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COMBINING MORAL AND MATERIAL INCENTIVES IN CUBA[1]

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ABSTRACT: Since their revolution of 1959, Cubans have used two types of incentives to attain their stated goals of developing the economy, meeting basic needs of the population, and overcoming the alienation or dehumanization of modern capitalism. Moral incentives have been defined as motivation to work voluntarily for the (global or local) community, with no personal gain except the satisfaction of working collectively for the good of all. Material incentives imply a tangible, concrete reward in exchange for work performed, and are presumed to be the basis of capitalist market relations. The experimental mini-brigades, contingents, and modes of distribution show how the two incentives work in practice in Cuba. Although many past debates have dichotomized the two types of incentives, this paper concludes that while Cuba's public pronouncements have at times emphasized moral incentives for ideological reasons, the real practice has been a combination of the two, because through the system of distribution of scarce durable goods, participants' co-workers or peers are more likely to vote for material rewards to those workers who have demonstrated "morally motivated" volunteer efforts over time.

John Dunn gave credit to the Cuban revolution of 1959 for having "resuscitated the plausibility of the revolutionary role as an option for the future and not merely a glorious embellishment of a vanishing phase of history" (1989, p. 200). But the Cubans have tried to do even more: they have pulled Karl Marx from the dustiest shelves and attempted to revive his humanistic version of the anti-capitalist critique (Marx, 1844; Marx & Engels, 1845-46; Ollman, 1971), popularized to some extent by Che Guevara before his death in 1967 (Guevara, 1987). They set their goal as nothing less than overcoming human alienation.

A vital element of the anti-alienation strategy, particularly during the 1960s and the late 1980s, has been the use of "moral incentives," defined here as motivation to work for the benefit of others or the community rather than for personal material gain. The accomplishment of such altruistic action generally has been reinforced, however, with material rewards of various types. Material incentives are defined here as tangible, concrete rewards in exchange for work performed and are presumed to be the basis of capitalist market relations. Cuba's mini-brigades and contingents illustrate the difference.

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Participants in the mini-brigades (*micro-brigadas*), roughly 30 to 35 people each, construct apartment buildings, daycare centers, hospital wings, bus stops, or other facilities specifically to meet social needs. Brigadistas usually join the effort for about three years and expect (but are not guaranteed) to obtain a new apartment. Unlike the mini-brigades, the construction contingents are organized in brigades of around 300 each and they build on a larger scale for macro-economic needs such as dams, reservoirs, irrigation systems, roads or tourist hotels. The *contingents* have been presented as having fewer material incentives, requiring the sacrifice of very long working days (14 hours) with participants receiving higher hourly pay but getting paid only for a normal 10-hour construction day, thus donating the other four hours labor. However, the established merit system permits participants who volunteer for two-year or four-year stints to accumulate *meritos* that their (future) peers will take into consideration for material rewards, although possibly not until years later. Each system uses a combination of moral and material incentives, but in quite different ways (cf. Campbell, 1992).

Moral incentives for production have been analyzed in the past by Bernardo (1971) as indicative of moving away from a capitalist type of labor market based on threat of starvation and other deprivations. The degree of success of the morally motivated mini-brigades and contingents should help indicate how Cuba may or may not have been able to move away from capitalist norms. Unfortunately, the presentation that follows does not have sufficient data and therefore falls far short of making such sweeping generalizations. Nevertheless, analysis of the social issues of alienation and motivation as the Cubans have related them to processes of social change can provide important insights regarding such possibilities.

While an over-simplified dichotomy pitted moral (socialist) against material (capitalist) incentives, Arthur MacEwan (1976) explained that most people actually meant "personal incentives" when they used the term "material," and "collective incentives" when they used the term "moral." I understand his explanation according to the diagram that follows.

	Material	Moral
Individual or Personal	Personal material gain e.g., an apartment	Personal moral reward e.g., meritos de permanencia
Collective	Direct material collective award, e.g., pay bonuses or time at a Cuban resort for everyone in the group	Moral collective recognition like flying banner "Heroes of Moncada" over the factory or office bldg. of exemplary workers.

Ernesto Che Guevara, one of Cuba's revolutionary leaders and head of the

Ministry of Industry for a few years in the 1960s, suggested public recognition of voluntary efforts as a way of overcoming alienation and of encouraging others to emulate the "communist spirit" (Guevara, 1987, pp 231-245). He took the position that moral incentives with social mobilization presented a way of changing the political culture by raising the level of social consciousness and self-confidence necessary for workers to take control of the systems of production and political power. Although support for his views was not unanimous inside circles of revolutionary activists, there was widespread support for Guevara's ideas (Pérez-Stable, in press; Silverman, 1970; Tablada, 1989).

These views are supported by more contemporary work on social movements (Fireman & Gamson, 1979; Gamson, 1990; Marwell, 1981; McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1988; Melucci, 1989; Oliver, 1984) in their discussions of incentives for participating in social movements, either as correlation between mobilization and development of a social or collective identity or solidarity, or from the position that altruistic behavior and moral incentives are more likely to produce participation and mobilization for the collective good than are direct material incentives. In the words of one of Gamson's informants, a union organizer of hotel and restaurant workers, "You can't organize people over money," (Gamson, 1990, pp. 149-150). All are opposed to the strictly utilitarian views of rational choice theory as exemplified by Mancur Olson's self-enriching actors in *The Logic of Collective Action* (1965).

Besides the sociological and historical work on collective action, there is also a growing body of experimental work on altruism and cooperative behavior and a body of theoretical work that strongly opposes the popularly promoted notion that human beings are "naturally" or "essentially" greedy or inclined to destroy one another, or that "Nice guys finish last" (deVos, 1992; Orbell & Dawes, 1992). The tentative conclusions that material pressures for survival have played a role in promoting collective altruistic behavior seem to be in harmony with the approach Cuba's leaders have tried to take in the second half of the 1980s, when they organized collective teams to meet the immediate needs of the people and the economy.

CUBA'S INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND SUCCESSES IN THE NINETEEN-EIGHTIES

Several socio-economic problems needed solving by the mid-eighties. The children of the baby boom of the 1960s began having babies at the end of the 1970s. People continued to migrate from rural to urban areas and the result was serious urban overcrowding. Housing problems, while taken seriously in the countryside, had been postponed in Havana.

Data from the late 1980s compared to 1953 and/or 1959 show impressive social gains. Table 1 shows that, comparatively, housing units increased from 2.5 to 6.5 per 1000 people between 1959 and 1987. Considering that the population had

doubled over the same years, Cuba had managed to increase four-fold the total housing built during roughly three decades after the revolution. Pesos spent per capita on education nearly doubled, while expenditure per capita on healthcare increased to 22.34 times the amount spent before the revolution. However, the data in Table 1 conceal the scope of the urban housing shortage, until one understands the statistical meaning of "urban" or the non-rural category, then recalculates the dimensions of the problem.[2]

Table 1. Housing, Health and Education Comparisons

Indicator		1953-591980s
HOUSING		
Housing units built/1,000 persons	2.5 (1959)	6.5(1987)
Housing units built	17,089 (1959)	67,099(1987)
Conditions of dwelling average national		
Good	13.0% (1953)	40.4%(1987)
Acceptable	40.0% (1953)	41.0%(1987)
Bad	47.0% (1953)	15.4%(1987)
Unclassified	3.2% (1987)	
Conditions of rural dwellings		
Good	3 .0% (1953)	24.1%(1987)
Acceptable	23.0% (1953)	55.7%(1987)
Bad	74.0% (1953)	18.4%(1987)
Unclassified	1.8% (1987)	
EDUCATION		
Illiteracy Rate	23.6% (1953)	1.9%(1981)
Primary Educ. completed	45.2% (1953)	100.0%(1985)
Secondary Educ. completed	8.7% (1953)	85.0%(1985)
Higher Educ. completed	4.0% (1953)	21.4%(1985)
Pesos spent on Educ. per capita	79.4 (1953)	154.5(1987)
HEALTH		
Life Expectancy in years	62.8 (1955-60)	74.3(1984)
Infant Mortality/1,000 live births	78.8 (1953)	11.9(1988)
Persons per doctor	1,076.0 (1953)	334.0(1988)
Persons per dentist	27,052.0 (1953)	1,679.0(1988)
Pesos spent on health per capita	3.5 (1958-59)	78.2(1987)

Table 1 is from José Luís Rodríguez, "The Cuban Economy: A Current Assessment," in Halebsky & Kirk, 1990. His data are from both Cuban and broader Latin American statistical sources.

Because the table does not show a direct comparison of housing conditions between rural and urban, we must extrapolate the worsened condition of urban housing from the "national average" that includes both rural and non-rural housing. Thus, while the "bad" housing went down nationally from 47% to 15.4% of all housing, the proportions went from 74% to 18.4% in the rural areas, indicating that improvement of housing was far greater in rural areas. Adding the fact that much of the improved housing classified as "urban" was located away from the larger cities, we can begin to see the seriousness of housing problems in Havana and Santiago.

Cuba's development of the countryside is an unprecedented achievement among developing countries, which generally have concentrated on large-scale industrialization and urban development at the expense of worsening living conditions in the countryside. But the negative side effect of Cuba's attention to the long-neglected "interior" (the countryside) was the growth of its urban problems. In recognition of the seriousness of the housing shortage, the Vice-President of Cuba's National Housing Institute called in 1987 for the construction of one million new residences to meet housing needs by the year 2000 (Smith & Padula, 1990).

Development of the economy, improvements in health and education and changes in gender relations brought new problems. Nationally, women had increased as a percentage of the paid labor force from approximately 12% in 1953 (Pérez, 1988) to 26.6% in 1979 (Comité estatal de estadísticas, 1986) to 38.3% in 1988, and in Havana, to 43.4% (Federación de Mujeres cubanas, 1990). The extended family source of childcare disappeared as more women of all ages went out to work, and there was a severe shortage of childcare centers. Yet, the 1985-90 five-year plan called for the building of only two or three childcare centers for the City of Havana Province (Alarcón, 1989). Women (and many men), whose domestic work was excruciatingly time-consuming, were angry and politically up in arms, but there was a shortage of construction workers.

Healthcare had improved to the extent that Cuba surpassed major U.S. cities in infant and under-five mortality rates, yet this was considered to be in spite of a low health consciousness by the population. Central state planners agreed with healthcare professionals on the need for locally situated preventive care centers for health education and care readily accessible to people in all areas, rural and urban. But how could they build the doctors' offices in local communities given the labor shortage? And why was there a labor shortage?

In a society where education was free, young people tried, quite correctly and understandably, to attain the highest education possible, but someone still had to take out the garbage, grow the crops, harvest the sugar cane and build houses and roads. Some measures, like the use of secondary students' work-study program to increase the citrus crop, showed impressive results. But the basic shortage of manual labor remained a serious problem leading to an unbalanced division of labor with shortages of (skilled and unskilled) construction workers and an

over-abundance of trained professionals and technical workers, according to lecturers at the University of Havana's Equipo de Investigaciones Sobre el Desarrollo (Institute of Development Studies, 1990).

In spite of its avowed and demonstrated concern for human needs, the central state was faced with a bureaucracy that clearly had not prioritized social needs and with a planned economy with so few construction workers it could not address the most elementary housing and other needs of the population. The construction labor shortage was made worse by an attitude that manual labor or getting one's hands dirty somehow was not as dignified or rewarding a way to spend one's lifetime as working in an office; to some extent, pay scales reinforced this attitude (Brundenius, 1984). This prejudice against manual labor (and those who perform it) is a theoretical, political and practical consideration that exacerbated problems in Cuba's division of labor and in workplace practices (Smith & Padula, 1990; also see Carchedi, 1991, for a theoretical discussion of mental and material labor).

By 1986, the seemingly obvious common sense solution was adopted: the only way to get one's own living quarters and daycare facilities was to help build them. Construction brigades had done just that in the 1960s on a massive scale. During the 1970s, most domestic mobilizations came to a halt, although a few people volunteered on a small scale to work on weekends and evenings to help build housing for their co-workers. The idea was picked up in the mid-eighties and expanded into a *movimiento* of tens of thousands organized through over-staffed workplaces as well as in the barrios with the worst housing conditions, which also had a relatively high percentage of unemployed youth and housewives. Joining a mini-brigade offered the almost-certain material incentive of getting an apartment, plus the experience of learning new skills and sharing in a socially valued project with others.

HOW DID THE MINI-BRIGADES WORK?

The mini-brigades were special construction brigades of thirty to thirty-five persons working as a team to build housing and daycare, medical or other facilities to meet the direct social needs of the population. Employed participants continued to receive their regular paychecks from their employing firms or offices during the duration of work with the brigades. Those previously unemployed received unskilled laborers' wages until they became skilled or qualified for higher pay scales. Retired construction workers were often enlisted to teach their skills to the new brigadistas, some as paid *fijos*, or skilled workers, others as volunteers. The brigades were semi-centralized within each province in one large program under the direction of the provincial *Poder Popular*, Cuba's system of popularly elected representatives, according to Gerardo Ríos Nazco, Vice-Director of the *Micro-brigadas* movement for the City of Havana Province. Mathéy (1989a, 1989b)

has analyzed the mini-brigades as both self-help projects and a form of political participation.

People from virtually all sectors of the labor force participated, including office workers of various grades, agricultural workers, hotel and restaurant workers, although no study as yet has broken down the job categories of participants.[3] In 1990, 9,900 — or 27.6% — of the 35,805 mini-brigade members in the City of Havana Province were women. Many unemployed women and youth, besides surplus office workers, gained skills previously not available to them. Unlike the contingents that train women to operate sophisticated equipment like bulldozers, trucks and cranes, people in the mini-brigades learned less glamorous but nevertheless important and useful building skills. One can merely speculate about how far the Cubans could have gone with the mini-brigades' construction had there been no global economic crisis and no oil shortages, especially considering the rate of increase in participation in the mini-brigades and the contingents, involving 2.56% of the active workforce in 1987 and 4.43 % in 1989.[4]

Some professionals, such as doctors and teachers, were prohibited from joining the full-time construction brigades because of the social need for their skills. The state provided materials and training to the mini-brigades, and it was entitled to a percentage of the finished housing units for distribution to the neediest cases of non-participants. This percentage for the state varied from 50% at the beginning, to 40% for the bulk of the late 1980s. In 1990, a shortage of gasoline, necessary for special transportation of people and building materials, led to a decision that there could be no more new housing starts, but that work would continue to complete buildings already in progress. Soon, in November, 1990, the daily newspaper *Granma* reported that the state lowered its portion to 20%, presumably to permit all the brigade members who needed housing to get it. Besides housing, the mini-brigades erected a variety of socially necessary facilities listed in Table 2.

The brigades produced in four years over one hundred thousand new housing units. While this rate is certainly not high enough to meet Cuba's projected housing needs by 2000, there was every reason to assume a continuing increase in supplies, labor power and productivity, which did go up as the brigadistas gained experience.

Unfortunately for Cuba, the shattering of the Soviet Union and the COMECON economies and trading system led to a plunge in oil shipments to one-third, or perhaps as low as one-quarter, the amount of oil previously supplied to Cuba (Rodríguez, 1990). Since then, Cuba's oil supplies have continued to decrease. Given the severe economic problems due to lack of oil and transportation, it is likely that privately built housing, which accounted for an average 25% of all new units between 1959 and 1985, has also slowed considerably. It is one thing to be able to buy building materials at cheap rates from the state — probably still no problem; it is quite another to be able to transport materials, family members,

Table 2. Mini-brigade construction, City of Havana 1987 - October, 1990

Year completed	1987	1988	1989	to Oct'90	TOTAL
Housing : (apts)		5332	1617	4240	900* 13089
(with consoltorios*)	575	?	274	132**	981
Daycare centers	54+1R	57+2R	1	1	116
Spec needs schools	0+1R	4+3R	20	0	28
Prim schools	0	0	1	0	1
Art/Voc schools	0	0	1	0	1
Second. schools	2	1R	2R	0	5
IPUEC (school)	0	0	1	0	1
Student Houses	2	2	1	0	5
Albergue rooms	0	2	1	4	7
Int'l guest homes	0	0	1	0	1
Homes for elderly	3	1	0	0	4
Facilities mass org's		3	2	0	5
Video rooms	3	0	1	0	4
Medical facilities					
Consoltorios*	621	500	274	132	1527
Poli-clinics*	5R	8	12	4	29
Phys. Therapy facilities	0	0	0	9	9
Hospital repair	0	5	1	1	7
Hospitals (or wings)	0	1	7	4	12
Laboratories	0	0	0	1	1
Market facilities	4	4+1R	3	7	19
Computer Centers	0	1	2	0	3
Pharmacies	0	2	3	1	6
Bakeries	0	15	20	6	41
Gyms/Sports	8	1	8	1	18
Youth/Social Clubs	0	0	1	2	3
Cafeterias	0	0	4	1	5
Theater/cultural	0	2	2 +2R	4	10
Small industries	0	1	1	19	21
EXPOCUBA - kiosks	0	0	2	0	2
Electr. repair services	0	3	8	5	16
Bus-stops	0	1	3	0	4
Cement/materials for mini-brigade use	0	0	6	6	12
Brigade Prefab shops	0	0	12	0	12
Miscellaneous. buildings	0	0	2	10	12
Miscellaneous renovations		0	0	0	11

R = Renovations or repair work. * Poli-clinics are out-patient facilities for diagnosis and care by medical specialists. Consoltorios are neighborhood-based doctor's offices, usually built with a residential apartment or two for the doctor and/or nurse and their families.
Data supplied by the Movimiento Microbrigadas, Dirección Provincial, Ciudad de La Habana.

friends or skilled sub-contractors like licensed plumbers or electricians to the building site.[5] Joining a mini-brigade seemed to be a more likely means to assure oneself of housing.

HOW DO CUBANS EVALUATE THE WORK OF THE MINI-BRIGADES?

The mini-brigades and contingents were projected by at least some Cuban social scientists as new organizational forms that could help ameliorate the alienation associated with modern capitalism and with the semi-modern bureaucratic states of Eastern Europe and the former USSR. Both brigades and contingents aimed to help overcome ignorance of — and therefore fear of, or prejudice against — physical labor and those who perform it. At the same time, the establishment of contingents and expansion of mini-brigades aimed practically to alter or overcome obvious weaknesses in the internal division of labor. Finally, in the method of their organization, both mini-brigades and contingents sought, although in different ways, to eliminate alienation through changing or challenging habitual capitalist "labor-management relations" in the process of production. By the end of 1990, however, less than 5% of Cuba's workforce was participating in these experimental organizations (Linger, 1992).

Considering the relatively small numbers involved, the impact and pride of accomplishment seems great, at least for the mini-brigades. Attitudes expressed by brigade participants can be classified into a few categories of remarks, listed here in the order of frequency heard from the small number of brigadistas (less than thirty) with whom I had talks (Linger, 1992):

1) Pride in work completed, expressed by every single participant — and, if present, by their family members as well;
2) Relief at taking care of long-standing social needs like the repair of schools, old houses and other older buildings;
3) Training in a new type of labor that might lead to doing skilled work, which would provide the opportunity to switch jobs if one got tired of one or the other in the future (Note: I did not interview anyone in Guinera or other traditionally poorer neighborhoods where "social mini-brigades" were organized to include unemployed residents and where this response might have been the most frequent one);
4) The drawing together of government (especially city) planners, with neighborhood residents and mini-brigadistas;
5) An advance for women to learn non-traditional skills and become employable in more types of jobs;
6) Three years is too long to have to work for the right to get an apartment;
7) It would have been more productive to have more skilled construction workers doing this work.

The sample is too small to draw any significant conclusions, yet the remarks show a range of opinions offered by a few participants to a North American visitor. While few people commented at length on the participation and training of women, it was this category of remarks that I thought reflected the most significant and revolutionary potential of Cuba's example, particularly if workforce integration can be extended beyond just women to include all unskilled and/or unemployed workers. According to some of the literature on economic development, when the self-evaluation of the less skilled and less educated members of a society changes from dependency to self-reliance, the creative potential for economic development — and coincidentally their revolutionary potential — can be greatly increased and released in ways only imagined by dreamers today in most poor countries and among the oppressed sectors in the more developed countries. Under these conditions, the masses seem to accomplish the impossible (Harrison, 1987).

MERITOS AND REWARDS

The mini-brigades were set up with material incentives for participants, either the possibility of getting a new apartment or receiving *meritos* for some other significant material award, such as a new refrigerator. But the understanding of receiving housing at the end of two to four (average three) years labor in a brigade is not based on a contractual agreement. All decisions on the dispensing of available apartments, large durable goods or luxury vacations are made collectively within a merit system whereby notation of meritous or voluntary work performed is attached to one's permanent work record.

Cubans collect *meritos* at their regular jobs for lack of absenteeism, high quality work, voluntary overtime labor at the job or elsewhere (such as teaching night courses in adult education), volunteering for international missions, working for a month or two in agricultural labor, or doing part-time construction work. Three years work on a *mini-brigade*, or two years in a contingent would probably amount to a large accumulation of *meritos*, as would a stint of duty in combat in Angola, a sacrifice that would be recognized as deserving a new apartment.

The *meritos* system functions through places of employment, where workers elect a special commission organized under the control of the *sindicato* (union). Its four or five members include leaders of the union, management, the party and the youth. After the commission receives the information and nominations of recipients for the available goods, it has the responsibility to review work records, including such factors as quality of work, absenteeism, attitude toward co-workers and toward the job.[6] Additionally, the committee evaluates the nominations of people for specific items based on their needs for that particular available durable good or large appliance — such as a stove, refrigerator, TV, or (in the old days when there was gasoline) that very, very rare item: a car.

The workers then decide collectively in a system of discussions and elections in assemblies whether to accept or reject the recommendations of the special committee. Usually, but not always, the group as a whole accepts them. Considering that until recently there was little unemployment, at least officially, this method is seen as both the fairest means of distribution of scarce goods and the best way to encourage good work habits, less absenteeism and more productivity. Thus, *meritos*, although accumulated for a variety of activities ranging from the most altruistic sacrifices to simply good work habits, actually serve as an important material incentive.

Some U.S. intellectuals find the concept of moral incentives so strange or "idealistic" that they think it could not possibly be true (or work).[7] Yet, I heard the same description of this system by workers in various types of industries, at various levels of skill, and from people with varying degrees of involvement with the Cuban Communist Party. It was a relief to find other accounts of the same processes or patterns of distribution in Jill Hamberg's (1990) study of Cuban housing policy and in Arthur MacEwan's (1976) discussion of incentives, equality and power.

The merit system of distribution could be summarized as a method the Cubans have developed to handle both the scarcity of durable consumer goods and the tendencies to slip into absenteeism or poor workmanship, given the fact that, in Cuba, there are no severe negative threats such as unemployment, starvation or eviction from one's dwelling — methods a capitalist system relies upon to keep its workforce performing with discipline. In Cuba, the merit system of rewards differs greatly from the rigid system of ration cards by which every Cuban would get enough necessities like food, medicines, soaps, or detergents, no matter what her attitude toward co-workers, politics, or her level of work performance might be.[8] Thus, while the "free rider" in Cuba may be able to survive with the barest of necessities, she or he is unlikely to get scarce material goods that are awarded through the merit system, given the policy that peers at the regular workplace vote on the allocation of those goods. Consistent performance at the job, lack of absenteeism, high quality work and attitudes toward co-workers enter the picture both at the level of the recommending commission and in the decisive broader meeting of all workers.

DISCUSSION

In classical Marxist social theory, alienation among human beings, although expressed in very complex forms, is caused by two fundamental realities: the nature of modern industrial production and the totality of the unequal social relations of capitalism. These conditions both alienate workers from the products of their labor and all human beings from one another. This concept is the deep structural essence of what Che Guevara and other leaders seem to have had in mind when they said that Cuba could not build socialism with capitalist methods (Castro, 1986).

This truly profound phrase has major implications for all the social sciences. In Cuba, it meant voluntary labor as teamwork, under presumably non-coercive conditions, proposed by Guevara as an important method of moving away from capitalist production and toward building socialist consciousness or communist moral values (Tablada, 1989). A key element in the Cubans' concrete efforts to relate practical changes to the grand theoretical issue of alienation, and overcoming it, has been morally motivated campaigns or "moral incentives" for voluntary work for the common good. It remains to be shown in future research of a large sample of participants whether or not the mini-brigades and contingents have actually been able to address the issue of alienation with any significant degree of success, and whether motivation for joining the contingents has been more toward the "moral" or the "material" end of the spectrum.

The contingent style of organizing work reminds one of public works projects like the Works Progress Administration (WPA) or Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the 1930's economic depression in the U.S., suggesting that the model is applicable generally for public sector construction. However, going far beyond Depression-era projects to a planned non-capitalistic economy, the Cubans sought to integrate workers into decision-making and to change relations between "leader/bosses" (*jefes*) and "workers" at the job sites, in addition to their obvious goals of building good public works such as roads, bridges, reservoirs, and irrigation systems. Thus, changing social relations at the point of production seems to be a goal of the contingent style of organization of labor. Has this Cuban experiment succeeded?

The theoretical success of the contingents, considering the long hours of labor they entail, depends on a widespread socialist consciousness — and the only apparent way to evaluate that phenomenon is by the circular argument that if the contingents are functioning well (and producing), then Cubans have a higher level of socialist altruistic consciousness, indicated by the voluntary sacrificing of personal time for the enjoyment of the benefits by people in the future. As an outside observer, there is no way for me to be sure whether the service is truly voluntary or whether it may be similar to the less-than-voluntary leasing of lands to the state by farmers in some rural areas during the 1967-71 period (discussed by Deere, Meurs, & Pérez, 1991). We will be able to judge better once the data become available and people express themselves regarding the extent to which they consider their participation in the contingents as voluntary.

The mini-brigades probably counter deep structural alienation better than the contingents, simply because there is a more clear cut linkage between producer and product, between the builder and the apartment she will live in, a more or less immediate (although not contractually guaranteed) reward after three years of work as a *brigadista*.

While we cannot state that the Cubans have overcome the alienation of modernity, we can say that conscious attention has been paid to the use of moral

and material incentives and to bringing workers closer to the products of their labor. Yet, the terms "moral" and "material" are a bit misleading because, in reality, virtually all special or voluntary work in Cuba is based on altruistic giving of one's time for the sake of improving life for the future. At the same time, that altruism is generally recognized, perhaps immediately as in the case of apartments for mini-brigade members, or perhaps years later by material goods, or by the immediate "moral" prestige factor of having accumulated a number of *meritos* for socially valued work, and by the moral reward of having done a good deed to make the world a better place for others. Thus, it seems that a more correct understanding of Cuba's methods would be conveyed by the terms "combined moral and material incentives."

Altruistic behavior and moral incentives are discussed in a body of social science research ranging from the mathematical sociology and game theory simulations of Raub and Weesie (1992), to rational choice experiments (de Vos, 1992), to social movement research and theory (Gamson,1990; Marwell, 1981; McPhail, 1991; Melucci, 1989; Oliver, 1984; Tilly, 1978), to the Cuban economic and political sociology of Guevara (1965), Martínez (1989, 1990, 1991) and Tablada (1989). These diverse investigators and analysts, whose reasoning varies widely, agree on at least one point: While there often may be a shared moral and material interest, or a shared individual and group concern, it is possible to conclude that even when there is no apparent or immediate personal gain, many people will act in selfless or altruistic ways for the long-term common good. They may do so collectively or individually, both in societies that called themselves "socialist" and in those that called themselves "capitalist democracies."

It seems that egalitarian and collective solidarity sentiments are hard to subdue. Journalists are reporting social disintegration and anger at the increasingly anti-social acquisitive behavior of former officials in the ex-Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. Sociologists Michael Burawoy and Pavel Krotov (1992) have reported finding desolate or demoralized industrial workers who "mourn for the past and despair for the future" in response to the new forms of capitalist ownership and chaos in the ex-USSR.

This would indicate that the turn toward capitalist market mechanisms (and material incentives) has meant a break from previous norms such as the "trust and discipline that [formerly] bound their society [the USSR] together." It does not seem to be market mechanisms in the abstract that people object to. Rather, they are reported as angry at members of the emerging strata who are accumulating wealth at the expense of everyone else (Bohlen, 1992). This situation is similar to reactions by Malaysian villagers against specific accumulators (Scott, 1985). Instead of the commonly-held wisdom that poverty or misery is the cause of revolution, scholars from a wide range of disciplines have shown that the sense of injustice or violation of entitlements is a common theme in many peasant revolutions, as well as in less drastic forms of resistance (see works cited by Goodwin and Skocpol,

1989, p. 491; also Deere, González, Pérez, & Rodríguez, 1992). Walder (1986) has also reported interesting and violent examples of the anger and actions of industrial workers in China against their "activist" peers who were seen as spies and "quota busters" who were rewarded by managers with more material rewards and privileges than everyone else. Similar sentiments are to be found against the self-enriching behavior of strata arising from state institutions and enterprises in developing African countries (Harsch, in press).

These reports support arguments that cultural and ideological contexts, considered with structural factors, are powerful predictors of altruistic or helping behavior (or of anti-social acquisitive behavior). They imply that one may make predictions about Cuba's future based partly on the ideological orientation or cultural resistance to certain kinds of changes. We can anticipate that as severe economic and political pressures continue to bear down on Cuba, the economy will be forced to accept the penetration by a growing number of joint ventures with foreign capital and its attendant market mechanisms (Gunn, 1992).

One of the most interesting questions for social scientists is how those external economic pressures will interact with ideological or cultural resistance from the Cuban population whose members share a political and cultural history of struggle, deprivation and social solidarity, going back to at least the 1860s (Pérez, 1988). Cubans might prove to be less fatalistic than those Slavic workers Burawoy and Krotov perceived as "mourning." There are great differences in the historical experiences and political cultures of the Spanish Caribbean and those of Eastern Europe and the USSR. Exactly what degree of social and cultural transformation has taken hold in Cuba should be revealed throughout the still unfolding crisis of the 1990s.

We may measure the extent of Cuba's social transformation over the past three decades by the degree to which those who support moral motivations and norms for helping behavior are able to attack politically or resist the seduction of market tendencies toward private accumulation of capital and personally acquisitive behavior. If the market or capitalist tendencies overcome Cuba's weakened economy, then moral incentives are likely to be seen as "history," part of the "romantic" legacy of Che Guevara and inappropriate for survival in the world capitalist economy. To the contrary, some Cuban intellectuals project a certain pride in sharing the hardships equally, which they see as the only means to survive the global economic crisis without destroying the social gains that have benefitted the entire population after the 1959 revolution (Alonso, 1992).

There is a discussion in Cuba on how to save as much as possible of the welfare state — the laws enacted and norms propagated over time for the common good — such as free healthcare, education and very low-cost housing. In the words of Aurelio Alonso, Cuba must consciously decide how to "adapt [to the new world system] without desocialization" (1992). Regardless of the degree to which Cuba must alter its attempted transformation, social scientists could benefit greatly by just

looking at what actually has been accomplished since 1959. As is so often the case, more research needs to be done on the mini-brigades and on the construction and agricultural contingents before we can pronounce the degree of their success either as methods of re-organizing labor over a long-term period of time, or as methods of overcoming alienation.

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NOTES

1. Portions of this paper were presented at the meetings of the American Sociological Association, August, 1992, Pittsburgh, PA. I am grateful to Cuban colleagues at the Institute for Development Studies (DES) at the University of Havana, and to Gerardo Ríos Nazco, Vice-Director of the *Micro-brigadas* movement for the Province of the City of Havana, who provided data on construction by and participation in the mini-brigades. Two economists, Ricardo Nuñez Fernández of the Group for the Integral Development of the Capital and Gustavo Rodríguez Fernández, fellow DES researcher and

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2. Cuban statisticians include as "urban" quite small settlements, provided there are as many as 200 residents with schools, electricity, and health facilities. In an effort to "urbanize the countryside," they built a highly significant 282 community settlement areas for 200-500 or 500-2000 residents each (with new housing and other facilities) between 1959 and 1975 (Stubbs, 1989, p. 29). Larger urban areas like Santiago and Havana that saw relatively less housing improvement were averaged in the non-rural category with at least one to two hundred thousand new "urban" housing units located far away from larger cities.

3. Because salaries were paid through participants' regular jobs, it should be fairly simple to pull together data on the occupational backgrounds of (working) participants. Previously unemployed brigadistas were paid from a separate Poder Popular source, and thus, it should be possible to classify them as well, based on an interview with Gerardo Ríos Nazco, Vice-Director of the *Micro-brigadas* movement for the Province of the City of Havana, December, 1990.

4. Interview with Gerardo Ríos Nazco, December, 1990.

5. From 1989 to 1992, there has been a gradual reduction of gasoline available for personal use. By late 1992, the oil shortage was so severe that gasoline for personal use was entirely suspended.

6. It is not clear whether these commissions conduct their work with the same criteria as the "emulation commissions" reported by Bernardo from the late 1960s. Indices were streamlined around 1966 to include "fulfillment of work plan, rational utilization of raw materials, professional improvement, attendance and contributions of voluntary labor" (Bernardo, 1971, p. 63). It is not clear whether or to what degree this form of evaluation in place during the "revolutionary offensive" of the late 1960s was disrupted or altered with the stabilization and institutionalization based on the Soviet model between 1971 and the mid-80s, nor how the criteria may have changed again with the "rectification process" of the late 1980s.

7. An early version of this paper received that reaction from several members of the Proseminar on State Formation and Collective Action, a group of about 1/2 graduate students and 1/2 post-doctoral participants, led by Profs. Charles Tilly and Richard Bensel, New School for Social Research, 1991.

8. This system is still in place and, due to the severity of the crisis, rationing has increased to the point that virtually everything, including all food, is available to Cubans only through the rationing system. Previously available items like soaps, razors and shampoos were extremely scarce in mid-1992, but, when available, were distributed equally, according to residents of Havana. The rationing system for necessities should not be confused with the system of special material awards for items like fans, TV sets, or large durable goods.