Freedom (in the pre-communist sphere of necessary material production) can consist only in socialised man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their metabolism with nature, bringing it under their communal control instead of being dominated by it as a blind power, and accomplishing it with the least expenditure of energy and in conditions most worthy and appropriate for their human nature. (Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 3.)

**Combinado Textil de Santiago de Cuba**

For the first and only time during our stay in Cuba, we are subject to strict security — no cameras, no bags. The factory is a prime target for CIA saboteurs.

In the foreground a welcoming committee from the complex is clustering tightly. Perhaps 200 people: women favouring bright bandanas to cover rollers in their hair, some of the men affecting cord or denim peaked caps, all save for a sprinkling in white lab coats — wearing T-shirts and jeans.

Behind them, standing the law of perspective on its head, shrinking the group to a tiny vari-coloured mass, is a huge, functionalist topography of flat, bland surfaces and blind factory walls. The textile complex cuts a great raw swathe across a Santiago hillside through the detritus of an urban slum.

My focus is pulled back to one of the figures, a director, who, with the aid of a hand-held megaphone, is telling us that the complex, just brought on line, consists of five integrated factories: three textile units, one mechanical plant and one industrial service and energy plant. The annual output of 80 million tonnes of cloth (40 million tonnes cotton, 40 million tonnes polyester fabric) is produced by a workforce of 7,000, two thousand working in the cotton plant.

We are bussed to one of the textile units and, after another security check, are ushered inside. The scale of the machinery is daunting, the nature and degree of automation more so. Plant items bear the stamp: "Made in the USSR 1982". The complex is part of a Russian economic aid package.

All skilled processes are automated, as is the movement of materials through the stages of production. Labour appears of two kinds. Most workers are engaged in one form or other of machine minding. On the floor of the weaving section the clatter of the mechanical looms is ear-shattering. Workers stand in rows, several metres apart, hooking up broken threads, clearing fluff. Talk is impossible. Few wear ear plugs. Hidden from view from the floor, in the mezzanine control consoles and computer rooms, smaller groups of technicians monitor and synthesise the process.

The largest textile factory in Cuba, the largest in Central America, and one of the largest in the world, this is a showpiece of Cuba's industrial growth — and of the New System of Economic Management and Planning instituted in the mid 70s. For me, it also concretises a cluster of crucial contradictions in the achievements of Cuban socialism.

Cuba's continued survival as an independent national entity is dependent on it achieving a large degree of economic autonomy and diversification. To what degree this achievement may be gauged socialist will depend on what theoretical tools the Cubans are
bringing to economic practices, how they are being deployed, what new ones can be produced out of the specifics of the Cuban situation.

In the struggle against underdevelopment, Cuba's industrial growth, averaging 6.25 percent per annum since 1961, has latterly been spearheaded by light industry, its expansion averaging 23 percent per annum since 1978 being in large part due to textiles. At the international level, whether this quantitative expansion will allow Cuba to make a qualitative leap out of relations of economic dependence is a moot point. The newly set up textile industries — exemplar of Cuba's latest attempts at industrial diversification — are not supplied by any indigenous cotton growing industry. While highly desirable potential suppliers of raw materials exist within the Caribbean Basin — Nicaragua, for instance — I was told that current supplies are from the Eastern Bloc, particularly the USSR. Moreover, while a large potential market exists in Latin America. Cuba exports the majority of its textile products to COMECON countries. Certainly, such exports to COMECON countries are part of repayment schemes built into trade and technological aid agreements generous to Cuba. However, a significant effect is that such arrangements, far from building long term Cuban economic autonomy, integrate Cuba into a new structure of dependence. Cuba's textile industry, like her sugar industry, seems destined to become part of COMECON's international division of labour, subject to COMECON priorities of planning and methods of organisation.

Within Cuba, the ways in which industries are being set up or restructured, and the mode of technologies being introduced, points to a new form of dependence at another level. Reorganisation of central planning and management structures, technical assistance to mechanise the sugar industry, to develop the nickel industry, to increase the electricity output, to modernise the oil refineries, and to reorganise enterprise planning methods through the use of computers — all are part of economic strategies to combat underdevelopment produced in tutelage to Soviet and COMECON specialists. The Santiago textile complex is a classic case.

What has been imported here is not just machinery but a whole technologically specific structuring of relations of production. The textile complex utilises capital intensification, computerisation and automation in such a way as to structure the factory's relations of production in a neo-capitalist mode all too familiar to first world industrial workers. The pattern is one of a pyramid of work with direction flowing downwards from an apex, where planning is centralised, where "synthetic" intellectual and management skills — together with advisers — are located, to intermediate strata of technological workers, and thence to a shop floor base at which level only basic, easily learned manual skills are required.

At the base the work is alienating, repetitive and potentially hazardous. I could have been standing on the weaving floor of Bond's in Sydney.

At another level, a further complex of contradictions and potential problems seems to emerge. What is going on here is not a process of "de-skilling", as in first world countries. Rather, there is another process at work. On one hand, certain technical capacities are being developed as new forces of production which have the capacity to challenge the very relations of production presently being instituted. On the other hand, imported theoretical tools are being reproduced locally which do not appear to have the self-reflexive capacities to deal with such a challenge.

Let me try to spell that out. Cuba has made massive achievements in education, first of generalised literacy, then of universal junior secondary levels. However, the quantitative emphasis in the earlier years, given limited educational resources, was not able to be balanced by attention to the quality of much higher or specialised education. Over the last five years attempts have been made to redress this. In interviews with the Rectors of Santiago and Havana Universities, I was told that university priorities were now very sensitive to training relating to economic development. The government's adult education policy makes similar attempts to relate study to work skills. However, results still appear limited. As Beauvais puts it, "the massive development of education has had little effect on labour productivity".
The new: Modern sugar loading operation.

Thus, after 25 years, the Cuban economy must still work to increase productivity using a technologically unskilled workforce. The swing in education policy at technical and university levels to redress the balance may produce a potentially more sophisticated workforce over the next few years. However, the "new workers" will confront over the next 20 years — the work life of whole industries now being established — structures of work relations as typified by the Santiago complex. For these workers, a potential contradiction lies in the ironies of "over-skilling", where discontent emerges from the insertion of people into jobs where they possess more capabilities and expectations than the work relations permit.

Meanwhile, the production and reproduction of divisions between mental and manual labour via imported industrial structures must create a fledgling elite of technicians and planners, hence a division of interests among the workforce. It will also create pressure for a further fine tuning of educational curricula to produce knowledges limited to the requirements of a technically stratified workplace. Certainly, overall, the possibility exists that these divisions will replicate the sorts of contradictions already experienced, not only in capitalist countries but, as documented by Bahro, in Eastern Bloc countries, especially the USSR.

What sort of responses may be likely to such contradictions? Answers I could elicit from Cuban guides and advisers did not sound promising. Significantly, I encountered problems at a basic theoretical level. There was an a-critical emphasis on the development of the forces of production. Relations of production were regarded as unproblematic epiphenomena which would evolve benignly with that of the forces of production now that control was not with capitalists but with the workers' state. There was no knowledge of western Marxist critiques of Soviet Marxist "orthodoxy". The latter was being reproduced, via "Marxism-Leninism" classes, as a neutral, value-free "science" at every level of the educational system, following — like all technical courses — syllabuses imported from the USSR.

In many conversations, Cuban comrades stressed that growth in productivity was essential. This was equated with a simple quantitative growth in productive forces. The particular structure of production relations created in the application of the imported technological package was seen, not as one alternative among many, but as a particular effect of the universal tyranny of this technological stage of development. The difference between this stage under capitalism and under the Cuban Workers' State, they explained to me, was not to be found or expected at the site of industry.

Under capitalism, both work and leisure were impoverished. In Cuba, while there might be at this stage poverty in relations of work, this was compensated for by concentrating on enriching the social and political elements of the workers' leisure world. New housing was being provided. Workers would gradually work fewer hours per shift. Incentive schemes involving holidays and consumer goods operated for individuals and groups. Work and neighbourhood based cultural and sporting activities operated.

At the factory, there is the phenomenon of participation. Workers, through their union, determine norms, allocation of bonuses — but below the phenomenon level, the omnipresent structure of work relations operates as an objective barrier to even thinking large scale or basic changes in those relations. In the absence of knowledge of alternatives it would appear that these relations may remain, unquestionable, outside the workers' concepts of control.

But at this stage another fundamental division which could be the source of future contradictions must be taken into account. If the practices emerging from industrial work relations appear in themselves inadequate for the task of transforming those relations, and if the theoretical tools in deployment seem set in the function of acceptance, if not legitimation, this is not the case in the other major category of Cuban social reality. Concepts of collective control and potentially transformative practices are definitely in play in civil and political life.

In this sphere, popular control and decision making operate at the basic level of Cuba's system of decentralised civic administration. Principles of participation, accountability and recall, and collective responsibility inform the practice of CDRs (Committees in Defence of the Revolution: neighbourhood or locality committees) and Assemblies of People's Power (municipal councils). Community experience and involvement within this practice are wide-ranging. Delegates elected through the CDRs to Assemblies of People's Power, together with the sub-committees co-opted, are responsible for the running of "schools and educational activities; the radio stations, cultural events, bookstores, movie theatres; the restaurants, hotels and tourist centres; the post offices, telegraph offices, and press offices; the grain mills; the power stations; the courts and the system of justice - and much more". In so far as the ongoing, collective practice of social democracy and popular control within this sphere is a real "experience, the resultant insights, dispositions and
knowledge must sooner or later overflow from the category of civil life into that of working life. There they will confront the theoretical "orthodoxy" that orders the concepts at work. Unless there is prior insight at party level (see section below, Maps of the Forest), as they come into contradiction with that order now being legitimated, they will be arraigned as heretical and threatening. We have, in the development of differential, contradictory experience in each category, the elements of a fundamental crisis in Cuban socialism.

The Kaolin Factory, Isle of Youth

We visit the Kaolin Factory in Nuevo Gerona, the port of the Isle of Youth, which is a small Cuban island 100 km west of the mainland. Among the models of the island's economic reconstruction, this is one of particular interest. Of the 1,000 workers here, 80 percent are women and the factory director is a woman. In a front-office interview, she tells us that the factory has an annual output worth $US6 million and that 45 percent of production is exported.

During a tour of the factory, a number of things strike me. This is no example of a creative artisans' workshop. The mode of production here is what Marx would categorise as "manufacture": skilled potters — all women — turn, throw and paint pottery mostly by hand or by working with moulds. Productivity has been intensified and rationalised by bringing potters together literally under one roof. Their skills have been developed and specialised using a division of labour on assembly lines corresponding to traditional stages of pottery production for each commodity. Economies of scale have been achieved further by the use of large kilns and multiple moulds.

That the factory is export-oriented is obvious. Women knock from moulds hundreds of identical teapots — alien artifacts to their makers, who drink only short black coffee. Others, surrounded by huge flocks of tiny, ornamental ceramic fowl, handpaint monochrome plumage. I watch a woman, one of her hands steadying the other, painstakingly write endless "Cuba" on miniature oil urn souvenirs. If this is art for export it is certainly down-market, kitsch end. Others produce inexpensive plain white household crockery for the domestic market.

On my bookcase at home, facing me now as I write this, stands my memento of that particular unit of socialist labour: a small pottery pigeon (perhaps dove?). I had watched a woman expend her labour power in the exclusive and repetitive task of painting three brown brush strokes on each side of thousands of similar birds to accent the bulge of furled wings, placing daubs of brown to delineate eyes and beaks, quickly and crudely inscribing "Cuba" on the pedestals that had perfunctorily replaced feet. Who, I wonder, and on what criteria, had determined that she truncate her skills on such an object?

Export credits, whether in dollars or roubles, are crucial for the purchase of capital goods necessary for Cuban's industrialisation and its struggle against underdevelopment. However, on the model of international division of labour presented by this factory, Cuban industry develops no autonomy but ties itself into the pattern of producing second-rate commodities for COMECON "Woolworths". In doing so it moves itself into a position of dependency akin to that of other Third World countries, where industrial sites are exploited to provide junk goods for the First World masses. Moreover, despite differences in size and kind of technological investment, at the Kaolin Factory, as at the Santiago textile complex, the nature of the relations of production and the estrangement of the workers from the objects they make generated by those relations seem set to produce in their workforces an alienated consciousness very much at odds with the consciousness which has the potential to be generated out of their experience of social relations in civic life.

Another, problematic aspect in the development of a multiply divided Cuban collective consciousness which I glimpsed at the Kaolin factory was a division between the conceived and actual role and status of women.

Since the Cuban Wars of Independence in the 1860s, the struggle of women had been hound up in the movements for national liberation. Cuban women gained the right to vote in 1934 after the overthrow of the Machado dictatorship. Under pressure from the newly organised trade union movement and the communists, the Cuban Constitution of 1940 put the principle of equal pay for equal work on the books, together with equal civil rights for married women and laws against sexual discrimination. These weren't enforced until after the 1959 revolution.

In 1974, a series of laws was passed including a Family Code which legislated against discrimination against women and children, and for equal rights and responsibilities for men and women within marriage. The Code gave joint control over family property, equal responsibilities for child-rearing, education and even housework. It "established the rights of children to stability, care, love, health and education."1 Laws 1100 (1963) and 1263 (1974) generalised social security and, among other benefits, extended maternity leave benefits to all working mothers, provided breast-feeding time during the working day and free pre- and post-natal care services and materials. These laws were formulated in a process of discussion and analysis with working women and with the mass organisation, Federacion de Mujeres Cubanas (Federation of Cuban Women, or FMC) to which four of every five Cuban women over 14 belonged.

The FMC has:

... participated in every mobilisation, campaign and day to day task of the revolution: building the militia ... organising the literacy campaign, educating peasant women and domestic workers for productive jobs, encouraging women to take productive jobs outside the home, supporting the educational and public health campaigns and raising the political consciousness of Cuban women.

The core of the FMC's work ... is the involvement of women in productive work — a prerequisite for the full equality of women.15

The FMC carries out a struggle against old cultural attitudes, habits and prejudices of men and women in the various organisations:

in the trade unions, to open up jobs for women and to convince male workers it is in their interests to do so; in the CDRs ... to
work out problems in the home and help provide services that make it easier for women to leave the house; in the government, to provide services for working women and young children, and to convince reluctant administrations to hire women; and in the Communist Party, to carry out educational campaigns against old prejudices. 

Juridical equality and the work of the FMC in political, civil and union organisations are part of the impetus to change conceptions of the role and status of women. The effects of new social relations developed over two generations in the education system and in the continuing work brigades reinforce this impetus. Most Cuban secondary schools are “Schools in the Countryside”; co-educational boarding schools, collectively producing their own food, operating under a degree of school-community self management, and supplying units in the huge mobilisations of people for harvest work. Experience in the egalitarian practices of these communities, in the supra-familial organisations of the CDRs and youth movements, together with sex education programs, has dramatically undermined the prejudicial influences of the family — and possibly the old role of the family itself. In an interview with representatives of the FMC which I attended, it was claimed that sexual crimes and prostitution had “ceased to be social problems”.

However, it is in the actual nature of women’s involvement in work that I suspect major ongoing contradictions will continue to unfold. That this tends to happen behind the backs, so to speak, of those dedicated to the struggle for women’s equality, seems due to at least two factors. One is the blind spot — well known to western marxist feminists — in orthodox “Soviet Marxist” theory regarding women’s exploitation; and this is the only body of theory available to Cuban women. The other is the belief that women’s emancipation has been achieved in all areas of life. In actuality, often the very plans to integrate women into the workforce (women now comprise over 30 percent of the Cuban workforce) have reproduced sexual discrimination by a sexual division of labour which has gone unrecognised.

At the Kaolin Factory, I asked the woman director why women were the majority of this particular workforce. Was it part of some policy of positive discrimination? “No,” she replied. “One of our fundamental tasks was to find jobs for women. Here, practically all the jobs are appropriate to women.”

What did she mean?

“Well, the women were used to making pottery utensils at home. It’s natural for women to work with the earth, with clay.”

A familiar pattern seemed at work. The old village sexual divisions of labour had been naturalised via sexist, essentialist concepts of “women’s nature”, generalised, romanticised and even internalised by women planners coming from an urban background, thence industrialised and reproduced at the Kaolin Factory.

In that instance at least there seemed no qualitative improvement in women’s work; rather, now women, as well as men, were drawn into the general web of impoverished relations of production.

Although women make up 30% of the workforce, they are still relegated to traditional areas of labour, paid or otherwise.
It remains to be seen whether these contradictions become overt, and whether the double experience of women coming out of the work of the FMC and the practice of popular power in civic relations will provide alternate strategies for the liberation of the workplace.

Maps of the Forest — Party, Planning and Practices

Marx argues that capitalism itself develops, in its technological and material innovations, characteristics suitable for its transformation into socialism. Out of capitalism's development of the cooperative form of the labour process potential agents for such a transformation are created. While, under socialism, material production is still dominated by necessity, its defining feature is its transformation of capitalist relations of production into ones in which collective control is exercised over the production process. It is only via such collective control that any form of social emancipation is possible. Its achievement is a necessary — but not sufficient — condition for the further transformation into communism. An implication is that the thus defined freedom itself becomes a productive force, allowing a qualitative increase in social productivity. Hence the issues of workers' control of industry and of the democratic self-management of society should be core concerns of socialist theorists and practitioners. In most actually existing “socialist” economies, this is sadly not the case.

No longer capitalist, claiming to be different from Eastern Bloc countries, Cubans speak of tracing a "third way". In terms of the concerns expressed above, the Cuban creation at the moment appears a hybrid fraught with difficulties as well as hope.

In the decade following the failure of the 1979 sugar harvest goals, the leadership, in a desperate attempt to increase national productivity, implemented policies which have, in effect, built into Cuban socialism two divergent, potentially contradictory categories of social organisation.

In the region of social and civic life there has been an institutionalisation of organisations thrown up by the practices of the early period of the revolution, to form the decentralised system of collective administration called People's Power. This system seems to be producing new democratic social relations and practices of communal self-management.

In the region of production, there has been a comprehensive rethinking, then a reorganisation of national economic planning, and a large-scale implementation of new industrial and technological structures under the New System of Economic Management and Planning (SEMP), introduced gradually during the 1970s. The theoretical tools, the planning modes, the technological systems and industrial packages predominantly derive from the USSR and Eastern Bloc countries. The new relations of production replicate those of their countries of origin.

Features of SEMP include a neo-capitalist division of labour according to skill, and in some cases sex. This favours, through the creation of technical and managerial elites, the growth of aristocracies of labour and the attendant self-interests on one level, and on the base level, alienation and "subalternity" among most workers. Subalternity is reinforced by a competitive system of output-linked norms and material and moral incentives to exceed them. Known as "Socialist Emulation", it is democratically but unquestionably administered by the trade unions.

SEMP operates at the national level by the central co-ordination of the economy under a series of five-year plans. At the level of industrial sectors and individual industries it is relatively decentralised, sectors and enterprises having an amount of autonomy in the use of state funds, and in the "contractual" relations they form with each other and other sectors. Within the industrial enterprise, while being accountable to the relevant assembly of People's Power, the director is responsible for the enterprise's operation, organisation of production and relations with other productive units. The director only really shares powers of decision-making with workers' union delegates in relation to the allocation of the enterprise's "profits" in the form of bonuses and social funds.

Since bonuses — both for management and staff — depend on enterprise results, dialogue will tend to pose questions and answers within a discourse concerned with conditions for profit maximisation. Such a discourse also has the potential to favour sectional and regional interests, reproducing their inequalities. In the absence of a discourse concerned with workers' control or any real mechanism for democratic participation at the factory level, Socialist Emulation can hardly be seen as an answer to the problem of raising the economic consciousness of the masses.

However did such a state of affairs come about? A full answer requires an historical explanation which I have no space for here. Instead, I want to sketch in one part of the answer, which I believe lies in the general, relative theoretical poverty of the Cuban Revolution and, in particular, of the leadership.

The success of 1959 was one of the 26 July Movement: a broad coalition of popular discontents articulated on not much more than bourgeois sentiments of national liberation and revolutionary but untheorised populist notions of social justice. The communist Popular Socialist Party, a creature of the Third Internationale, was suspected because of its reasonable criticism of the adventurism of Castro's group, and carried a legacy of discredit because of its brief association with Batista's short-lived radical phase during the 1940s. There was no strong tradition of independent marxist theoretical work or political practice.

The lack of theoretical coherence can be seen in the dramatic pendulum swings in socio-economic experimentation after the revolution — from the "Utopian Period" of revolutionary voluntarism of the early 1960s to that of the SEMP in the 1970s — as Cuba struggled with the effects of underdevelopment in the economic isolation of the Blockade and as misinformed US punitive actions pushed her step by ad hoc step into dependence on support from the USSR.

Castro had said in the '60s that, for him, discovering marxism was like finding "a map of the forest". If the simile is to retain its aptness, it has to be stretched. The map was not one drawn up in accordance with a coherent marxism, but a series of
compilations — made by Cuban revolutionary practitioners as they faced problems in the field — of perceived correspondences between their own previously expressed humanist objectives and various ideas rendered up from the texts of marxism-leninism then in use by the Cuban communists of the Popular Socialist Party.

In the mid-'60s, the vagueness of the compilations, together with confidence engendered by the assertion by the leadership that a politically accepted map for Cuban Socialism did exist, covered the reality. The 1965 fusion of the three uneasy organisational partners in the revolutionary alliance (the 26 July Movement, the Popular Socialist Party, and the students of the Revolutionary Directorate) under the leadership of Castro's own informal group was of a politically expedient, rather than a theoretical nature.

Significantly, the First Party Congress was not held until 1975, when the new map of SEMP, drawn up by the leadership, had begun to be put into operation three years before. What was required from the party congress was not the map's construction, but its legitimation.

The strength of the Cuban Communist Party, as it has been hitherto developed, is not so much in its theoretical capacity but in its highly functional but informal influence on opinion at every level in which its members are located. Both party and its cadres see their role as "agitational", but, in a single party state and in the absence of any body of independent theoretical practitioners, the leadership compiles and the membership disseminates the maps.

"The educator must feel satisfied with his (sic) knowledge. He must be a self-taught person who is always perfecting his method of study, investigation, of research" — Fidel.

Other forest-dwellers can either accept the proffered orthodoxy of the agitators' latest piece of orienteering, suggesting improvements in the pre-given route, or are left to find other, informal routes in the heretical dark.

The new map, as a piece of theoretical cartography, was a product which could be likened to the early Renaissance navigators' projections of the New World. Significant blanks occupied the space between the vague regions of socialist democracy and those, well-charted by Soviet marxism, of the planned economy.

After the failure of the 1970 sugar harvest hopes, the vagueness of the earlier cartography was now seen as vacuous. As the leadership searched for ways to reconstruct the economy, it did so in terms of a conception of a simple division between what were perceived as the sins of early pride — the errors of Utopian vanguardism — and the latest revealed doxa of a scientific marxism grounded in the achievements of existing socialist economies, together with the mature revolutionary theory they produced. This doxa, now grasped, informed SEMP. Reinforcing this perception must have been the fact that during this period of rethinking, the whole field of Cuban-USSR economic and commercial relations were renegotiated and the Cuban economic effort integrated within COMECON.

The leadership's real but untheorised concern for the Cuban people and for developing their capacities to participate in decision making found no point of reference in the new doxa. It seemed grounded in a different, if not dislocated, region of the experienced Cuban world.

When organisational forms thrown up by the practice of the earlier period were incorporated and legitimated in the governmental apparatus of People's Power, so too were the potentialities of their functions.

Summer 1984-85
The CDRs already function as supra-families, providing the fundamental point of cohesion, of collective belonging within any locality. Records of individual comings and goings, births and deaths, local events and history are kept. Open discussions are held, and decisions collectively made regarding not only administrative matters but also codes of inter-personal behaviour such as issues of sexism, sexuality and parental responsibility. With the decentralisation of population into new towns and the movement of young adults brought up in the self-management boarding-school system to new areas of work, the CDRs have the potential to become basic instruments of social and political continuity, reproducing and developing practices of collective control. They also provide a terrain for the combat of patriarchal dispositions still being reproduced in family units.

Other “progressive” practices, such as those evolving in the work of the FMC, the CDRs, and in the peasants’ experience of collectivisation in co-operatives as rival models of organisation of agriculture to that of the state farms, may have the potential to overflow and offer alternatives in the industrial workplace.

However, there continues a “dis-relation” — an unacknowledged, unexplored gulf between such practices and the potential of similarly organised practices of workers’ power. This lack of connection has meant that experiences partially theorised, and redeployed in people’s government could not be theorised via solutions involving workers’ control in the debate over the key problem of labour productivity. The essential question of the low “economic consciousness” of the workers could not be addressed in terms of a comprehensive theoretical strategy.

Tending to act as a barrier, and in contradiction to its own “best sentiments”, are the limitations of the Cuban leadership which are passed on down through all levels of party functionaries. The tension is observable in many of Castro’s speeches between a voiced concern for popular participation and a paternalist conception of the party’s relationship to the people. While the population may participate in choosing the best routes, it is the party which provides the map. The present map provides no avenues of workers’ control, no real bearings, no adequate theoretical instruments to discover the way to truly democratic planning or self-management of the units of production.
While the managerial and technical changes implemented under SEMPER have created a space for a quantitive increase in productivity to fill, that space will soon be used up. Both leadership and people will be at another crossroads. What are the conditions in which decisions will have to be made?

Objectively, the stage is set for a series of clashes and confrontations if the practical insights, dispositions, knowledges and expectations being produced among the majority of Cubans in the region of socio-political relations are brought to bear critically on experiences within the region of production. The outcome of these confrontations will depend on the resolution of at least the following questions:

• Will the model of People's Power, with its decentralised popular control of institutions, provide an alternative to those exemplified in the Textil Combinado and the Kaolin Factory? Can the organs of popular administration transform the elitist managerial organs of industries rather than merely supervise and maintain them, as they do now? (Affirmative answers here provide the only socialist solution to the long-term problem of increasing productivity and raising economic consciousness.)

• Can the question, whether women's entry into industry has tended merely to industrialise already existing sexual divisions of labour, be addressed by strategies emerging from the emancipatory practices developed in the FMC as it works among the people's mass organisations?

• What will be the future role of the Cuban Communist Party as it interacts with the organs of popular government? Has its vanguardism laid the foundations for an elite to exercise informal bureaucratic control?

• Can the problems in self-criticism involved in the limitations of an imported Eastern marxist orthodoxy — the dominant theoretical discourse — be overcome if and when the social consciousness born in the practice of People's Power comes into conflict with the effects of technological elitism built into the new industries and directions in education? How can key thematic concerns of socialism — the issues of workers' control of industry and the democratic self-management of society — be properly addressed if the largely informal insights and knowledges of Cubans are permeated by a theoretical discourse which marginalises such concerns?

Footnotes

4. Bahro, R. in his The Alternative in Eastern Europe. (New Left Books 1978), pp.146ff., uses the term “synthesis” to describe social self-knowledge that comes from people experiencing the labour process as its subjects, through forms of work which involve the co-ordination of concepts — “general work” — and the organisation of control functions. This he contrasts with “subalternity”: the limited, particular knowledge of workers who remain the objects of a labour process, where their skills are manual, schematic and unconnected to the decisions that formulate the mode of that labour process. Bahro's book is crucial to any discussion of "Eastern marxism" and "actually existing socialist economies".
5. There seemed little consciousness of factory safety procedures. Not only were ear protection devices unused but machinery had few safety guards over moving parts. Dust prevention devices operated to service machines more than to protect workers. When questioned on these matters, our guides said protective devices were available but workers seemed disinclined to use them, claiming they were hot and uncomfortable.
9. Bahro, op. cit.,
11. Bourdieu, P. in his Outline of a Theory of Practice (Cambridge University Press 1977) uses the following terms, which I find valuable. In class societies, where the definition of the world is at stake, one form of struggle is for the imposition of dominant theories, explanations and systems of classification — a contest for symbolic forms. Some fields of knowledge may be dominated by DOXA (that which is accepted as the truth, undisputed and unquestioned). Dominating groups have an interest — whether they realise it or not — in defending the integrity of DOXA, or short of this, establishing in its place the necessarily imperfect substitute, ORTHODOXY (the "right line"). When ORTHODOXY is established and one set of knowledges is regarded as legitimate, other, alternative knowledges can only appear in the struggle as illegitimate, blasphemous, HERETICAL.
17. Quoted in Cannon, op. cit., p.249.