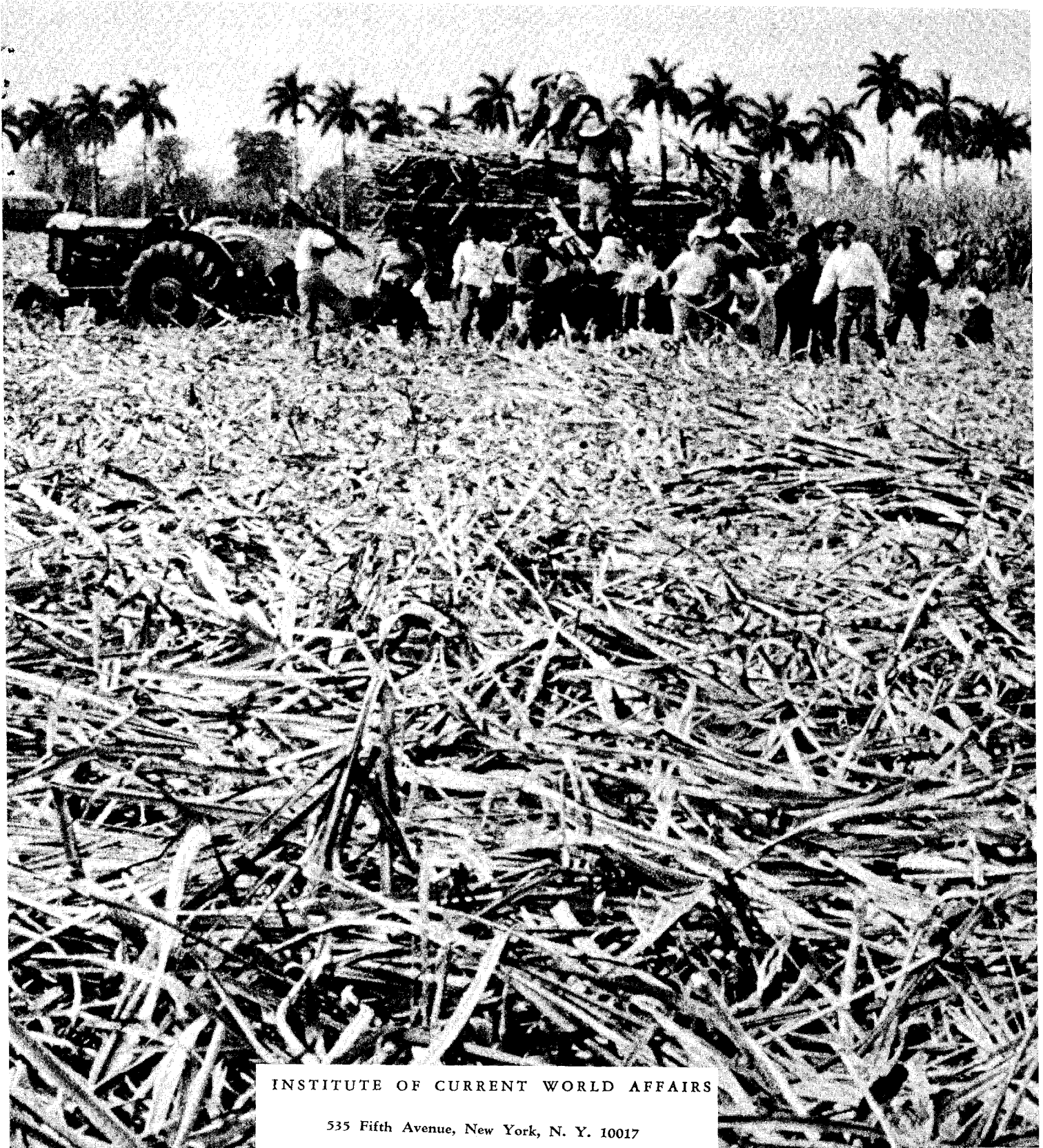


Delia



INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

535 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10017

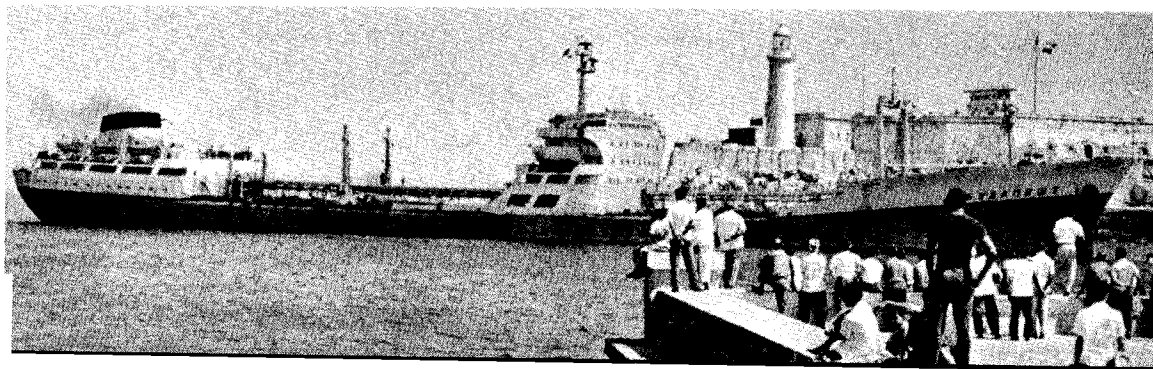
Before traveling to Cuba, I was typically wary about the proverbial "guide" usually encountered at the rail station or airport in a communist country. Perhaps my skepticism was due to previous experiences in the Soviet Union where, as a student in Europe, I used to organize two or three week trips during vacation periods and therefore had to contend with the evasiveness of the guides encountered there. Cuba, however, that wasn't the case, or at least not my experience with those responsible for me. Although I did recognize in ICAP guides behavioral patterns that I'd seen in Russian Intourist people,\* as far as I was concerned my guides, Hebert and Delia Luisa Lopez, were different. Not only were they my "Responsibles" but as university professors, they were colleagues and moreover, until the end, my friends.

The first thing I remarked about Delia when she was introduced to me by Pepin, the hefty bagman and representative of Foreign Relations who introduced us, was her size. She was tiny, about five feet one; and in her work shirt, jeans and black work boots, she looked like a child dressed for battle. I soon learned not let her size fool me, though. She could lift a stack of cane stalks twice as long as she was and work steadily in the hot August sun for hours without a complaint.

I remember the weekend we joined hundreds of other professors and students for a "tre por uno." From University

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\*ICAP is the official Cuban tourist agency responsible for guiding visitors arriving with a delegation. I was not assigned an ICAP guide because I was a long term visitor sponsored by the University of Havana which, through its department of Foreign Relations, handles visiting professors, journalists, academics, etc.



Plaza we were transported in giant green fifty foot trucks to Pinar del Rio Province where we were assigned to plant cane for next winter's harvest. The first night, Friday, we set up camp in a series of wooden barracks jammed wall to wall with bunk beds. At four the next morning our "Jefe," a tall black representative of the U.J.C. was running through the rows of bunk beds shouting like a marine drill instructor: "Al pie ... Al pie ... vamonos Chicos a sembrar."

An hour later, spread out in pairs across the fields, our group had its first taste of planting cane that season. In the middle of the furrowed field, waiting for me to bring her a load of freshly cut cane to plant, stood Delia, a bit of yellow cloth holding her hair back from her sunburned face.

As I approached I was panting and she laughed. "You're not used to this are you? Nor I, honestly. But it's good to get out of Havana." At 27, Delia must have been one of the hardest working members of the Philosophy Department. She was a professor of Marxist Thought at the University in addition to being in charge of the selection of texts used by the entire Faculty of Humanities. Apart from that, she was one of the key members of the UJC in the faculty, and a part-time worker at the Instituto del Libros. On top of these obligations, she also participated in the usual round of other activities organized within the context of a Revolutionary life: the Marxist discussion group; the CTC union meetings; CDR neighborhood meetings; militia duty once a month; and voluntary work every Thursday night at a box factory in old Havana. Almost as an afterthought I learned she was married, which is perhaps one of the reasons she and her husband were then obtaining a divorce. She told me the legal formalities only took three weeks to complete and that finances were no problem so there would be no hassle. As for custody of their four year old son David, both parents agreed he would remain with Delia.

Meanwhile in the furrow to our right, Jesus Diaz was shouldering cane to Marta who, though only 28, was the director of the Philosophy Department. She always appeared to be very efficient and exuded a great deal of strength and confidence that together with her blonde hair and blue eyes, created a special aura. Everyone liked her.

Jesus then began to sing an Afro-Cuban song, a "guanguanco", that allowed for constant variation, the kind of music perfect for those who can't seem to remember words but like to sing anyway. Being very creative and a bit of a showman, Jesus could and did carry on making up verse after verse for hours. I didn't know it then, but he was also a

poet and a playwright besides being an associate professor in the Department of Philosophy. He had been awarded a "Premio" from Casas de las Americas for his book of short stories, Los Anos Duros. Typical of most Party members, at least those of the old breed, one would have never known it from him.

Walking back toward the pile of cane stalks at the edge of the field, I watched Jesus try and demonstrate to us all that he could lift a heavier load of cane than even the most powerful member of our group, Hugo Azcuy. Hugo, a lecturer on the History of Philosophy and a member of the Party was no weakling. Quiet and strong, he had been elected the unofficial foreman of the planting that day. Watching Hugo, I saw that the trick to lifting cane is in the evenness of the load. If gripped correctly in an evenly balanced bunch as many as twenty stalks can be lifted and swung up onto the shoulders. Though tall and well-built, Jesus wasn't so adept at gathering and heaving as Hugo was. Both attacked the pile gathering in the stalks. Yet Jesus loaded unevenly and as he stood to swing his bunch to his shoulder, six or more stalks slithered free and dropped to the ground, throwing the rest of his load off-balance. Hugo, meanwhile, was already carrying twice the number Jesus had gathered into the field. Puffing his way along, Hugo stopped just as he reached me and winking said: "This is what I meant by emulation!" Then boosting the load higher onto his shoulder, he trudged off down the furrow toward Marta.

What Hugo said was a response to a question I'd asked him the previous day. Wondering about the difference between competition and what Cubans call socialist emulation, I received an explanation from Hugo. "What might look like friendly competition between workers to you in actuality isn't that at all. It's emulation. When one competes the aim is to beat the other man and thus acquire the prize or the money for oneself. When one emulates, the idea is to outdo the other yes, but the prize is not for the winner, it's shared with the losers as well. In production, this is really part of our system, the idea being to motivate ourselves to work for everyone, not just for the individual. If we all produce more, everyone will share the rewards. If some don't work, or slough off, we all lose."

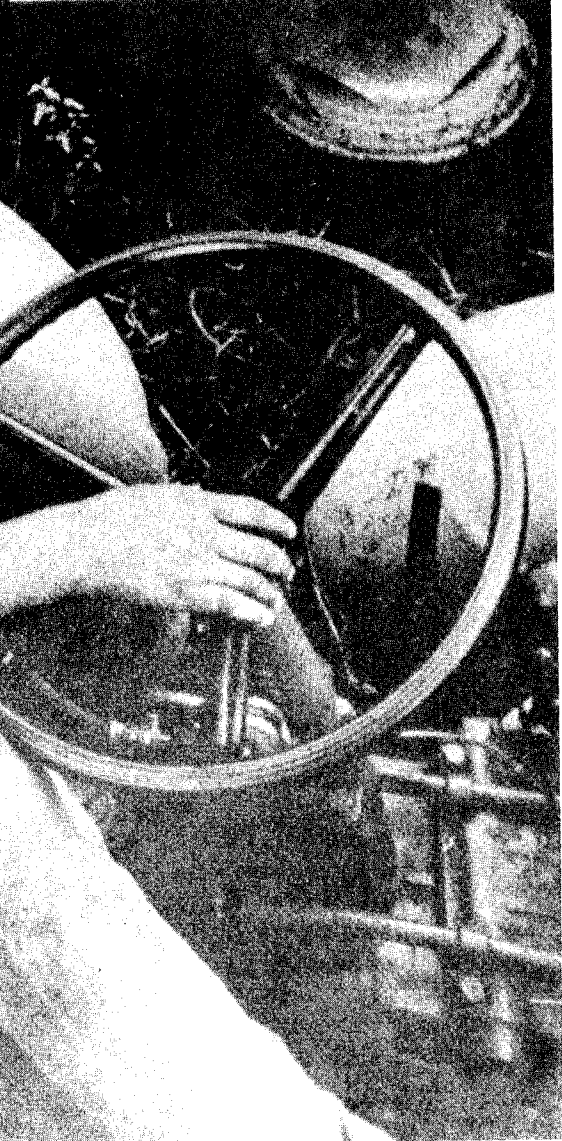
"Yes, I understand what you're saying," I said. "But knowing the prize is going to be shared equally among all the players, and knowing too that the game is very rough, how will you ever manage to get everyone to do their best, to play hard, work and produce."

"Education," Hugo responded. "By educating ourselves to understand that unless everyone works hard, we're all worse off. If half of us don't produce, we'll all have half that much. However, as you know, we are beginning to give special rewards to those who work harder. Not more money, because as you know everyone has plenty of pesos; but more consumer goods. The best workers, those who 'merit' more are awarded consumer goods. It's a material incentive--agreed--and something Che would not accept wholeheartedly. But it's the best way to distribute the limited amount of TV sets, radios, watches, refrigerators and even pressure cookers that we produce. Furthermore, it gives the man or woman who works overtime a little extra."

In the fields with us that day was the spiritual father of our team, Aurelio Alonso. In good form, he was one of the most congenial of all Delia's friends. On the few occasions we had previously talked, he had been open and enlightening, qualities I found unusual given the unsteady ground most intellectuals tread in Cuba. As head of the Party within the Department, perhaps Aurelio felt more secure. Also he had proven himself in intellectual combat with the Orthodox Wing of the PCC and come out a winner. On that occasion Fidel had personally sided with Aurelio and others who attacked "Manualism" during the mid 1960s. The polemic originated when the orthodox wing of the Cuban Communist Party imported thousands of manuals in order to initiate cadre to the main tenets of Marxism, as outlined of course by the Soviet Union. Aurelio argued that the Manuals were harmful, not only from a methodological standpoint (turgid, complicated, oversimplified and not applicable to Cuban conditions), but ideologically as well (the manuals claimed that Marxism could answer any question about, and be applied to, all matters of human existence including scientific and cultural phenomena).

Since then Aurelio, Jesus, Hugo, Marta and others from the Department, including Delia, had been identified as the defenders of the non-orthodox or evolutionary view of Marxism. Essentially they believed Marxism has been dogmatized, event distorted and that as a result more creative scholarship was needed. As exceptionally brilliant and hard working men and women, this group had made the Department of Philosophy the most open and exciting of any in the University. These people were unbureaucratic thinkers, open to new ideas, willing to listen and accept the unorthodox. They were, in fact, waging a quiet struggle for eclecticism within a Marxist framework. Partly, this was because they all considered themselves followers of Che Guevara who detested a dogmatic acceptance of any single line. For this reason too, the Department often found itself at odds with the Moscow line. However, it would be inaccurate to say





that the Department of Philosophy was, therefore, anti-Soviet. More to the point, the group was hostile to the "Cuadrado" mentality, the type they symbolized by finger-drawing a square in the air.

During those early months, rarely a day went by when Delia and I didn't get together for some reason or other: lunch at the Libre; a mass rally in the Plaza; or an evening watching the people's court in central Havana. I enjoyed her company and it was so natural to accept her friendship at face value. Both of us communicated well, exchanged an easy flow of ideas and were interested in the same things--especially politics.

"....What do you think about Fidel's discourse last night?"

"...Can you take Marx as having worked out an analysis of a society that doesn't yet exist?"

"....Do you think the UJC is breeding Party bureaucrats rather than the New Man the Party itself is supposed to represent?"

"....Do recent developments like the increasing participation of the Army in production or the crackdown on intellectuals mean that the Revolution is becoming militarized or worse Stalinized?"

On the union of Young Communists. "Too often the UJC selects a certain type--the least creative--the sort who wants to make a career out of the Party.... The UJC is easier to get into than the Party, and once you're accepted, unless something really goes wrong, you're almost certain to become a full member of the P.C.C. This is not very good because a militant should represent the very best, the purest spirit of communism. The worst thing, though, is the leadership of the UJC. Not only are many pompous and vain, but they're square and not very bright. I won't mention names, but you know who I mean."

On the Cuban Press. "I think the newspapers are worse than ever. They contain less information and are certainly more selective in reporting news, even about other socialist states. Coverage on world events is very bad....if it weren't for the daily clipping service provided to the Department by COR

(Committee for the Orientation of the Revolution) we would know nothing about what's going on outside Cuba.... In certain respects though, I believe our newspapers report the news about the Third World more perceptively and more objectively than your press in America."

On the Literacy Campaign. "When I was in the mountains working that year, teaching campesinos how to read and write, I think I learned more about what it is to be a revolutionary than all my experiences since. They were the happiest days of my life.... How I'd like to return there to see 'my family' again!.... They were like parents to me... Well, maybe some day."

On the Role of the Army. "I disagree with Dumont.\* What he didn't understand, and by the way how could he, he was only in Cuba a month, is that we are so disorganized, so undisciplined, that our economy will collapse unless we introduce some order. And quickly! Because the FAR (Armed Forces) is the best equipped and trained organization we have developed, we think that by introducing their methods to production, we will increase efficiency... There is another side too--ideological. We believe that every Cuban should be a worker, an artist, a student, an athlete and a soldier--all in one! Does that sound impossible? Well, we don't think it is. That's why all of us go to work in the fields once a month, and to the factory every week. And why the soldiers cut cane every harvest and help in production.... I do understand though what a danger militarization can be. But the members of our Armed Forces don't have any more in their cupboards than we do."

As we talked about these issues I thought I received straight answers from Delia and became convinced of this after one particularly forthright conversation. One afternoon, we hurried to an eye clinic after class so that I could be examined for a pair of glasses. We were at the clinic an hour or two because more than fifty people were packed into the waiting room, dispatched by their local polyclinics to the regional hospital for examination of various eye disorders. Medical care, now available to everyone and essentially free of charge, is more than adequate. But it still requires a lot

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\*Rene Dumont after visiting Cuba for a month in 1968, criticized the Revolution for what he saw as a militarization of the economy. His book Cuba: Est-il Socialiste, caused Fidel himself to direct an attack against visiting intellectuals.



of patience, especially for the overworked medical staff. (Fortunately, the glasses only took a week to make, paid for with a requisition from the University. Except for those who still prefer private practice, money never exchanges hands for medical care.) After my examination, we cut across the hill that runs between the hospital and the main buildings of the University. There I asked Delia to provide me with some back issues of Penseamiento Critico, the journal published by the Department. I had read some issues the year before and was impressed by the quality of the articles I'd seen. Penseamiento, for example, had been the only journal to publish an important resolution of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party about the Cultural Revolution; and over a period of several years it had consistently opened its pages to a diversity of Marxist or revolutionary thinkers who did not always square with the current line being handed down by the Cuban Revolutionary leadership. Leafing through back issues, one could read Karl Korsh, a Marxist expelled from the German Communist Party who eventually had to emigrate to the United States; Gyorgy Lukacs, the Hungarian philosopher who has written many important works on aesthetics and the history of philosophy; Regis Debray, the French author of Revolution Within the Revolution, a defender of Guevara's guerilla strategy and implicitly anti-Soviet; Harry Magdoff and Paul Sweezy, editors of Monthly Review; Guillermo Rodriguez Rivera, professor of Letters in the University of Havana, a poet that cultural bureaucrats in the National Council of Culture had attacked; Eldridge Cleaver, former Minister of the Black Panther Party and not particularly beloved by the orthodox wing of the Cuban Communist Party; Michel Tort, a French Marxist who writes on Marxism and psychoanalysis.

I was disappointed, therefore, when Delia told me that she thought she might have difficulty obtaining some of the back issues for me. "They're hard to find. Most of them have been distributed and the current issue is, incidentally, going to be the last one we shall be able to publish. I know this only because my ex-husband, who's also in the Department, is one of the editors of the Review."

It took me a while to grasp what she had told me. It was the first sobering sign I had that some critical changes were taking place within the Revolution, changes that some commentators had suggested were taking shape after the arrest of Heberto Padilla. "Why," I asked, "is the Journal being closed down?"

With hesitation Delia said that because the work load on the Department was so great, the effort to continue publication was overtaxing the staff. There were only fifty

professors of Philosophy to teach the entire University enrollment of 20,000 students she said; and so, her ex-husband and the other editors had been obliged to suspend publication because of this.

I didn't press the matter then, though it seemed obvious to me that in a socialist society, particularly Cuba, publication of a journal wasn't something one undertook or terminated so lightly. Publications didn't start or stop as a result of a decision taken at department level. Higher authority must have acted for some reason.

A week later, my suspicions were confirmed. Lounging around the cement pedestal overlooking the University's main entrance, Delia and I were talking about some of my students when suddenly she brought up the subject of our discussion the previous week. "You recall, I told you that Pensemiento had been closed down because it was too time consuming for the staff. Well, I want you to know that it wasn't quite the whole story. It's been bothering me; but actually the University's Rector in conjunction with the Party decided that Pensemiento should cease publication. There was a formal meeting held and the Rector explained that the Revolution was concerned about the material being published in the Review. He said that it was attracting too much attention and that the positions taken by the contributors reflected on the Revolution itself." Delia went on to explain to me that according to the Rector there was a great deal of confusion about the Review, that many outsiders thought that actually the journal was speaking for or on behalf of the Revolution, which indeed was not the case. This confusion was causing problems for the leadership, so Pensemiento had to be silenced.

Not only that, Delia informed me, but other changes were taking place within the Department itself. Marta had been removed as the Director of the Department and reassigned to the University's television station, which at the time, was not yet functioning. Jesus Diaz, the able lyricist of the Guanguanco, had left the Department to go to ICIAC, the Cuban Institute of Cinematography. What his job there would be was as yet unclear. Hugo and roughly a dozen other professors from the Department had also been summarily fired, left without work pending reassignments elsewhere. (Hugo, Delia said, was transferred to the Department of History, but for some reason there was an objection to this by the Department of History). In short, the Department of Philosophy had been purged of some of its finest minds.



The more we talked that afternoon, the more I realized that the closure of Pensamiento was only part of a larger crackdown on intellectuals throughout the various Departments of the University as well as numerous cultural organizations.\* The limits of what defined "revolutionary thinking" had been narrowed even further, to the point where even a Marxist interpretation of history or political development wasn't enough. One had to acknowledge and support the line as it was defined by the Revolution. Diversity of thought, even within the context of Marxism and Leninism was out and the Department of Philosophy was only one group experiencing the effects of this policy. The same line was being applied to novelists like Eduardo Heras; to poets like Padilla, Rodriguez Rivera, and a dozen others; to theater directors like Roberto Blanco; to journalists in Prensa Latina; and to students at the University of Oriente.

"I'm really concerned about this," Delia said. "I know many of the writers and poets affected by Padilla's arrest, and now it's happening to us. I mean why does this have to happen?"

I suggested that the current pressure exerted on intellectuals to toe the line probably stemmed from the economic difficulty Cuba faced following the demoralization after the failure of the 10 million tons Fidel had promised

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\*Two important pronouncements by the Revolution have clearly outlined the leadership's position regarding these matters. The first was the Report issued by the Congress on Education and Culture published in April, 1971. The second was a speech by Raul Castro at a conference commemorating the 11th anniversary of the founding of MININT. His address was delivered the 6th of June, 1972. In his discourse, Castro called attention to the problem of "ideological diversions" within the intellectual establishment of Cuban society. He warned that the Revolution would soon have to establish laws for intellectual workers just as it has for those who worked manually. It appears certain that there will be no loosening of the ideological belt tightening that characterizes current policy since the failure of the 10 million ton harvest in July of 1970.

in 1970. By September 1970, heads began to roll in every ministry, especially those that were in key positions controlling various aspects of the harvest. Many of these people were in the Party as well. One, Jose Llanusa, for example, the former Minister of Education and Culture, is now in charge of a large pig farm in Camaguey.

In economically difficult times, I said, political pressure builds to control dissent and free-wheeling intellectuals are the first to get hit. At the same time, because of the disorganization and incompetence during the harvest the hard-liners, especially those in the military, acquired substantial influence with Castro. Militarization of the economy reflects this too.

"All of these factors," I said, "including the implementation of the 'mass line,' is going to have an effect on intellectuals. It seems to me that Fidel has decided that if he is going to have to depend on the masses to make the kind of sacrifices he asks of them over the next ten years, he's going to crack down on any signs of elitism that show up elsewhere. And for that, there is no better target than the intellectual."

Delia and I seemed to agree on these points, although I was still more openly critical than she was of the hard liners like Blas Roca and Raul Castro who were evidently two of the major influences on ideological development in this respect. But then Delia did something I'll never forget. Opening up her notebook, she took her pen and jotted something down. she ripped it out and handed it to me. On it were written only four words, "The Revolution Must Live," but they said so much about her.

A few days after our conversation on the steps of the University, Delia phoned to tell me that she was not feeling well and that she would not be around the University for a few days. In fact, it was a week before I saw her again and in the interim, though I didn't know what, something must have happened; for thereafter, an imperceptible yet very real barrier came between us. It manifested itself in many ways. I saw noticeably less of Delia, and she seemed on edge, nervous much of the time. Requests for interviews with officials of various organizations went unanswered. And while she was less responsive to questions I raised about political or ideological matters, Delia began to subtly probe about my relationship with my unclé, about close friends I had mentioned to her in earlier discussions and in other areas that, at the time, seemed overly contrived. In retrospect, of course,



THE FELLOW DURING JULY 26 CELEBRATIONS..TOGETHER WITH DELIA (BACK TO CAMERA) AND ANOTHER FRIEND, ALBERTO FAYA, ALSO IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY. WE WERE ON OUR WAY TO HEAR FIDEL SPEAK IN THE PLAZA