

Revolution could carry on without him. A stray bullet could, I suspect, still change the whole course of Cuban history. While there would probably be little aversion on the part of Fidelistas, and certainly not on the part of the old-line Communists, to see a broadening of the power base, there is general recognition within both groups of the essential need to have Castro serve as the front man.

8. That the crisis has taken additional starch out of the waning enthusiasm for the Revolution among the Cuban people seems apparent. As far as those who have opposed the régime in the past are concerned, this is not too important since recent events have only confirmed their beliefs. At the other extreme, the Government supporters probably remain for the present staunchly behind the régime even though there are indications from some private conversations we have had that at least members of the intelligentsia now entertain doubts. Essentially, however, this group cannot afford to relax their support very far, since the fall of the Government would spell the end for them. In the middle, where lies the vast majority of the population, passive, generally apolitical, and thinking largely in terms of the necessities of life, there has been underlying unhappiness for a long time. The bulk of such people want to enjoy their life peacefully and without regimentation. In broad terms, they care little about ideological issues or the complexion of the Government as long as it provides the means of obtaining three square meals a day and does not enter into their lives too deeply. Their dissatisfaction stems largely from the stomach rather than from the head, and it is dangerous to equate discontent of this type with anything constituting real opposition. Their morale has, I think, suffered a further drop from the crisis. One reflection of this is the way in which many members of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution appear to have become less assiduous in carrying out their duties. There are also some signs that people are beginning to reason a little more about the defects of the Government. For the first time I see the glimmerings of this change but it is not something I would be prepared to document just yet.

9. At bottom, the economic situation is still the Achilles' heel of the Government. The crisis cannot but have had adverse effects in this regard even though in the first flush of the call to arms there was a special crisis effort put into economic operations with, for instance, absenteeism in particular declining temporarily. There have, however, been not only the manifold dislocations of mobilization but the disruption of the normal supply channels to the island. A member of the Inspection Service of the Ministry of External Commerce told me this week that almost no food had entered Cuba since the crisis began. A two-month gap in these supply lines from the Communist Bloc is going to be hard to repair without a major effort on the part of the Soviet Union, even granting the fact that good reserves of some staples such as wheat are reportedly on hand. The forthcoming months are likely to show increasing strains in the economic field.

10. The Government is undoubtedly conscious of this, and particularly its effect on the public at the yuletide season. This is evident from the efforts currently being made for a sort of organized gaiety for this period. Increased rationing arrangements have been instituted for Christmas in an endeavour to improve, or give the appearance of improving, the food situation during the holidays. However, in the case of the beef ration it appears to be essentially a question of doing without one week in order to have extra the next week. Moreover, the additional quantities of turkey, chicken and pork promised by the Government are somewhat indefinite. No specific amounts have been mentioned and it is doubtful if there is sufficient supplies of these foods on hand or if small farmers can be persuaded to cooperate at the low official purchase prices so that the added rations can be provided on a nationwide basis. Even assuming the Government is able to place more in the larders for Christmas, it is likely to be at the expense of normal rations in January and February. Knowing the Cuban fondness for the pastime of dancing, the Government also appears to be intent on providing many outlets for this activity, even including impromptu street affairs.