult education programme. 3000 volunteer teachers organized themselves, to go into the ~~mountains~~ and rural areas to teach the people. The Frank Pais Vanguard Teachers' Brigade and the Ana Betancourt Educational Plan took care of the education of several hundred thousand adults including 150,000 peasant women.

Basic education and on-the-job schooling took care of workers' education, and by raising their technical qualifications boosted their productivity.

The combination of work and study, much talked about but seldom successfully implemented in India, is another of Cuba's significant achievements. In 1962, several thousands of scholarship students were sent into the mountains to pick coffee. Later, by 1969 work-experience became an integral part of education in all schools.

Today there are more than 3 million students in Cuba (about 800,000 before the revolution). 100% of the children between 6 and 12 are now attending school. There are 620,000 boarding and semi-boarding scholarships. 83,000 students are in higher education, 50% of whom are actual workers.

By 1980, the enrolment will be 4 million. Almost half a million are in boarding schools or semi-boarding schools. The state takes them on educational trips. It is hoped to make education compulsory up to the 9th grade.

I visited the Lenin School, which is indeed a show-piece, inaugurated on 31st January 1974 by Brezhnev and Fidel. It has 6 grades - 7th to 12th. Students number 4500. All are resident. Enormous recreation facilities are provided - 2 Olympic swimming pools, courts for Basket-ball, Volley-ball and Foot-ball. They have a 52 hectare farm or orchard, and 62 hectares of a Citrus-fruits plantation.

Every student has to do $2\frac{1}{4}$ hours of physical work daily from Monday to Friday. Some work in the Orchard and the Citrus Plantation. 75% are engaged in industrial production. They have a battery cell factory, a transistor radio assembly plant, a calculator factory, a regular radio factory, a factory for antennae of television sets, an electronic computer assembly plant, and a sports equipment factory. Students also take care of the cleaning and maintenance of the enormous school buildings and dormitories. The campus is huge - 300,000 square metres. Students maintain the whole thing.

There are 7 schools like this in the country; they train the nation's professional leadership. About 5000 apply for admission to the Havana School each year. The best 750 are chosen. One has to have an average of 85% marks in the last three grades of primary school to get in. The purpose of the school is to develop good leaders in science and technology, in the professions, and in culture. The students learn their academic subjects at great depth have also facilities for training in sports, dance, drama, music, painting, sculpture etc.

Even more impressive for me was the Pioneer City of Jose Marti - near Havana. It has begun to function only in 1978 at full strength - i.e. facilities for 21,000 children, living in 527 houses.

This is where young student come for a week of special training, usually in July - August. During September to May, the young pioneers come for 15 days. A whole school comes - teachers, staff and students of 1st to 9th grades. Classes go on in the pioneer city with the same teachers as back home.

The city has its own sports fields, farms, polyclinics, swimming beaches. Students organize their own life - about 40 to 50 in each house. They can have a special house for diabetic children, with diabetic food and medical help. They make their own breakfast. The main meals are taken in 19 dinning rooms supplied from a central kitchen.

Here the child is given an atmosphere that fosters creativity and the spirit of cooperation. Here they learn to think in national and international terms and to become creative leaders.

The success of this educational effort is what gives hope about the Cuba of tomorrow.

There are no orphanages - orphans are immediately absorbed into homes. 652 Day Care centres care for little

children, so that some 50,000 working mothers are free from worry. By 1980 these numbers are expected to double.

Everywhere I went I saw children happy and full of enthusiasm, maturity and a sense of responsibility, willing to do hard work, yet very pleasant and friendly. This phenomenon alone gives me immense hope for the future of Cuba.

Conclusion.

One could speak enthusiastically about several other measures - social security schemes, sports facilities, the judicial system, peoples' organizations, the organization of the armed forces, the Young Communist League, the Young Pioneers - from all of which we in India have much to learn. We should start now. We should stop the Indian habit of making excuses for doing nothing. The misery of our millions must end - soon.