and the Guardian

collaborated to create this supplement on Cuban culture in honor of the 10th anniversary of the Cuban revolution. The supplement replaces the fourth issue of CAW!, the SDS arts magazine.

Painting by Mendive, Havana
Culture in Cuba after 10 years of revolutionary change and growth is impossible to document in a few pages. We have tried to offer at least a sampling from as many areas as space and available material allow. The plastic arts and poster design deserve much fuller analysis and could only be hinted at because of the technical limitations of black-and-white newsprint. They are among the most important developments in Cuban art—from billboards, posters and design in periodicals to paintings and total-environment exhibitions. The music, of course, must be heard and felt, not only seen.

Where possible, we have let Cubans speak for themselves because we feel that they are best able to communicate the Cuban reality.

Barbara Dane
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Editors
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Translation

Excerpts from a speech at Santa Clara, July 26, 1968, the 15th anniversary of the attack on the Moncada barracks which marked the beginning of the armed struggle in Cuba.

Every people, every nation, has its way of making its revolution: every people, every nation, has its way of interpreting revolutionary ideas. We do not pretend to be the most perfect revolutionaries. We do not pretend to be the most perfect interpreters of Marxist-Leninist ideas, but we do have our way of interpreting these ideas. We claim our way of interpreting socialism, our way of interpreting Marxism-Leninism, our way of interpreting communism.

No human society has yet reached communism... A communist society means that man has reached the highest degree of social awareness ever achieved: a communist society means that human beings are able to achieve the degree of understanding and brotherhood which man has sometimes achieved within the closed circle of his family. To live in a communist society is to live in a real society of brothers; to live in a communist society is to live without selfishness, to live among the people and with the people, as if every one of our fellow citizens were really our brother...

The students here expressed the idea that communism and socialism will be built simultaneously. The expression of that idea has led to a situation in which Cuban revolutionaries have been described as wishful thinkers, has led some people to say that this is an erroneous interpretation of Marxist-Leninist ideas, that it is not possible to build communism if socialism is not achieved first and that in order to build socialism it is necessary to develop the material base of socialism. We do not deny this last point...

A people aspiring to live under communism must do what we are doing. They must emerge from underdevelopment. They must develop their productive forces. They must have a command of technology in order to be able to turn man's efforts and man's sweat into the miracle of producing practically unlimited quantities of material goods...

The road is not easy. The task is difficult, and many will criticize us. They will call us petty bourgeois idealists; they will say we are dreaming; they will say we are bound to fail. And yet, facts will speak for us and our people will speak and act for us, because we know our people have the capacity to comprehend and to follow this road...

Fidel in a prison mug shot after the attack on Moncada.

Victoria Dudley
Richard Epstein
Carol Grosberg
Barbara Dane
Susan Lowes
Pat Finerman
Ruth Glass

Children in a Cuban nursery.
Princeton, N.J.: Tonight Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, pioneer in the development of the atomic bomb, died here of the first North American heart attack at his home. Your sad hands are quiet now, in your soft voice, not grasping your pipe now. You don't speak any more. Of things every day more terrible, has been lost. You disintegrate forever. Nor anything. A wall has been raised.

Under capitalism... the alienated human individual is bound to society by an invisible umbilical cord: the law of value. It acts upon all facets of his life, shaping his path and his destiny. The laws of capitalism, invisible and blind to most people, act on the individual without his awareness. He sees only a broad horizon that appears infinite. Capitalist propaganda presents it in just this way, and attempts to use the Rockefeller example (true or not) as a lesson in the prospects for success. The misery that must be accumulated for such an example to arise and the sum total of business contributing to the formation of a fortune of such magnitude do not appear in the picture.

Competition with the past

The new society in process of formation has to compete very hard with the past. This is evident not only in the individual's consciousness, weighed down by the residues of an education and an upbringing systematically oriented toward the isolation of the individual, but also in the very nature of the transition period, with the persistence of commodity relations. The commodity is the economic cell of capitalist society; as long as it exists, its effects will make themselves felt in the organization of production and therefore in man's consciousness...

Blind alley

Pursuing the chimera of achieving socialism with the aid of the blunted weapons left to us by capitalism (the commodity as the economic cell, profitability and individual material interest as levers, etc.), it is only possible to come to a blind alley.... Meanwhile, the adapted economic base has undermined the development of consciousness. To build communism, a new man must be created simultaneously with the material base. That is why it is so important to choose the correct instrument of mass mobilization. That instrument must be of a fundamentally moral character without forgetting the correct use of material incentives, especially those of a social nature...

In order for man's full awareness and realization of his social being to develop in a culture, work must acquire a new value. Man as a commodity must cease to exist and a system must be established which grants a quota for the fulfillment of social duty. The means of production belong to society and the machine is only the front line where duty is performed. Man will begin to free his thought from the bothersome fact that he needs to satisfy his animal needs by working. He will begin to see himself portrayed in his work and begin to understand its human magnitude through the created object, through the work carried out. This no longer involves leaving a part of his being in the form of the labor power sold, which no longer belongs to him; rather, it signifies an emanation from himself, a contribution to the life of the society in which he is reflected, the fulfillment of his social duty.

Social duty

We are doing everything possible to give work this new category of social duty; to join it, on the one hand, to the development of a technology which will provide the material conditions for greater freedom, and, on the other hand, to voluntary work based on the Marxist concept that man truly achieves his full human condition when he produces without being compelled by the physical necessity of selling himself as a commodity.

Che Guevara

Translation revised by Barbara Zanni.
In a revolution, change is dynamic and swift. In Cuba the changes have extended from the seat of power to the ownership of land, resources, and means of production over these 10 years, down into the seeds of creation within the dreams and thoughts of its people. The speed and depth of the changes are dazzling. I could have told you about the attempts to revamp and revet the seedy nightclub routines left over from the George White Scandals, except that meanwhile the nightclubs and bars have been closed and the performers have moved outdoors, going out to entertain and learn from the people working in agriculture. I could have mentioned the music on radio and TV, the breakup of the smoky club and the pretentious theater are replaced by clean sunny air and the back of a truck, where the rest of the world now feels.

An experimental theater group left Havana last month to go to work in the Escambray mountains to study the customs of the people, to find out how they express themselves, and to learn their problems. The group is under the direction of Wilfredo Lam, Cuba’s best-known painter, who is working on this mural project night and day, a giant community mural which seems inherent in the old market-place atmosphere, and replacing the remoteness of the “star” with the joy of community. Just the changing of work from big city to the countryside has made the smoky club and pretentious theaters replaced by clean sunny air and the back of a truck, where the rest of the world now feels.

Organizing and providing all these things is a large part of the work of the National Council of Culture. It has to do with subtle problems. The arts have been plagued by opponents of one kind or another, and capitalism’s legacy of hustlers has not yet been totally transformed. The art is two-pronged. The first is to stimulate creative artists in every walk; we do not want only to find and develop a pre-revolutionary Cuba. There was not one theater! The first goal is to create, “We don’t want only to find and develop a pre-revolutionary Cuba. There was not one theater!” To imagine the excitement and novelty of this unless, these explanations that proved they were not such mysteries involving every passerby through music, look at unfamiliar shapes and conceptions (with I work on this mural went on night and day, a giant community mural which seems inherent in the old market-place atmosphere, and replacing the remoteness of the “star” with the joy of community.

Legend of hustlers

We want a nation of poets

We want a nation of poets and artists,” an official of the Cultural Council said recently. Take, for example, Las Villas province, where six regional councils and many municipal councils coordinate new creative enterprises. Villas has one professional theater and 10 amateur groups, there are 25 orchestras: including dance combos and folkloric groups, a puppet theater and 25 professional solo performers. There is a conservatory of music, with six subsidiaries.

A bus driven or a school kid meandering around for relaxation in the plastic art center might decide he really wants to try out for the National School of Art (Cubanacan) in Havana. If he makes it, he will receive a full scholarship plus a stipend so that he can study with the best teachers available. If he wants to finish in his own province, he can graduate as an art teacher and work in a high school; he can later try out again for Cubanacan. A job is guaranteed to anyone who finishes the course.

Legacy of hustlers

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SOY DEL PUEBLO  
(I am of the people)  
Carlos Puebla

Como cantar es mi oficio,  
yo canto el esfuerzo duro  
de construir el futuro  
con alegre sacrificio.

Por el pueblo voy pasando  
y oyendo su sentimiento;  
lo recojo, y al momento  
se lo devuelvo cantando.

Con alegria serena  
canto lo que el pueblo siente,  
Y canto porque el presente  
no es de llanto ni de pena.

BAJO EL ARCO DEL SOL  
(La lucha armada)  
(Chorus)

Hoy dividi mi llanto por colores,  
dimensiones, y distancias y fue  
Como el Mekong y yo, tan separados  
Que estoy muriendo de vivir sentado  
en la distancia irreconocible quizás.

Quiero olvidar mi voz, colgar guitarras  
en el sol  
Quiero ser humano, sin vestirme de ilusión  
Serenateando bajo el arco del sol.

Under the arc of the sun  
The armed struggle

Today I walk beside another hate  
that surrounds the world and me  
when I am  
And I see reality under a tempest.  
I feel those other blows, other furies  
don't bleed through my kind of wound,  
And I see reality on its knees before the sea.

Look at my wounded hand, that pulses with death,  
and listen to the fire discovered in my voice.  
Look at my wounds in other regions, like Indochina,  
under the arc of the sun.

Today I divided my tears by colors,  
dimensions and distances,  
and they were like the Mekong. And I,  
even more separated,  
Because I am dying to live, sitting,  
may be, in the unbridgeable distance,  
I want to forget my voice, to hang my guitar in the sun.

I want to see action, and to clothe my self like a man with this fate  
And to face with me a bone made of a lover.  
I want life, not death,  
Serenating under the arc of the sun.

I want a bullet, and to clothe my self like a man with this fate  
And face with me a bone made of a lover.  
I want life, not death,  
Serenating under the arc of the sun.
Filmmaking in Cuba is real, in spite of the American economic and cultural blockade. The blockade makes scarcity of equipment and raw stock. It also works in a more devious way. If an American film distributor buys the world rights for a film, Cuba cannot buy the rights. If MGM is the major investor in Antonioni's "Blow Up," Cuba cannot see it. If United Artists buys the Western hemisphere rights for Bergman's "Persona," Cuba cannot see it. This has gone on since 1961.

Some Cuban filmmakers feel uncertain about their work—the direction they are taking—because of lack of communication with other filmmakers. But most feel that the blockade has forced them to experiment with new forms, and that they have had to consider how to combine all the elements of the revolution into a new cinema.

ICAIC

In 1958, ICAIC (Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematograficas, the Cuban Institute of Cinema Art and Industry) was established to teach about, make and distribute films. In order to develop filmmakers (there was no Cuban cinema before the revolution) a kind of apprenticeship evolved: the filmmaker makes a short documentary, then a short fiction film, then a long documentary, and finally, if he or she wants to and if it is approved, a feature fiction film.

But in an underdeveloped country like Cuba, there are constant problems—not enough of anything available to plan a production when one wants to. And so it is necessary to wait until equipment is available, or money for costumes, or any number of things. What has developed is that technicians, instead of sitting idle, have become interested in exploring other areas of filmmaking. One often finds a sound man doing historical research for a film he is waiting to work on, or learning how to edit. Not only does this add to the general abilities and knowledge of the filmmaker, it increases the collective atmosphere and reduces possible elitism and feelings of arrogant expertise.

To make a film

A filmmaker submits a script to ICAIC. If it is approved, he becomes responsible, in terms of content, aesthetics, cost, etc. Once a film is approved, the filmmaker has complete autonomy. He selects his crew, actors, music, everything. When the film is almost complete, he shows it to the directors and other filmmakers at ICAIC and it is discussed and criticized. Scripts are rejected for the usual reasons—exorbitant budget, incomplete themes, inadequacy of facilities.

The films

Many Cuban filmmakers tend toward films which examine the particular problems of a new society—the establishment of a new town, the opening of nursery schools in rural areas—and films with themes like injustices in capitalist countries and involvement with other revolutionary struggles, trying to show their people that they are not alone.

Many of the films of Santiago Alvarez, internationally known because of his powerful treatment of the movement in the film "Now," (1965)—the war in Vietnam—"Hanan, Martes 13," (1967), Abarca's "La Guerra Olvidada" (1967), about the liberation struggle in Laos, is an attempt to destroy the ignorance which surrounds this war.

Long films

"The Death of a Bureaucrat" (1966), by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, is a slapstick comedy which laughs at some aspects of Cuban bureaucracy. Great take-offs on Laurel and Hardy, Chaplin, Laurel, Jerry Lewis, "B," Harold Lloyd and others.

"Memorias del subdesarrollo" (1969), by Humberto Solis, is a beautiful three-episode film. Each story is from a different period of revolutionary struggle in Cuba. The first part, 1895, is rich in the tone and historic background of the period. It is sharply black and white, beautifully costumed, with shots reminiscent of Eisenstein. The second part, 1932, has the quality and texture and the grays of the thirties. Solis must have seen many Von Sternberg films. And the last part, which takes place in the early sixties, incorporates some documentary-style shooting, some Vertov, flat modern lighting, and contains the joy and humor which is the revolution of which we are today.

Distribution

ICAIC has solved the problem of what to do with films once they are made. Their solution is contrary to everything that is done in capitalist countries. Films play in theaters for an extended period of time if they are considered important—aesthetically, politically or historically. ICAIC programs Cuba's hundreds of movie theaters with those criteria in mind, and not the criterion of whether the film draws thousands of people. All films play in the small towns as well as the large cities. There is no film advertising, just a daily newspaper listing of all films playing. There are no real critics. There is a film reviewer, but he basically reports on a film's content.

One of the most important aspects of distribution is the more than 150 Cine Mobiles which constantly travel around the country—to nursery schools, hospitals, youth camps, sugar-cane fields, vacation resorts, everywhere showing Chaplin, Eisenstein, Cuban documentaries. The Cubans know the value of film—for teaching, for entertainment, for art. Film is a part of their way of life. There is probably not a single Cuban who has never seen a film (and there were hundreds of thousands who never knew what a movie was before the revolution).

"Por Primera Vez" ("For the First Time"), by Octavio Cortazar, is a short documentary showing how a Cine Mobile visits a rural town in Oriente province, up in the mountains. The peasants and some of the children are asked what they think a movie is. There are answers like: "It must be something very special if the government sent it; no one ever came here before." And from the children come fantasies of magic, fairness, strange and wonderful things. Then they see a Chaplin film and you see all the strange

A Cuban child watches her first film, "Modern Times."
Our country is an experimental laboratory

Following are excerpts from a recent interview with Alfredo Guevara, director of ICAIC (Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematograficas—the Cuban Institute of Cinema Art and Industry).

What was Cuban cinema like before the revolution?

It practically didn't exist. What was produced was not in any way a part of Cuban culture. So-called Cuban films were usually American or Mexican, with a few eclectic scenes filmed in Cuba—usually scenes of prostitution.

Since a large percentage of Cubans were illiterate, they were unable to read subtitled American films and therefore could see only Mexican films. So large city theaters were dominated by Paramount, Columbia, etc., and the rural theaters by Spanish-language films of very low quality.

We have been particularly sensitive to the thousands of traditional Westerns that were shown in our theaters. In these movies the white man—white civilization—always civilized the Indians by force and regarded any act of resistance as intolerable. Since many millions of Latin Americans are also Indians, this myth of superiority has been one component in their character formation and miseducation.

Would you say that Hollywood perpetuated domination and oppression through its cultural stereotypes?

The cinema is credited with much more power than it really has. It is easy to come to simplistic conclusions—one could say, for example, that the cinema is responsible for everything. But cultural models are transmitted in infinite ways, and imperialism imposes its models much more directly and inflexibly. Besides, the cultural pressure of the imperialist power has been much more effective and relentless.

Our country is an experimental laboratory. We have no models. Neither good models nor bad models—no models at all. In our experimenting, in our need to search out new roads, one of our most important aims is to offer the possibility that cultural formation can be carried out in a climate of diversity.

Fidel often says that we trust our people. In our desire to develop a new man, we should offer—not only to the new man, but to the men we are right now—the opportunity to know everything, to deepen in all ways, to appreciate all things. I am not only speaking of filmmaking, for ICAIC is involved in all areas related to film—for example, in construction of movie theaters. Say we are planning to build a theater in a medium-sized town. If we calculate a possible attendance to justify a theater of 1,200 seats, we always try to build two theaters of 600 seats so that every person will have the opportunity to choose one film or another. These are small things, I know. I don't want to say that liberty, or the construction of socialism or the essence of communism depends on choosing one film over another.

Our movie programs are planned open-mindedly. In Cuba you can see films from different countries, directors and styles, from the most common to the most sophisticated and experimental. This is a clear objective of our work and we think of this as an integral part of the task of decolonization.

The process of decolonization cannot go from one extreme to another, i.e., from the total cultural isolation of our country to the more primitive national forms, stiffened since the beginning of colonization. Decolonization presupposes the rediscovery of lost centuries, but by walking forward, not backward. It requires an evaluation of the native culture, and a revitalization of it when possible. The situation is especially grave in the cinema since we have no points of reference from the past. We must build a cinematic movement capable of joining our cultural past and also going beyond it.

Could you be more specific about how you go about building a cinematic movement?

After the success of the revolution, the cinema was turned over to a group of potential creators and technicians who had a theoretical knowledge of cinema, but no practice. This forced us to a level of improvisation that was sometimes beyond us. We have had to learn by doing.

We have tried to take advantage of all available influences without adopting any artificialism. We have invited filmmakers from different countries to visit, so that our filmmakers can have contact with all the currents, experiences, styles and technical possibilities.

We have had enormous difficulties, but that is natural. We don't think that creating a cinematic movement without an act of magic or the product of a political decree. However, a just political policy could be helpful. I say political rather than cultural policy, because, frankly, I don't have much faith in cultural policies if by cultural policy we mean the establishment of rules or limits within which a cultural movement can be produced. However, I do feel we have been correct in taking, as our point of departure, the idea that our single duty is to create the material conditions (technical and industrial) and a spiritual atmosphere of openness and seriousness that will be favorable to the development of talent. I am convinced that the revolutionary government has been correct in not imposing a conception of art on the artist, and in accepting the limitations of the artist's function.

What goals do you set for yourselves?

Because we are an underdeveloped country struggling to raise our level of development, we emphasize the production of didactic documentaries that can help increase production and technological development, simplified scientific treatises, and newscasts that we make in conjunction with the various activities of the revolution and the specific plans for development. We also create conditions which allow us to refuse the imposition of a pedagogical character on artistic productions. Feature films and documentaries are not simply the product of pedagogical goals, and owe their success precisely to the fact that they are not limited by these goals. That is, a feature film, if it is produced with sufficient seriousness, if it delves into the language and the themes that it hopes to deal with, if it discovers a way of being relevant, will accomplish its pedagogical or clarifying function, without specifically having this purpose. I believe that this is the characteristic of all art.

Richard Epstein

and Lucy Liben

End of the comics

Little Orphan Annie, finally arriving at an interesting age,

Winds up a whore in a Detroit slum

Befuddling all possible逻辑（after much feeble wrangling with his family)

Tears up his draft card under the nose of his cartoonist

Tarzan of the Apes is proclaimed President of an African republic

by a coup d’etat directed from outside.

Dogwood and Blondie (before their weeping dogs)

agree on a more highbrow long-sustained outside the pages of the Sunday paper.

Steve Canyon and Terry (last of the Flying Tigers)

are learning the building of flamethrowers and scorched steel

over the province of Quang Binh.

Victor Cassius

translated by Rafeal Rodriguez

Your tits your breasts as you prefer to call them important part of the female body were slices of orange for him to look at after day and night have both passed and time hangs suspended once again in the small bamboo box

or more precisely in the nude torso of his wife where her two sweet little oranges stand out as if captured in a snapshot.

I say were because yesterday they were sheared off at the roots

severed from the original trunk in a predictable ceremony of beasts

thrice fulfilling all the laws of symmetry and one of the indispensable Commando Knives especially designed by the U.S. Army to slice oranges

or breasts of Vietnamese girls.

Denia Garcia

translated by Marty Glass
Adapting revolutionary reality

In ten years of revolution, Cuba has moved from a theater of mediocrity imitation of Europe and North America to a one of innovation to the beginnings of a uniquely Cuban revolutionary theater. 

Adolfo Gutkin, a theater director in Santiago, Oriente province, identifies three types of theater prior to the revolution. The first is a popular theater ("buffoon" or "vernacular"), which he describes as a "picturesque degeneration of the minor Spanish genre and the one-act farce." It was characterized by speech and movement with a national flavor, stereotyped characters "without humanity or transcendence," "contagious" music that was picked up in popular dances and the frequent use of coarse jokes to comment on social phenomena. 

Gutkin sees rural theater—the second type that antedates the revolution—as the most important contribution of the three types of theater to the development of a national theater. This theater is "unwritten, on the level of rituals and ancestral rhythms which still saturate the collective unconscious and give to the Cuban personality its special color. I am referring to the spontaneously produced, without a major source than the vernacular and which is still far from being totally explored."

The third type of pre-revolutionary theater is formal, with Cuban playwrights depending on the style and content of European plays. Playwright Virgilio Pinera describes the condition of the formal theater prior to the revolution as a period when five, seven or nine years produced, and it would then be presented for only one or two nights. These presentations did not have a large public, or even one which represented the intelligentsia. 

Gutkin divides the ten years following the triumph of the revolution into two periods. He describes the first as the period of "sectarianism," marked by an uncritical and unspecific enthusiasm for the revolution. It was the period of "Brecht fever," for the Cuban theater had once again to look to foreign authors to fill the holes created by years of political dictatorship and artistic void. "But," Gutkin says, "The Brecht who was shown was a tendentious and discredited Brecht, hastily set up by political necessity," and of course he did not express the Cuban situation.

The second change of direction," says Gutkin, was "from sectarianism to the liberal vanguard" and also took place in social life before it happened on the stage. The Cuban revolution, once its power was strongly established, began to work on the nation as a whole, and its emphasis on socialist education opened the possibility of deciding how socialist will be built in Cuba in says Gutkin. "The role of the art in this transition to analyze time improvisation which is more immediate and connected to the social life characteristics with the lives of the people."

While Gutkin cites the Teatro Estudio, which is reversed after marriage, since the woman takes charge of the majority of responsibilities within the home and relegates the husband to an economic function. These relationships take on a castarting quality when the progenitors are relating to their children: the tyrannical or nonexistent father, the possessive or overprotective mother, or both scenes at once, resulting in frustrated children in whom liberating action is again and again replaced by rationalization.

This is part of the theme of the international prize-winning "Night of the Assassins," by José Triana, which traveled in England and through Europe. It is the enactment by two sisters and their brother of the ritual murder of their parents, the children becoming the parents, and then each other and people outside the family. The play draws on elements of African ritual and has many levels of interpretation, one of them dealing with the theme of the transition from the old to the new Cuba, as well as family relationships. 

Vicente Revueltas, director of the Teatro Estudio—which only last summer closed down after 15 years as Cuba's most advanced theater group—considers "Night of the Assassins" a transition from a more or less naturalistic theater to one that delves into the deepest part of the human consciousness, relating this to political and social realities.

By the time I left Cuba, this transition had actually begun to take place. I had arrived in Cuba with a few names of people who were doing "the most interesting theater in Cuba" or had some ideas about new theater, but the scene in general did not sound very exciting. However, my first conversation with director Vicente Revueltas indicated that something was about to happen. Revueltas had been director of the Teatro Estudio since it began. Even during Batista's time, he had considered himself a Marxist and was producing most of the serious theater of the period. The revolution the Teatro Estudio retained its reputation as one of the most important theaters in Cuba. But now Revueltas was talking about the need for a new kind of theater. He was interested in the work of the Living Theater. 

About two months after our conversation, the Teatro Estudio closed its doors and Revueltas went to work for ICAIC, Cuba's film institute. At least two groups were formed by members of the Teatro Estudio and one of them may be an example of the new revolutionary vanguard that Gutkin was referring to. They had just begun workshops before I left Cuba, and I had the opportunity to sit in on one of them. Exercises from the Living Theater and the Polish Lab Theater were being tried out, and Tomás Gonzales, a young poet-playwright-director, was working on exercises based on movements that are part of the African culture that was brought to Cuba by slaves and is now an important ingredient in Cuban culture. (Part of a conversation with members of the group appears on page 9.)

This was not the only group that had begun a search for a revolutionary Cuban theater. A group of theater and film actors had just left for the Escambray mountains to spend time with the peasants and work on a theater that would communicate to a people whose reality, until only recently, had been the land that they were able to cover by foot in a few hours or a day or two a week. When I left Cuba, the names of foreign playwrights—Brecht and LeRoi Jones among them—were still in the air. 

The scene in general did not sound very exciting. Gutkin might describe as "liberal vanguard," but even this dealt with Brecht and his agents in an immediate and powerful way. "María Antonia," by Eugenio Hernandez, for example, deals with the theme of the death of the old concept of machine and the Cuban woman as a sexual object. The director, Roberto Blanco, is searching for an authentic Cuban theater and sees the problem as one of developing a theater for a country that is growing and affirming its existence, rather than an art that is reacting to events. 

By the time I left Cuba, the names of foreign playwrights—Brecht and LeRoi Jones among them—were still in the air. When I left Cuba, the names of foreign playwrights—Brecht and LeRoi Jones among them—were still in the air. When I left Cuba, the names of foreign playwrights—Brecht and LeRoi Jones among them—were still in the air. When I left Cuba, the names of foreign playwrights—Brecht and LeRoi Jones among them—were still in the air. When I left Cuba, the names of foreign playwrights—Brecht and LeRoi Jones among them—were still in the air. By October the new theater had begun to make a place for itself among the more traditional theater groups. If the development of the new Cuban theater is as rapid as the change that brought it into existence, we may be looking to Cuba to see the possibilities for revolutionary theater rather than vice versa.
Members of the theater broke up into small experimental groupsrevolutionary experience. Following are excerpts from interviews with Oscar Alvarez and Julio Gomez, members of the new workshops.

\[\text{I have}
\]

When I see and touch myself, I Juan with Nothing only yesterday, and today Juan with All, today with everything, I turn my eyes, look around, I see myself and I touch myself, and I ask myself, how is this possible?

I have, let’s take a look:
I have the pleasure of going, I, farmer, worker, simple man, I have, let’s take a look:
well, just the sea.
but just beach to beach, wave to wave
and to think,
I have, let’s take a look:
that I’ve already learned to write,
that I already have learned to read,
I have what I need,
and he taught me the heart of all poetry.
We now face a deep search into our culture. Most of our playwrights have been trapped by the classical forms of theater, some by Ibsen and Strindberg, others by Genet or Beckett. We have had good plays, but they have been incomplete. Many have been too populist, and others too intellectual.

We have a rich culture which is the synthesis of one of the most advanced African cultures (Yoruba, found on the west coast of Africa) and a current of European culture. The Africans who were brought to Cuba as slaves brought a culture that in many ways assimilated the Spanish culture instead of being assimilated by it.

“We’ve got to do something that stirs people and makes something come from them. We don’t consider theater to be an intellectual art. We shall try to plant the seed of the possibility of the new man, the total man, so that people can touch it.”

Nicolas Guillen translated by Barbara Dane

GUARDIAN / CAW / CUBAN SUPPLEMENT / 9
The Cultural Congress

One year ago some 500 revolutionary intellectuals and artists from all over the world met at the Cultural Congress of Havana. The focus of this historic conference was the third world—the world of colonial oppression and neo-colonial exploitation.

Despite the vast differences in their style and background, participants in the Congress revealed a profound unity of commitment. Inspired particularly by the militant spirit of the Vietnamese and the revolutionary ardor of the Cubans, the Congress helped to develop the overall sense of purpose relating to the national liberation struggles of the third world.

Following are excerpts from three of the most important talks at the Congress, taken from a forthcoming book on the Cultural Congress edited by Irwin Silber.

The responsibility of the intellectual

The real dichotomy between the third and first worlds is not "underdeveloped countries/developed countries" but "underdeveloped countries/underdeveloped countries." The latter are the countries that have been developed as a whole thanks to the exploitation of our countries. The intellectual in the latter countries, therefore, achieves his knowledge mostly through the exploitation of the third world. That which our people have the right to demand from us, we, the intellectuals of the underdeveloped countries, have the right to demand, with the help, from the intellectuals of the underdeveloped countries—that knowledge be returned to those who have made it possible.

In those countries of strongly established capitalism, in those sickened consumer-oriented societies, leftism is fashionable. It is a new luxury, as liberty is a more ancient luxury. But in those countries, what does being a leftist mean nowadays? To travel like an enthusiastic tourist to meetings such as this? To quote Marx?

Let us say no: from our point of view—mean the point of view of Vietnam, Cuba, the Congo—none of the subrefuges that our colleagues from the underdeveloped countries may find in order to justify themselves—something that our people do not allow us to do—none of these subrefuges is valid. To be a leftist in those countries may mean nothing but to be the first to acquire the consciousness of one's responsibility as a man who masters technique, science, and knowledge, thanks to the exploitation that his society has exercised or exercises upon us.

Our people have supported and are still supporting, in Europe and the U.S., universitarians, academicians and also anti-academicians, vanguards, isms, conversions, commitments, subrefuges. The intellectuals in those countries who are aware of this are not few. It is enough to keep in mind some pages of Jean-Paul Sartre in France, or Peter Weiss in Sweden, of Noam Chomsky in the U.S. But perhaps there are more (among the so-called leftists who demand those professionally irresponsible?) who refuse to accept the fact that there is an indestructible relationship between the misery of the third world, on the one hand—misery that goes from starvation and ignorance to war—and the findings of Western art and science on the other hand. A sacred division of work makes some colonialists benchesmen, foremen, merchants and bankers—and others teachers, scientists and artists. But it makes all of them, with no exception, beneficiaries of that situation—although the latter group may ignore their responsibility. They may even believe that they have extraordinary aptitudes which must be fulfilled under any circumstances, and not knowing that aptitudes are nothing but the social configurations of vague inclinations, and that, therefore, they are the product of a society, the same as any other product. To defend an aptitude is to defend a society.

Once this responsibility is recognized (or rather, assumed) we can begin a new dialogue with the intellectuals of the underdeveloped world. Until now, this dialogue has oscillated between two annihilating extremes the repeated hypocrisy that a dialogue was more than the overseas echo of a boastful monologue; and the resented rejection that was, likewise, less a dialogue than the abrupt cessation of a conversation, in which we were also humiliated.

The situation changes when we all understand and accept that science and art in the exploiting countries also belong to the exploited countries upon which they have been built, and that, therefore, we all have the right to demand that the knowledge of the planet be turned over to our impoverished lands. This is not a form of paternalism but a way of returning to us what we have been robbed of. And this is really important, because while we can surely use the help of playwrights and painters from abroad, we are in great need of economists, physicists, and cyberneticians.

For us, this will be the measuring tape: Intellectuals of the left, intellectuals conscious of their responsibility, will be the ones in underdeveloped countries, who will carry out that restitution in a practical manner: as linguists who help to spread the native languages; as scientists who work as slaves without pay or profit. They have kept us in backwardness, ignorance and famine. In addition to the obvious pillage of our natural and material resources, they also want to destroy our souls with secret weapons: mass communications media have spread a series of myths and values that in most cases clash with the authentic interests of the underdeveloped world. The preponderance of certain Greco-Roman ancestors has already been denounced by Marti: "Our Greece is preferable to the one which is not ours... let the world be grazed onto our republics, but the core must be that of our own republics.

Even blonde and white beauty sharpens the inferiority complex of the colonized Negros, orientals and mestizos. Perhaps the dark Bolivian who threw a stone at the Guacolda in the Looave was rebelling against that injustice which smiles ironically from the Mona Lisa throughout time. The press published the news everywhere: a hunchback, a barbarian, dared to attack a masterpiece of the Italian Renaissance. He left a scratch on her arm. I would like to consider it as a quiet and unconscious protest of the so-called third world against a first world which pretends that same eternity feigned by the hard rocks which back up the stupid smile of the Florentine lady... .

Edmundo Desnoes

Edmundo Desnoes, a novelist, used to live in New York, and returned to Cuba after the revolution. His "Incomparable Memories" was just published in England. He is now working on a book about the massa media and the third world.

The secret weapons

We are and we are not. We add up to two billion men who cover the earth—in spite of the fact that they have tried to convince us that it is really Sherwin Williams paints and Coca Cola which cover the surface of the planet. We are a majority of mankind and we scarcely have voice or vote. Weapons of iron and fire have kept us working as slaves without pay or profit. They have kept us in backwardness, ignorance and famine. In addition to the obvious pillage of our natural and material resources, they also want to destroy our souls with secret weapons: mass communications media have spread a series of myths and values that in most cases clash with the authentic interests of the underdeveloped world. The preponderance of certain Greco-Roman ancestors has already been denounced by Marti: "Our Greece is preferable to the one which is not ours... let the world be grazed onto our republics, but the core must be that of our own republics.

Edmundo Desnoes
Cuban poets don’t dream
any more

Cuban poets don’t dream any more
(not even in the night).
They go to close the door,
To write in privacy,
When suddenly the wind
Crosses the boards and shakes them,
Hands grasp their shoulders and
Turn them, putting them
Face to face with others’ faces
(sinking in swamps, flaming with napalm)
And their eyes are forced to
Look, and look, and look.

The bombing of a village:
Hanoi 23 May

The town was by a river,
and afterward, there was no town, no river, nothing.
Only some stains on the earth
As of whitewash, only blue.

Heberto Padilla
translated by Claudia Beck*

*From “Cuban Poetry, 1959-1966” (Instituto del Libro, Havana); translations revised by Barbara Dane.

In the Pentagon
What are they talking about?
I hear them
Moving their black dice
Screaming in rage
Burning death on the table
Mixing
Oil with blood
Spitting bread
Cursing
The prophets of crime
I hear them behind the walls
Of crystal
And cold air
And they breathe an air
Of gun powder and gangrene
Speaking of you
And of me
Measuring our steps
Calculating our weight
And filling us with
A number
A description
Labeling us Hiroshima
Or handing us over
To clouds of gasoline and debris
But
We are beyond their calculations
Although they can’t hear
Our open voices
There inside
They have no rule for measuring us
No map to locate us
No bomb to exterminate us
No map to locate us
Wherever death
May surprise us, it
Will be educus,
Provided that our
Battle cry reach some receptive ear, and
Another hand stretch
Out to take up
Our weapons.

Jose Alvarez Baragano
translated by Claudia Beck*

The intellectual in the revolution

We are well acquainted with that feeling of frustration, uselessness, and rootlessness experienced by the artists and writers of an underdeveloped and colonized country. We are well acquainted with their defense mechanisms, their alibis. When a man is ready to write “Ulysses,” master a foreign language, and is able to discuss surrealism or Guernica for hours, he knows he belongs to a select international community. In turn this reassures him of his privileged condition.

Although neglected by the bourgeoisie, the intellectual to some extent shares its domination of the world. At the same time he can allow himself the luxury of scoring it. Pretexts are abundant. The correct pronunciation of “Goethe” or “Baudelaire,” for instance, becomes a sign of superiority.

Because we have assumed our responsibilities and are ready to answer for our deeds, we intellectuals of a country in revolution demand concrete responsibilities of others. I am not referring only to our civic responsibilities. To teach how to read and write, to learn how to handle a gun, to cut cane, are part of our essential duties as intellectuals in an underdeveloped country in revolution. Since we lack immediate cadres we are also obliged to serve as links between our work and our public. The poet understands that he must be a master, a communicator, and a public official, so that the exotic and beautiful poem he writes in silence will be repeated by the public in the streets tomorrow.

But there is more to it. We consider man’s effort to interpret reality and create a world—in his own image—a revolutionary effort. From the Altamira bisons to Vassarly, from Homer and the African legends to Kafka, they constitute our inalienable heritage.

Our colleagues usually slap us on the back when they visit us, perhaps because they did not expect to find abstract and pop art paintings in our art galleries, editions of Proust and Joyce in our bookstores, and Robbe-Grillet’s films in our movie theaters. Perhaps they did not expect to hear the serial music of our young composers and passionate discussions about aesthetics at art seminars and coffee tables. “Remarkable revolution,” they say, “Do not let anything spoil it.”

I confess that this remark, which used to flatter our pride, has lately become rather irritating. There is a mixture of paternalism and distrust in the eagerness to preserve the image of an immaculate revolution—the revolution is neither a virgin nor is it made by archangels. This remark also transforms us into mere mercenaries, guardians of an already burning fire, when we should actually be incendiaries, creators of a new fire.

Cuba has achieved the reconciliation of supposed opposites—social justice and freedom of creation, underdevelopment and vanguard art—doing so at a distance of only 90 miles from this century’s most inexorable world imperialist power. This fact only reveals that this is an authentic revolution willing to forge, within the tensions of the modern world, a man finally liberated from his specters.

Ambrosio Fornet
Dance

To assimilate a new energy

The movements of the agricultural worker, the pride and dignity of the militiaman and woman, the hope and energy that expresses itself in all activities within the revolution— these are the elements being assimilated into Cuban dance. Through the experimentation now going on in Cuba's African, folk and modern dance, and ballet runs a single theme—dance comes from and belongs to the people.

For six months in 1968 I taught modern dance in Cuba at the Modern Dance School of the National School of Art, the National Modern Dance Company and in the Folklore Ballet Company. Students and company members study tuition free, and teachers' salaries are paid by the government. The teachers, directors, and choreographers share their talents and are beginning to develop a common concept of dance throughout Cuba.

The national dance troupes tour the provinces, bringing their art to the people. Those who show interest in teaching go to Havana to study, and return home to teach in their towns and villages. The process is slow, for the majority of Cubans had never seen a dance program or any theater before the revolution. Afro-Cuban folk dances have been introduced in the Modern Dance School. Until recently, it was believed that the folk dances and their music—which is religious—could never be learned by non-members of the religion. Now even the musicians, until recently the sacred keepers of the cult, want to teach their music, to see it preserved as an art form. Students learn the native Afro-Cuban dances and their histories. Movements never before utilized in Western dance are becoming as natural as the movements already an organic part of the dancers' training. Choreographers are beginning to use the folk material in their work. The musicians who play for the folk dance classes are folk musicians who are also dock workers or dock workers who are also musicians. Thus the folk dance program preserves a cultural heritage for the sake of its artistic values, until now neglected, and also gives roots to Cuban modern dance.

The search for what Cuban modern dance is, and how a choreographer is to develop it under socialism, has produced magnificent works by Ramiro Guerra. His work ranges from folk themes in his "Suite Yoruba," to Afro-Cuban folk dances and their histories. Movements never before used in Western dance are becoming as natural as the movements already an organic part of the dancers' training. Choreographers are beginning to use the folk material in their work. The musicians who play for the folk dance classes are folk musicians who are also dock workers or dock workers who are also musicians. Thus the folk dance program preserves a cultural heritage for the sake of its artistic values, until now neglected, and also gives roots to Cuban modern dance.

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Ballet is a fusion of Italian, Soviet, English and American styles, heightened by national elements such as particularly Cuban hip movements. Alberto Alonso, Alicia Alonso's brother-in-law and principal choreographer for the National Ballet, has incorporated folk and modern dance movements into both traditional ballets and those created in Cuba. Ballet is no longer for the wealthy. "When we have a little time, once a week, once a month, we go to the factories and talk with the workers. We demonstrate ballet steps and teach them all the conditions a child must meet to study ballet. And the workers show us around the factory. Then we give out free tickets to one of our performances." (María Llorente, 21-year-old ballerina with the National Ballet)

ALICIA ALONSO AND ROBERTO RODRIGUEZ IN "CARMEN," one of the most popular productions of the Cuban National Ballet. The style of the National Ballet is a fusion of Italian, Soviet, English and American styles, heightened by national elements such as particularly Cuban hip movements. Alberto Alonso, Alicia Alonso's brother-in-law and principal choreographer for the National Ballet, has incorporated folk and modern dance movements into both traditional ballets and those created in Cuba. Ballet is no longer for the wealthy. "When we have a little time, once a week, once a month, we go to the factories and talk with the workers. We demonstrate ballet steps and teach them all the conditions a child must meet to study ballet. And the workers show us around the factory. Then we give out free tickets to one of our performances." (María Llorente, 21-year-old ballerina with the National Ballet)