



The changing face of CUBA

by Barbara Kaczor

"Che lives." This was the message of Cuban economist Carlos Tablada as he spoke to an eager audience in the Founders Senior Common Room on November 9. The author discussed his book, *Che Guevara: Economics and Politics in the Transition to Socialism*.

The book, according to its press release, is a "study of Guevara's political and theoretical contributions, in the course of his wide-ranging duties," as a leader during the Cuban revolution's first five years.

He has won one of Havana's highest literary prizes, the Casa de las Americas prize, in 1987. The award, cosponsored by Cuba's Centre for the study of the Americas, was given to coincide with the 20th anniversary of Guevara's death. Tablada donated the monetary award to the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front of El Salvador.

The author described the book as "a homage to Ernesto Che Guevara, to those who heard his call to battle and victory and those who have picked up a rifle."

Tablada was born in Cuba in 1948 and studied at the University of Havana, where he later taught philosophy. In 1986, he received his doctorate in economics at the Latin American Institute of Academy Sciences of the Soviet Union. In addition, he has lectured at universities and research centres in Peru, Nicaragua and Argentina.

The book explains socialism in two sections, one dealing with the theoretical and methodological questions of Guevara, and the other concerning the first stage of socialism in Cuba. Chapters deal with various topics including the role of money, voluntary work and incentive systems.

"You have to put everything into context," Tablada said. "You can't study a thinker by taking him out of the context in which he developed his thought." As he explained, "You can't talk about Che Guevara without talking about the Cuban Revolution." Guevara, along with Fidel Castro, played an important part in overthrowing Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista in the late 1950s.

In the early 1960s, as Cuba's minister of industry, Guevara led a discussion in the Cuban government. He argued against the reliance on capitalist market mechanisms, profitability and material incentives as key tools in socialist economic development. As the book's press release explains, he proposed a radically different course, "one which is controversial in today's world."

Guevara explained that the transition from a capitalist to a socialist society marked that, for the first time in history, the key to