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SARTRE IN CUBA—CUBA IN SARTRE

William Rowlandson

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William Rowlandson
Department of Modern Languages
University of Kent
Canterbury, Kent, UK

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Foreword

This is an account of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir's trip to Cuba at the start of the revolution.

It is an account of their accounts of the trip.

It is an account of Sartre's account buried by its author only months after publication.

It is an account of Sartre's other account of the same trip that only existed in note form, abandoned by its author and shelved in a dusty library archive until its rediscovery and publication five decades later, thirty years after his death.

It is an account of a scholar of revolutions, an advocate of revolutions—a revolutionary—coming face to face with a revolution in full swing. A revolution whose revolutionaries were praising him not only as a fellow revolutionary but also as an inspiration to the revolution.

It is an account of the tumultuous early years of the Cuban Revolution seen through Sartre and Beauvoir's eyes, their account of Cuba, Fidel Castro, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, economics, political tension, justice and injustice, violence and terror.

It is also an account of other people's accounts of Sartre and Beauvoir's trip to Cuba, and an account of other people's accounts of Sartre and Beauvoir's accounts of the trip to Cuba.

Sartre's Cuba accounts have been ignored and understudied.

They have been denounced as blind praise of Castro, "unabashed propaganda."

They have been criticised for "clichés," "panegyric" and "analytical superficiality."

They have been called "crazy" and "incomprehensible."

Sartre was called naïve.

He was rebuked as a fellow traveller.

He was, in the words of Cuban author Guillermo Cabrera Infante, duped by "Chic Guevara."

This book questions these accusations.

Were Sartre's Cuba texts propaganda? Are they blind praise? Was he naïve?

This book sets out to explore the complex relationship between Sartre and the revolution, his knowledge of Cuba prior to the 1960 trip, his Cuban friendships, his road trip across the island with Fidel Castro, his meeting with Che Guevara, his knowledge of Cuban history, his assessment of the need for revolution, his defence of the revolution throughout the 1960s, and, ultimately, his misgivings about Castro and the emerging methods of the revolutionary regime.

This book assesses the impact of Cuba on Sartre and of Sartre on Cuba.

Canterbury, UK

Dr. William Rowlandson
University of Kent

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The Invitation to Cuba

You have no right to ignore the Cuban Revolution.[1]

Some years ago I was working on a project about the mythologisation of Ernesto "Che" Guevara. In charting the journey of the famous photo dubbed by its author Korda *guerrillero heróico*—the defiant Guevara staring into the distance—I learned that it was one of a series taken on 5 March 1960 at a memorial service for the victims of the French cargo ship *La Coubre*, which had exploded in Havana harbour the day before whilst 76 tons of munitions were being unloaded, killing more than seventy-five people.

Standing with Guevara, listening to Fidel Castro's long speech in which he blamed the explosion on the CIA, were Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. This intrigued me. Coincidental with the Guevara project, I had been exploring the horrifying history of state use of torture, and I had recently read Sartre's 1958 commentary of Henri Alleg's *La Question*, a book that contains personal accounts of the French use of waterboarding in Algeria. Two separate projects thus came together in a photo, and, accordingly, I set about exploring the historical trajectories that brought Guevara, Sartre and Beauvoir to be standing so solemnly and so resolutely together.

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Of course, they are not separate stories but networks crossing and recrossing the historical landscape. Sartre was well read in Cuba: his philosophical ideas were debated, his fiction was influential and his plays were performed. Guevara was an attentive reader of Sartre. Sartre was familiar with the pressures long cooking in Cuban history. He visited in 1949 after visiting Haiti with his partner, Dolorès Vanetti, and was shocked to see the economic power of the United States in Cuban affairs and the culture of corruption, subordination and dependence it produced. It was on this trip, he tells John Gerassi in 1971, that he first understood the full imperial might of US economic interests in Latin America, declaring flatly "Cuba back then was a completely corrupt American colony."[2]

Sartre had been following closely the developments in Cuba throughout the 1950s, disheartened by Fulgencio Batista's coup d'état in 1952. He recognised the revolution as a struggle against colonialism, which, although differing in many respects from the Algerian crisis, nevertheless shared many characteristics. Thus his responses to both conflicts are critical of colonialism and sympathetic to the resistance it engenders.

Where to begin to plot these historical trajectories? How far back does one go? To place the Cuban situation in its well-known context, we need only relate that in December 1956 Castro's rebellion had launched itself from the mountains of eastern Cuba, had grown and absorbed other resistance movements and had defeated Batista's army. Batista fled on New Year's Eve 1958, and the rebels marched victoriously into Havana in January 1959. The ensuing months saw radical processes of transformation unfold, with numerous revolutionary projects dismantling, reforming or creating afresh structures of state across the island.

Carlos Franqui, director of the once-clandestine newspaper *Revolución*, visited Paris in October 1959. He was in France to drum up support for the revolution amongst intellectuals, and he was keen in particular to engage with Pablo Picasso, André Breton, Le Corbusier and Sartre.[3] Franqui visited Beauvoir and, with the help of an interpreter, urged her to visit Cuba. "He told me authoritatively," she writes, "that it was our duty to take a look with our own eyes at a revolution actually in progress."[4] Stealing a moment of Sartre's time during an interlude of his play at the Odéon, Franqui impressed Sartre not only with the organic nature of the revolution—not communist nor Marxist—but also with news of Sartre's popularity in Cuba, which according to Franqui

astonished him. Franqui also recommended that they visit Havana during the carnival so as to experience the island in full celebration.

Sartre and Beauvoir demurred for some weeks, both engaged on other projects, both unmotivated to make the trip: "I wonder," Beauvoir recalls Sartre saying to her, "whether it's not just physical exhaustion that stops us, rather than moral fatigue."[5] They later accepted the invitation "to shake ourselves out of our inertia,"[6] and, on 22 February 1960, they stepped down from the plane into the hot, humid, noisy, energetic and energising Havana: "'It's the honeymoon of the Revolution,' Sartre said to me."[7]

It had been a hard few years for Sartre. Well, all his years were hard: his commitment to writing was at times suicidal. His review of Alleg's book, entitled "Une Victoire," is sad and angry, reflecting his low spirits as witness of the crisis in Algeria. It is, I can concur, dispiriting to learn about the use of torture by one's own state and its allies. It is dispiriting to see torture normalised to the extent that its use is defended by a nation's politicians. *La Question* was seized by the authorities, as was the issue of *L'Express* (6 March 1958) that included Sartre's review. He was censured and censored, and he responded by having the text distributed clandestinely as a pamphlet (which was promptly seized), publishing it abroad and even printing it on a tiny scroll to be read with a magnifying glass.[8] Meanwhile, his ongoing abhorrence of Stalinism and critique of the Communist Party had earned him rebuke from the left.

In addition to the play that Franqui caught in Paris, Sartre had been most occupied with the first part of *Critique of Dialectical Reasoning*, a book that demanded so much of him that he had been taking a staggering daily cocktail of amphetamines, barbiturates, alcohol and tobacco, impoverishing further his already poor health.[9] He suffered a liver infection and a cardiac crisis, yet neither ordeal seemed to affect his tireless productivity (nor his self-medication); Beauvoir recalls writing shifts of twenty-six hours.

In September 1959 he spent ten lonely days in a Georgian mansion in Ireland as guest of Hollywood director John Huston, who had commissioned Sartre to write a screenplay about Freud. The two did not get on. Huston was alarmed at this "little barrel of a man as ugly as a human can be" who was forever writing, forever popping pills, who seemed to wear the same suit every day, who did not flinch when a local dentist pulled an abscessed tooth and whom he could not dominate.[10] Sartre, for his part, did not understand Huston (Sartre never spoke English well) and

could not relate to him in any way, calling him in a letter to Beauvoir, a lonely romantic whose "emptiness is purer than death" who "refuses to think because it saddens him."[11] Those autumn days in Ireland read like a scene from Sartre's play *Huis Clos*: awkward characters stuck together awkwardly in an awkward environment.

Sartre was also dispirited by the return to power of Charles de Gaulle following the November 1958 general election, by the lingering presence of fascism in French society, and by the ongoing tension in French Indochina, a conflict that would lead in the following decade to the Vietnam War. In addition to all of this, in January 1960 Albert Camus, Sartre's friend and antagonist, died in a car crash. His death put Sartre and Beauvoir into profound gloom. Even their stopover in Madrid en route to Havana was, according to Beauvoir, dismal.

I picture all these stories set against the Paris winter of cold drizzle, runny noses and heavy tobacco smoke lingering in the twilit cafés, suddenly swept away by the turbulence of a tropical island in revolt. It is this sudden transition that catches my attention as I am familiar with the dazzling discord of flying from a dark British winter into the heat, noise and smells of Havana. Everything is suddenly so different; home and home affairs seem distant. "After Madrid, after Paris," Beauvoir writes, "the gaiety of the place exploded like a miracle under the blue sky."[12]

The trip was a lively one. They were given separate rooms in the "fortress of luxury" Hotel Nacional. "My millionaire hotel room would hold my Paris apartment," Sartre writes, and he turns up to the maximum the air conditioning to experience "the cold of the rich."[13] It was, as Franqui promised, carnival time: "On Sunday evenings," recalls Beauvoir, "troupes of amateurs appeared in the streets, joyfully putting on shows they'd spent the whole year preparing; costumes, music, mimes, dances, acrobatics—we were dazzled by the taste, the invention, the virtuosity of these *comparsas*."[14] They were shown around the city, introduced to different figures of new official roles in the revolution, and instructed in different revolutionary initiatives.

Sartre was interviewed by journalists and appeared on the Cuban television. They were celebrities, Beauvoir recalls: "after he'd given a talk on television, everyone recognized him. 'Sartre, it's Sartre!' the taxi drivers would shout as we went by. Men and women stopped him in the street."[15] Perhaps Beauvoir modestly forgot that she, too, was recognised and cheered in the street; Carlos Franqui recalls the crowd shouting "*Saltre, Saltre, Saltre. Simona, Simona, Simona*" and that their

names quickly became a refrain of the carnival rhythm: "*¡Saltre, Simona: un dos tres! /¡Saltre, Simona: echen un pie!*"[16] There are photos taken by Castro's official photographer Alberto Korda that show Sartre and Beauvoir jostled by a lively crowd of beaming faces. Cold Paris must have seemed a world away.

They were entertained by the writers of *Lunes*, the weekly cultural supplement of Franqui's *Revolución*, and an edition of the journal was promptly dedicated to him, complete with photos of the pair.[17] On 14 March, Sartre presented to students at the University of Havana, where he was asked by one of the students about the relationship between ideology and revolution. He responded in brief but was so concerned with the question that he later explored in greater detail and published as an article in *Lunes*, "Ideología y Revolución." The article was printed the day before their departure. On 21 March, the director of *Lunes*, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, arranged a meeting in the journal's offices where Sartre spoke with a gathering of writers and intellectuals.

They visited Guevara, then director of the National Bank, at midnight, and one of Korda's photos shows Guevara in battle fatigues leaning forward to light Sartre's cigar, Beauvoir sitting chicly next to the rugged and bearded Antonio Núñez Jiménez. They tour the island with Castro, visiting cane fields, sugar refineries and tobacco *huertas*, inspecting the emerging effects of the nascent agrarian reform. They visited factories, villages and new tourist developments on the now-public beaches. They visited Santiago, Trinidad, Santa Clara and other cities. They are taken to the Castro brothers' hideout in the Zapata marshes, which Sartre jokingly calls the "Cuban Rambouillet,"[18] in reality a wooden barrack in a mosquito-ridden swamp. "Castro and his entourage," as one biographer puts it, "all slept in bunk beds arranged along the walls of a single large room. It was a familiar feeling for a man who had passed through the dormitories of the École Normale and Stalag XIID."[19] They sped through the waterways with Castro at the helm. They watched Castro fishing by blasting the water with a shotgun and hauling out the stunned fish. Sartre and Castro buzzed around the swamp in a tiny helicopter. They talked and ate and smoked. They slept little.

Sartre was impressed with Castro's energy and charisma. He was impressed with all the revolutionaries' energy. He was impressed with the revolution. His spirits improved. "It was," writes biographer Annie Cohen-Solal, "a real Sartre-Cuba festival."[20]

At all times, characteristically, Sartre was filling page upon page of notebooks with his observations. Cuban novelist Lisandro Otero, who accompanied them throughout, remembers Sartre constantly writing, deliberating and questioning his comrades, impervious to heat, mosquitoes or physical discomfort, of which there was plenty on their trip.[21] While in Cuba, Sartre was working on a preface to a new edition of his old lycée friend Paul Nizan's *Aden Arabie*, although he admits in the *Lunes* conference that he was struggling to focus on it with his attention drawn to the tumultuous scenes before him in Cuba.[22] Instead he observed, scrutinised and prepared his notes to publish as articles in France.

They left Havana for New York City, which seemed to Beauvoir "after the multicoloured tumult of Havana" to be "bleak and almost poverty-stricken."[23] This was a city familiar to both although they had never visited together. Beauvoir, in particular, was very fond of New York, and yet after their adventures with the rebels in the tropics, the city appeared to her drab and the people "shabby and rather bored." Being in Cuba changed her vision not just of the city but also of the United States as a nation, "no longer in the vanguard of humanity" but "poisoned by lies, cut off from the rest of the world by a Dollar Curtain."[24] It was only the taste of a martini that revived her affection, but the experience was brief as they were bundled into a press conference organised by the Cuban cultural attaché at the Waldorf. "The regime produced by the Cuban Revolution is a direct democracy," Sartre boldly declared. "The Cuban Revolution is a real revolution."[25] Strong words from a historian of revolutions. Sartre and Beauvoir found themselves amongst a lively crowd concerned at congressional hostility towards Castro and Cuba and eager to learn about the couple's observations. Sartre's radical views thus appear in opposition to an emerging and now long-in-the-tooth anti-Castro ideology in US politics.

Hurricane Over Sugar

Consider the luck of imperialism. By the very game of economic domination it creates among the oppressed needs which the oppressor alone is able to satisfy. The diabetic island, ravaged by the proliferation of a single vegetable, lost all hope for self-sufficiency.[26]

Once in Paris, Sartre altered his plan of publishing his accounts with *L'Express*, where he had published much inflammatory material in the 1950s, or with his own *Les Temps Modernes* and arranged to publish in *France-Soir*, a magazine with a far greater circulation. The articles, edited and tidied up by Claude Lanzmann (editor and co-founder of *Temps Modernes* and partner of Beauvoir) and entitled collectively *Ouragan sur le sucre: un grand reportage a Cuba de Jean-Paul Sartre sur Fidel Castro*, ran from June 28 to July 15 1960, and were well publicised and widely read. *France-Soir* did, however, cagily declare that their position was not necessarily that of Sartre's.[27] "Sartre's prospective audience," writes Ronald Aronson, "was not the usual small Left-intellectual sector, but a popular readership of over a million."[28] Sartre was not preaching to the converted.

The Spanish translation rights were immediately acquired by *Prensa Latina*, recently established by the two Argentines Guevara and Jorge Ricardo Masetti, and the Cuban edition, *Sartre visita a Cuba*, which was published by Ediciones R in October 1960 and April 1961, contains the translation of the *France-Soir* articles, his *Lunes* essay "Ideología y revolución", the transcript of the interview with the Cuban writers, and an appendix of forty or so photos of Sartre and Beauvoir throughout their trip.

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The articles were immediately published in numerous Spanish editions in Latin America as *Huracán sobre el azúcar* and in English in 1961 more prosaically as *Sartre on Cuba*. Further editions were published in German, Portuguese, Italian, Turkish, Russian and Polish.[29] When, later in 1960, Sartre and de Beauvoir were in Brazil, a translation of the articles in Portuguese was rapidly assembled and published, and Sartre and Beauvoir endured an autograph session of several hours in a bookstore after more than 1500 people descended on the bookstore.[30]

There was, very suddenly, great critical attention of Sartre's writings on Cuba, and he was praised and condemned in equal measure for his praise of Castro and the revolution.[31] And yet, curiously, having authorised the publication of the Cuba articles in book form in all these translation editions, Sartre barred book publication in French, and he was later keen to bury the texts altogether. Just as rapidly as the book had risen, so it fell away.

Sartre was not only keen to bury the Cuba articles; he also chose to abandon a separate book project on Cuba. Beauvoir recalls Sartre at work on "an enormous work on Cuba" that would occupy him until they left for Brazil in the autumn but makes no further mention of this work.[32] In 2007, researchers of the Paris-based ITEM (Institut des Textes et Manuscrits Modernes) discovered in the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas, Austin, a handwritten, unedited and incomplete manuscript of 1100 pages written, accordingly, after the June and July 1960 France-Soir articles. Gilles Philippe and Jean Bourgault, who made the discovery, were keen to publish the manuscript in book form, but the Sartre estate executor, Arlette Elkaïm (Sartre's adopted daughter) felt that Sartre would not have wanted a book published. Instead, Lanzmann was brought on board, and the material was published in *Les Temps Modernes* alongside a reprint of the original *France-Soir* articles.[33]

These notes, published as *Appendice*, are similar to the articles but less refined, less coherent, more raw. The tone is at times more strident, the voice less forgiving, the morality more austere. It seems a personal diary, the space where ideas are knocked around before they appear in print, a space for reflection. They are an invaluable document for deepening our understanding of Sartre's relationship with Cuba and the revolution.

Sartre's disinheritance of *Ouragan sur le sucre* may in part account for *Ouragan* remaining in the margins of Sartre's work, rarely discussed in critical detail. Paolucci notes her surprise that neither the French nor the English studies consider the articles in any detail.[34] There is critical

analysis, and biographers and scholars have approached *Ouragan* from a variety of perspectives in a variety of discourses. But when compared to the groaning shelves of scholarly works concerning *Being and Nothingness*, *Nausea*, Sartre's plays or even the difficult *Critique*, it is revealing how understudied are the Cuban articles.

Neither have they been well received. There is a tendency to view them as too gushing in their praise of the revolution and of Castro, too enthusiastic, too opinionated. Cohen-Solal likens *Ouragan* to "the articles he wrote about America, in 1945, and about the Soviet Union, in 1954: the same clichés, the same tendency to panegyric, the same analytical superficiality," and she calls the articles "unabashed pro-Cuban propaganda."[35] I disagree. I see Sartre doing precisely what he advocated the intellectual should be doing: observing, researching, deliberating and responding. I see his praise of Castro arising from his scrutiny, albeit enthusiastic, of the man. It is not blind praise—although at times it is gushing—as he is quite prepared to interrogate Castro about the growing cult of personality surrounding the leader, and to question the tension between Castro's declared commitment to individual freedom and the emerging authoritarianism of the revolutionary state.

Ronald Aronson, who dedicates more critical space than most to the Cuba articles, frowns upon the literary language of the articles. I applaud it. The sprightly wit and jaunty language make for lively reading. Bearing in mind that his prime readership was French, it is interesting to consider his choice of simile to describe the influence of the United States over Cuba's affairs: "they had neglected nothing in order to make of the newborn nation a future monster, equal to the geese of Strasbourg, who die slowly in the pains of too delicious a liver."[36] Cuban ethnographer Fernando Ortiz likens sugar to a demanding woman. Sartre likens sugar to foie gras.

In such a poetic vein (and I cite the original French to show his language) he refers to the nation as "ce monstre diabétique," and writes that "le pays meurt d'une indigestion de dollars et de sucre."[37] The island is an "archipel de feu contre la vitre noire de la mer,"[38] rebels' beards are *fleuves noirs*, "black rivers covering the chest,"[39] and a sunset that he watched with Simone de Beauvoir is a "tomate sanglante, sur les jeunes plantes de tomates."[40] There is rich poetic quality to these accounts that in no way detracts from their impact. I do grant that he is not innocent of insult, calling US politicians and merchants puritans, presidents Grau and Prio corrupt and venal, Machado tyrannous,

wicked and avaricious, Batista a chimpanzee and his lackeys monkeys; but such punchy language seems pertinent to his analysis, and certainly animates a text focusing in its early chapters on the potentially dry themes of economics, trade regulations and agricultural production.

Sartre's disinheritance of *Ouragan sur le sucre* may in part account for the lack of new editions; in addition to the 2008 *Temps Modernes* journal re-edition, the two book editions that I am aware of are a 2005 Italian edition, edited and introduced by Gabriella Paolucci,[41] and a 2005 Cuban edition, with essays, edited by Eduardo Torres-Cuevas.[42] To my knowledge there is no English language re-edition. "Who today," asks Lanzmann in 2008, "remembers a text of the great author entitled *Ouragan sur le sucre*? It's nowhere to be found, not in publishing houses, bookshops, nor even the stalls of the *bouquinistes* [book sellers along the Seine.]"[43] Even with the Spanish, French and Italian re-editions, Sartre's Cuba articles remain marginal. The time is right, I deem, to bring them in from the cold.

Sartre and Beauvoir in Havana

We are living in the fashionable district.[44]

One important consideration is the ways in which Sartre and Lanzmann structured the articles. The narrative sequence contributes significantly towards the way Sartre constructs the meaning of the revolution in Cuba. We can chart a story line of sorts: it begins in Havana in the present—February 1960—goes back in time to the nineteenth century, then sweeps across the decades and across the island to return to Havana in the present.

Sartre leaps straight in with no preamble, writing in the present tense from "cette ville" that he finds confusing and that he has failed to understand. It could be the beginning of one of the Ernest Hemingway novels that Sartre was so fond of (in 1949 he and Dolores had stayed with Hemingway in Havana. In 1960 Hemingway was away). He goes to great lengths to describe the luxury of the Hotel Nacional, a hotel that demands "fortune and taste" from its clients. "What can one say about it?" he asks. "There are silks, folding-screens, flowers in embroidery or in vases, two double beds for me, all alone—all the conveniences."[45] It is a curious beginning to a tale of revolution; indeed it is a good review of the Nacional, its elegant architecture, its "nobility" in comparison to the garish skyscrapers that puncture the skyline. It should be on the hotel's website today, as the Nacional is still a "fortress

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of luxury," an "island" standing apart from its surroundings above the Malecón. Nice endorsement.[46]

Aronson puzzles over this odd opening scene, and he reflects that it was "Sartre's attempt to describe the reality of revolutionary Cuba as it might appear to a French bourgeois."[47] I have also puzzled over it and I agree. Sartre seems to be putting his reader at ease, making it clear that he has not gone native and grown a beard and taken up arms. "The first report," Aronson continues, "shrewdly began by placing readers in the midst of Havana, but at an appropriate distance from the real social locus of the revolution."[48] I think this is probably quite likely. Sartre is reassuring the reader that Sartre is still Sartre, still the intellectual, the observer, the philosopher. Yet this is a fault, says Aronson. "The opening paragraphs, for all their refreshing concreteness, tended to present *Sartre seeing Cuba* rather than Cuba itself."[49] Well Sartre *was* seeing Cuba. He wasn't Cuban. He had no option other than observing and recounting. How long must he stay there to gain greater authenticity?

Sartre and Beauvoir arrive in a land undergoing radical change in its social fabric and yet none of that is visible to them. They visit the famous Tropicana nightclub and Sartre is surprised to see gambling: "They gamble then, in Cuba? They still gamble? One of our companions replied briefly, '*We gamble.*'"[50] Where is this revolution, Sartre seems to be saying, that has lured him away from his writing desk in Paris?

The luxury hotel, the "Yankees, elegant and sporty" in the lobby, the skyscrapers, the gambling, the nightclubs, the "de luxe restaurants," the big US cars; Sartre is presenting the Cuban landscape to readers in a way that they might recognise, perhaps if they had themselves been to Havana. I am reminded of George Orwell's opening pages of *Homage to Catalonia*, where he reports back to his reader how transformed was the city of Barcelona under the wartime republic, even down to the way folk addressed one another. We would expect the same from Sartre in Havana, but his account is the polar opposite. "I found that nothing had changed," he tells us, after walking for hours through the city with Simone de Beauvoir, in fact, "the number of autos had doubled and tripled—Chevrolet, Chrysler, Buick, De Soto. One hailed a taxi; it stopped—it was a Cadillac."[51] Where is Sartre taking the reader?

One can see his mind at work in these observations and detect a subtle strategy to this narrative development. Whilst this may be partly to put his reader at ease and set the scene, he is in fact making a case for the revolution. He is demonstrating what has *not* changed rather than what has changed. Not to show how far the revolution has progressed,

but how far it has to go. He is not presenting a luxury hotel as problematic in and of itself; indeed he seems to like it, cranking up the air conditioning—*le froid des riches*—and admiring the skyscrapers. He is indicating that the luxury hotel is incongruous with this famous revolution that he has come to visit. It jars with his conscience to be staying there, as in doing so he appears a member of the *ancien regime*—a Yankee in the lobby—not of the bearded rebels who have invited him. So do the nightclubs, casinos, cars and restaurants seem to jar. "In their beginnings, all, or nearly all, revolutions have one common characteristic: austerity. Where," he asks rhetorically, "is the Cuban austerity?"[52]

If, as Aronson suggests, he is considering his bourgeois readership, then he is keen to lead the reader, step by step, through the cracks in this city, behind the scenes. He is keen not to alienate his reader by leaping straight into revolutionary rhetoric, keen not to hector or sloganise. *France-Soir*'s readership was more than a million. Many readers must have loathed Sartre on account of his tireless attack on French involvement in Algeria. Many readers would not have been sympathetic to the Cuban Revolution. Sartre had to play it gently, steadier than he would the following year in his punchy preface to Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth.*

He gazes out of his hotel window and wanders through the streets—a visiting flâneur. He reminds me of Sergio, the protagonist of the Sartre-inspired novel and film *Memories of Underdevelopment*, who views Havana through a telescope from his high apartment balcony and wanders alone and disconnected through the jostling crowds. This can't do, Sartre realises, and he seems to close his eyes, rub them and reopen them, and now, suddenly, the reality of the place has transformed, its ugly truth revealed. "I had misunderstood everything," he writes, recounting this moment of revelation. "What I took to be signs of wealth were, in fact, signs of dependence and poverty." All these things, he realises, are the visible signs of underdevelopment, not development. The taller the skyscraper the greater the wealth gap. "At each ringing of the telephone, at each twinkling of neon, a small piece of a dollar left the island and formed, on the American continent, a whole dollar with the other pieces which were waiting for it."[53] Some of his more wealthy readers may have been familiar with that very view from the Nacional. They may have had a splendid holiday in what Graham Greene called "louche" Havana. Sartre is keen to remind them that they may have been blinded to the reality by the facade of luxury. The land was sick, he insists, swollen like a goose's liver.

And with this new perspective he realises that things in fact have changed. The river of wealth may be still flowing, but it has dried up at source. One particular fancy restaurant no longer has caged lions. The gambling slot machines have gone, smashed by jubilant crowds in the first days of the revolution. I suspect he would have noticed the lack of parking meters, also destroyed in those chaotic days. The cars may be more numerous than in 1949, but they are now a couple of years old and they are crammed with people "six or seven into each car." With uncanny insight he realises that these cars will never be replaced; they will be patched up for decades to come. This would save the nation "twenty times more millions than they had cost."[54] I wonder if Sartre imagined that nearly 60 years later these cars—*máquinas*, as they're called—would still be patched up, still be trundling down the Havana streets, still crammed with people, many crammed with tourists.

Having depicted this dichotomous landscape and with constant references to the present, Sartre then draws back a decade to explore the processes that led to the stirrings of revolution. He accounts for the consolidation of power in the 26th of July Movement, the need to dismantle rather than take over the Cuban armed forces, the need for the agrarian reform and the inevitable disquiet from vested interests both in Cuba and the United States. He concludes the brief second article with a statement that becomes the principle concern—and the title—of the whole body of articles: "The island lived off sugar. One day people noticed that they could die of it."

Sartre's History of Cuba

mon pauvre ami, in Latin America they have revolutions every year: it's their way of voting.[55]

The *France-Soir* readers may not have known a great deal about Cuban history and the context of the revolution, bearing in mind that at this stage the real battle lines between Cuba and the United States had not been formalised, the Soviet alliance was in its infancy, the Bay of Pigs was still a secret plan, Castro had not declared the socialist nature of the revolution, and the missile crisis was still more than two years off. Perhaps it was seen simply as a Caribbean squabble between the home-grown dictator Batista and the disgruntled people. A localised power struggle. Haiti may have sprung to some readers' minds, but this Cuban case was not a colonial issue, as Spain left the picture sixty years before. An internal affair, *bien sûr*.

It is with this in mind, I feel, that Sartre decided to dedicate the ensuing long and studious pages to the history of Cuba, to demonstrate not only that the revolution arose out of many decades of injustice and resentment, but that it *was* a colonial affair, and that in this case, the colonial power was the United States of America. Not the military, but the politicians and sugar barons. This may well have been quite startling news for some of the less-informed readers of the articles.

I am struck by Sartre's depth of research into Cuban history, considering the speed with which he wrote and published the pieces

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(the spring and early summer of 1960), and the many other projects—theatre, travelling, agitating—he was engaged in whilst writing these pieces. He was hard at work at the same time on the second volume of *Critique*; he had recently worked on a biography of Gustave Flaubert, a study of Tintoretto, a screenplay of Arthur Miller's *Crucible* and the John Huston screenplay about Sigmund Freud. He had published analyses of Maoism and critiques of Gaullism. He was an authoritative voice on the struggles in Algeria and Indochina and had condemned the Soviet intervention in Hungary. He had also written and had staged *The Condemned of Altona*, his final play. The *Appendice* notes do reveal that he scrutinised Cuban history in 1949 far more intricately than is apparent in the published *France-Soir* articles, and that he had been following Cuban history throughout the 1950s, but it never seems to have been his primary focus.

In sum, therefore, one would be prepared to forgive him a patchy understanding of Cuban history given his other concerns. Yet his research is admirable, his analysis is penetrating and his views are compelling. This to me is significant, and I find it intriguing that so little critical attention has been paid to his rich and involved understanding of the history of Cuba.

I have been teaching Cuban history and culture for fifteen years, and consequently I have regular recourse to succinct accounts for fact-checking, class preparation or to recommend to students. Over the last few years, in addition to other texts, I have recommended Sartre's historical chapters as informative approaches to Cuban history, with particular focus on the sugar economy. They are fascinating examples of invested scholarship.

Aronson critiques what he sees as an unhappy blend of history and political opinion. Yet to me, for all his literary flourishes and poetic metaphor, and for all his attempts at factual reporting, Sartre's texts are defiantly political and defiantly engaged. And let us be fair; no historian of Cuba, not even the meticulous Hugh Thomas, is free from personal investment in the history. Richard Gott's excellent *Cuba: A New History* embodies the author's political perspectives as a visible narrative thread, which grants the text particular poignancy. There is no account that is singularly "objective," and neither can there be (this is a separate epistemological concern); and neither should the reader abandon critical scrutiny of a text simply because it is a history (I say this as an inveterate reader of Borges.) I would argue that this is the nature of all historical

analyses, but with the focus on so inflammatory a field as Cuba, it seems particularly pertinent.

Above all, Sartre's accounts are *embodied* history. That's to say, when evaluating the agrarian reform, he not only explores in depth the nature of the agricultural system going back to the nineteenth century, but he also chats with agricultural workers and administrators. He reflects on the dominance of sugar whilst standing in a cane plantation, witnessing the "obstinate fecundity" of the cane, in dialogue with the very stalks that bear this history. He investigates sugar's history whilst touring a *central* and describing the pervasive, invasive, odour of the molasses, which affected even the taste of his pipe tobacco. His account of history is inseparable from the account of his trip.

Sartre displays a keen understanding of the motives and objectives of the Cuban struggles for independence from Spain in the nineteenth century, and he cites José Martí with evident familiarity. He explores the imperialistic design of the Monroe Doctrine and how the US intervention in the Cuban Wars of Independence disguised a ruthless desire to create a dependent territory. He even cites from Theodore Roosevelt's letters. He discusses the US military governorship following the war, the compromised constitution of the new republic and the stranglehold of the Platt Amendment. He charts the course of Cuban economic history through successive dependent and corrupt governments and the consequent poverty, injustice and underdevelopment such systems created.

Interestingly, he hauls into his analysis detailed figures and statistics relating to the export of raw materials, the import of manufactured goods, agricultural production, animal husbandry, unemployment, poverty, literacy, wages and population growth. These statistics are intriguing, as although they assist his argument, he does not cite his sources. Thus it is unclear whether these were figures that he picked up as he toured plantations, sugar refineries, schools and hospitals, and jotted down in his notebook, or whether he ordered historical and sociological analyses while at his desk in Paris. It may be that Beauvoir and Lanzmann assisted him with this statistical research. It is unlikely that he had gathered these data in the years before 1959, given their critical content about the state of Batista's Cuba. The figures seem comparable to other historians' accounts, indicating that he neither invented them (an unlikely scenario to be fair) nor that they were thrust upon him as currency of propaganda.

Thus the style, method and objective of the Cuba articles can be contrasted to the ongoing work on the second part of *Critique*, which he was writing at the same time and which he never completed. The first part of *Critique* is a tricky text to read, reflecting the disjointed mental state that Sartre was in while writing it.[56] As biographer Ronald Hayman describes *Critique*, "Instead of keeping himself in a fit state to look up passages in the Marxist philosophers and in his earlier writings, to check facts, sources, quotations, statistics, he was content to rely on his drugged memory and to take evasive refuge in the kind of abstraction which infuriated Engels when Marx resorted to it."[57] This does not seem to have been his working method for *Ouragan sur le sucre*, which seems far less obscure, dense and complex than *Critique* and follows a livelier narrative. The articles also reached a far wider readership.[58]

True to his longstanding dislike of colonialism, Sartre presents the Spanish rule of Cuba as a system designed to perpetuate the island's state of dependence and underdevelopment. The wars of independence were predicated on a national desire to modernise and industrialise and "to found its civil liberties on economic liberalism – the rights of the citizen over those of the landowner."[59] Thus the nineteenth century struggles were revolutionary struggles, dedicated to achieving those most enlightened of revolutionary principles hammered out by the architects of the American and the French revolutions.

In the meantime, however, the Monroe Doctrine, which had emerged as a paternalistic policy of assistance between the new nations of the Americas, had been distorted by "a gang of businessmen and politicians" to a new policy of intervention that now read: "South America belongs to North America."[60] In this way, Sartre continues, the involvement of the United States in Cuban independence constituted an act of imperial intervention. "The Cubans had taken up arms at the wrong time. They fought against the moth-eaten colonialism of Spain at the time when the real masters of the world were entering a severe crisis of imperialism."[61]

On the matter of US intervention, Sartre gives a mischievous wink to the reader that cannot have been lost on his Cuban readership. "Suddenly," he writes, "the battleship *Maine* blew up, furnishing the United States with the pretext to intervene in Cuba, then a Spanish possession. (Today, professors of history, even in the U.S.A., cannot mention this American battleship without a discreet smile.)"[62] I wonder whether Sartre really could draw on this team of discreetly smiling professors of history in the United States. His position is revolutionary,

as Cubans had long maintained that the United States blew up the ship as an act of self-sabotage to justify intervention, blaming the attack on the Spanish. This clandestine vision of history then surged into official discourse with the victory of the rebels in 1959. A monument dedicated to the victims of the *Maine* in Havana was erected along the Malecón in 1925, crowned with a vast golden eagle. In 1961 the eagle was torn down and a new inscription was added: *To the victims of the Maine who were sacrificed by the imperialist voracity and their desire to gain control of the island of Cuba*. There is no evidence to suggest anything other than accident, though as with all such murky histories, there remain some tantalising questions about the explosion its consequences and its beneficiaries. Sartre's allusion to these savvy (and possibly real) history professors thus reveals his recognition that such acts of secret sacrifice are possible and, perhaps, fairly common throughout history. The implications are devastating when the *Maine* is seen in this light, as it casts a shadow over countless subsequent events in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. If the *Maine* was an act of self-sabotage, then what else may have been? The discreet smile of the history professors is quite sinister.[63]

Sartre explores with equal enthusiasm the long shadow cast by the moment in December 1901 that the newly drafted Cuban constitution was modified to include the Platt Amendment. This document was a series of articles that granted the United States mighty administrative power in the new republic, stipulating the nation's trade and debt restrictions, ensuring the right to intervene militarily whenever the United States deemed necessary (a right they upheld) and the lease-held occupation of three coaling stations including Guantánamo Bay. Sartre makes no bones about this: through the Platt Amendment and other asymmetric codes, Cuba was constructed as an underdeveloped dependent imperial outpost, an insidious repetition of its previous colonial status. Once again Cuba was a sugar farm for the empire. The nation was a liver-fattened goose, whose visible signs of wealth disguised poverty, corruption and injustice. "Without a gesture, without a word, American imperialism, with the aid of its Cuban allies, reinforced the feudalism that its military forces had pretended to destroy."[64]

This presentation of history clearly did and still does chime with a vision of history fully commensurate with the Cuban Revolution, but that does not indicate that Sartre was in any way steering his historical analysis along designated lines. I cannot find fault with his overall historical treatment, although I couldn't declare that the Maine was

self-sacrifice nor that La Coubre was sabotage, despite my intrigue. This is how I view and teach the Cuban wars of independence and the early years of the republic. Sartre's position was radical and revolutionary. Mine is more or less consensual, as it is present in Hugh Thomas, Richard Gott, Antoni Kapcia, Louis Pérez Jr., Rafael Rojas and many other historians, all of whom in one way or another will owe something to the prominent narratives of postcolonial thought that arose in the 1950s and '60s and of which Sartre was a leading voice.

True to his Marxist vision of history, Sartre explains that the mechanism by which this dependency was nurtured was economic. Power is capital and capital is power. He goes to great pains to analyse the structure of the sugar economy and to explain how the bounty of the sugar cane was also its curse. "Produced in superabundance, sugar cane became the key factor of the Cuban economy. Other crops were overwhelmed, disappeared, or were never planted."[65] He continues with a concise summary of this carefully constructed monopoly: "Consider the luck of imperialism. By the very game of economic domination it creates among the oppressed needs which the oppressor alone is able to satisfy. The diabetic island, ravaged by the proliferation of a single vegetable, lost all hope for self-sufficiency."[66]

Sartre dedicates many pages to a close analysis of the particularities of the single-crop economy, and he explores the social and cultural implications of how such a system consolidated wealth and power in a few *latifundistas*, politicians and bankers whilst depriving a large, poor and disenfranchised workforce of basic rights. He understands the harvest cycles of the cane and the pressures such a process places upon the workers, often stuck in perpetual debt to their own employers. To overcome this oppressive system, Sartre argues, is the primary objective of the revolution, and as he toured the island with Castro he seemed confident that the agrarian reform would succeed in its aims to redistribute land and to empower the disempowered peasantry.

Here again his notes—the *Appendice*—inform us of his deep understanding of sugar. He did not learn of the economic power of sugar nor its ideological foundations as a sudden revelation in 1960. In his notes concerning 1949, he recounts interrogating his Cuban friends about the particular state of Cuban political inertia. He wanders alone (against advice), guided by *le hasard* through remote city barrios and into a sprawling shanty—*un bidonville tropical*. He observes poverty, prostitution, unemployment and general torpor and hopelessness.

Above all, he sees entrenched racism. "What can be done about these folk?" he later asks a companion. "Nothing," comes the reply. "They are forgotten." Why this state of affairs? Sartre enquires. "C'est le sucre!" comes the response. "It is sugar that rots everything. The land and the ministers are sold to sugar."[67] He tries to dig further, suggesting unemployment as effect, not cause, but one of his Cuban friends casually tells him "Oh you'll never understand it." Red rag to a bull—this is Sartre! He immediately sets about trying to piece together this intricate political and economic set-up, going for further walks, interrogating more fervently. "Où se trouvait," he asks, "la cause?" And his answer: "Sugar. There can be no other cause. Just that."[68]

It is clear that his research in 1949 loomed largely in the writing of the *France-Soir* articles. The title of the pieces themselves, this wild hurricane over the sugar, reflects Sartre's long concern with deciphering this intricate puzzle that he was told he would never understand. *Ouragan* is his response, and I like to think of this unnamed Cuban friend reading the text eleven years after unwittingly laying down the challenge.

In 1960, Sartre does not record his conversation with Guevara in the bank offices, but it is inconceivable that they would *not* have discussed the economics of sugar. Guevara was acutely aware that the revolution would achieve none of its goals without breaking the rigid structure of the sugar economy, and as such he promoted policies of agricultural diversification and industrialisation. I discuss the relationship between Sartre and Guevara later, but for the moment it is pertinent to note that they would certainly have come together over a term that I first heard from a Cuban historian in a conference at the University of Havana: *azucarocracia*. Sugarocracy. The rule of sugar. Sartre and Guevara knew that the problem was sugar. Perhaps they both secretly knew that the diabetic island would never be granted the chance to recover. The Soviets would exert their demands on the land and on the people. Sugar would prevail.

Sartre's understanding of Cuban history and the sugar economy is impressive, especially given the short time and his cluttered writing desk. His grasp on the events and tensions of the first months of the revolution is equally impressive. Having taken the reader back to the Wars of Independence, through the formation of the new republic and the years of neo-colonial dependency, Sartre explores with characteristic attention to detail the turbulent and unpredictable revolutionary process

from January 1959 to the explosion of *La Coubre* in Havana harbour in March 1960. There is a sense of immediacy to these articles, with events of the year before still unfolding around him as he writes, and with sporadic interjections in the text to indicate that he was writing on location. He writes, for example of "this month of March, 1960," and "I was still speaking about it the day before yesterday. We were riding by auto toward Matanzas."[69] Written in Cuba, typed up in Paris, these are bulletins, dispatches from the field. They are reports, not philosophical essays, and yet, curiously, they are philosophical.

The Philosophical Implications of the Cuban Revolution

No sugar, no island.[70]

The work that had most been occupying Sartre prior to the Cuba trip was the long and laborious *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, with its extended ponderings on Hegel, Marx, Stalin, the Problem of the Individual and the Negation of the Negation. "Do we need," Fredrick Jameson asks of *Critique*, "to philosophize history?"[71] This is a question pertinent also to *Ouragan sur le sucre*, which presents Cuban history from a visibly existentialist perspective. However, I would answer that *Ouragan* is not a philosophy of history, nor the attempt to guide a historical narrative along philosophical lines. I would simply argue that just as Guevara wittily suggested to Sartre that "it is not our fault if reality is Marxist"[72] so Sartre would suggest that it is not his fault if history is existentialist.

The Cuba articles are not considered essays of any real philosophical concern and are seldom included in discussions of Sartre's philosophical work. They are considered marginal on all fronts. That is one of the many reasons that I find them compelling. Like his punchy essays and stories, these articles are a digestible exposition of his philosophical concerns, requiring little rereading and head scratching, and no need to share Sartre's encyclopaedic knowledge of philosophers and political analysts. There is not one reference to Husserl, Hegel or Heidegger,

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nor any circumlocutions about the nature of being, and yet I would argue that the articles are strikingly philosophical.

Colonialism, as we know from Sartre's many statements, is oppressive. Whilst this is an essential Sartrean ethical position, with his focus on abuses of colonial power in so many historical cases, it is also ontological. It is about the nature of being. Colonialism, he argues in the *Critique*, employs a language and a system that deny the humanness of the colonised subject, rendering him an object in the colonial enterprise. Curiously, the same system objectifies also the coloniser, alienated by the same force that he employs to alienate the other.[73]

Spain, he writes in *Ouragan*, had imposed a feudal system in Cuba, whereby the slave and vassal society served to provide the raw material of sugar to the colonial power. In this respect, his consideration of Spain's authority in Cuba is similar to how he presents the Spanish in Peru in *Critique*, demanding the raw stuffs and denying the colony the power to develop and modernise. Cubans fought for independence and sovereignty and yet, at the final hour, found the old feudal system replaced with another. Sartre pays a lot of attention to this neo-colonial ruling in Cuba, focusing on the dominant role of sugar.

In the 1946 essay "Existentialism is a Humanism," given as a lecture in response to some damning reviews of *Being and Nothingness*, published three years earlier, Sartre spells out in the clearest terms the central thesis of existentialism. For an object, essence precedes existence. That is to say, there is a reason for it prior to its being. For humans, however, our existence precedes our essence. Unlike a table, whose *raison d'être* is, precisely, to be a table and to perform tableness throughout its existence, humans have no such reassuring knowledge of essence; "man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards," or, and he puts it more succinctly, "Man simply is." As a consequence of this absence of essence, the nature of man's purpose arises after, and not before, existence. "Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. That is the first principle of existentialism." These were the challenging philosophical ideas, expressed in plays, stories and essays, that had been circulating in Cuba and which become central to Sartre's vision of Cuban history.

"Man is free, man *is* freedom," Sartre continues in the 1946 essay. "That is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet is nevertheless at liberty, and from the moment that he is thrown into this world he

is responsible for everything he does." Here we have an indication of the political dynamic of existentialism that will become central to his analysis of history in *Critique* and in the Cuba articles. There is no a priori human condition. There are no *naturally born* servants or masters. A slave is still free in essence, even if freedom is denied him by circumstance. Slavery is thus a system that converts a human into an object by denying this essential freedom. The man ceases to be *pour-soi* and becomes *en-soi*. The person becomes a table or a paperweight. His condition is thrust upon him as the state of being. Slavery is thus the most oppressive of systems. Feudalism, colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, Nazism and Stalinism, in Sartre's analysis, are all systems that deny the freedom of human nature and render the human an object. Spanish colonialism in Cuba, which prevented the island developing as a sovereign state and the islanders as sovereign beings, was replaced with the US-controlled neo-colonial system of the sugar economy, which continued, even worsened, this process. This is Sartre's most urgent concern throughout his life: *freedom*. History as an endless struggle for freedom.

Reading *Ouragan* I was struck by the relationship that Sartre repeatedly draws between sugar's fruitfulness and the sterilisation of the land and the people. He stands in a plantation and marvels at how these stalks of sugar cane grow and regrow with such absurd defiance. "They press one against the other, they embrace one another, one would say that they entangle themselves around their neighbours."[74] There is something about sugar's will to exist that seems to bedazzle Sartre and that seems to contrast with the enforced servitude of the cane workers. As the cane grows so does their suffering. "*Cette violence* [omitted in translation], this obstinate fecundity gives me here, as in Port-au-Prince, the feeling of being present at the ceremonies of a vegetable mystery."[75]

He seems ill at ease in the plantation, uneasy at being present in this *mystère végétal*, and he seems to associate the ceremonies with oppression, not liberation. Vexed by flies and heat, he enters the mill and watches the deep molasses bubble in the big boilers and watches the damp roughly crystallised brown sugar carted off. The raw cane juice that Cubans drink he calls "cane pus."[76] It is a raw scene of oppression. It is as if the long and troubled history of slavery and sugar rises up out of the plantation and presses down upon him. He is sensitive to the presence of the past. He senses some deeper existential anxiety.

It was the chestnut tree's roots in a Bouville park that caused Roquentin to experience atrocious existential nausea in Sartre's novel

Nausea. The tree's simple will to existence seems so outrageous to Roquentin, so absurd, that he becomes horrified at existence everywhere of everything, most significantly his own. It is a physical reaction of nausea that Roquentin experiences when confronted with the superfluity of existence. It horrifies him.

Sartre appears to have a similar crisis in Cuba gazing at the sugar cane. He understands how this botanical superfluity has been coerced for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many. The vegetal is political and the political is existential. Bumping along the tracks in Castro's vehicle he gazes at the horizon and appears to sense again Roquentin's nausea of existence, and it again horrifies him. "Far off, like a menace—that I found everywhere—the bushes, the scrub, ready to take over the whole surface of the island at the slightest neglect."[77]

So it is not just the cane but all of this rich tropical vegetation that threatens him; a superabundance of existence. Beauvoir recalls that Sartre was never comfortable in the countryside, preferring city pavements and cafés, that he was allergic to chlorophyll. Gazing at the lush tropical horizon seems to bring on such a reaction. This vegetation appears to him "an invasion of spiders on the horizon; one sees their immobile legs waiting."[78] I am reminded of Sartre's visions of crabs and lobsters that were present since his adolescence, and which threatened to overpower him during a harrowing mescaline trip in 1935. He was quite frank about the crabs in a 1971 interview with John Gerassi, calling them "a sort of psychosis, hallucinations," and explaining their association with depression and with a fear of being "doomed, defined, classified, serious."[79] He also created a stern court of crabs in the play *The Condemned of Altona*, who torment Franz. Most significantly for a man who was constantly on the move, the crabs would appear to Sartre when he was travelling.[80] These spider-like plants on the horizon are brothers to the crabs, but in this case Sartre appears not threatened by his own doomed existence but by that of the downtrodden Cubans. His outing to the Cuban countryside was another tough trip.

In Cuba Sartre seems nauseous before sugar's unstoppable determination to exist even when repeatedly cut back, and he sees sugar's fertility rising in proportion to the oppression of the people. All existence is absurd, Roquentin understands with devastating power at the base of the chestnut tree. What could be more tragically absurd, Sartre seems to suggest, than these poor Cuban labourers, born to serve sugar, whose "obstinate fecundity" (it is a wonderful expression) mocks them back.

Sugar even mocks their own fecundity, as each birth produces simply another servant of the soil. "It was the sugar regime," he writes, "with its *latifundias*, that itself defined the newborn as excess lives. In explaining to the poor from time immemorial that man is put in the world to press the earth with his bare hands to make it sweat cane juice (no sugar, no island), they also explained that this iron law condemned them to live poorly, and that they had to accept their lot."[81]

To accept one's lot is to be objectified, to be oppressed. It is bad faith. The waiter in *Being and Nothingness* accepts his lot and swans around with his drinks tray *performing* waiter as his state of being. These Cuban *damnés de la terre* were forced to accept their lot and accept their existential state of servitude and poverty. Their own fertility—their own existence—as with the slaves under Spanish rule, is tied to sugar's fertility, sugar's existence: "to plan births, you have to have faith in the future. … The sons were poorer than the fathers. The children were born out of poverty, and poverty was born out of the system."[82]

There are no ties on Roquentin. Indeed, throughout the novel he seeks to untie himself from everything to become fully (and bleakly) free, and only through this process of removal does he feel the horrible nausea of existence. So lucky Cuban *campesinos*, one might argue, have been given a purpose that defines them. Born to their lot, from which they will never be free, their situation is far better than that of Roquentin's. Their essence *does* precede their existence: born to serve. No horror at the contingency of their lives.

Of course this argument cannot hold, and neither does Sartre entertain it. We are condemned to be free even when condemned to serve. That is what made the Cuban drama so supremely tragic. The cane workers were far from happy with their lot. Theirs is not bad faith. These *campesinos* had the state of being thrust upon them. The *latifundistas* removed from them their will to freedom. Indeed, in Sartre's despondent understanding of Cuban history, all Cubans had glumly accepted their lot. Inertia, hopelessness, powerlessness. That is, until Castro enters the narrative.

Each effort to overturn this oppressive system was brutally repressed, and, Sartre adds, lifelong hunger saps the will to resist. This was the system intricately devised by power brokers in Cuba and the United States. It was maintained by corrupt officers in government, the military, finance and business. It was a racket, no different from the casino-brothel racket of Havana. It was also designed to be hidden from view

by visible signs of prosperity—the skyscrapers, the automobiles and the *frigidaires*—that were really signs of debt. All the intricate and co-dependent parts of the system were bound by a simple ideology that Sartre returns to many times: "no sugar, no island."

In his 1944 play *Huis Clos*, Sartre presents three characters who have died and who find themselves stuck together for eternity. The hellish nature of the play is not (only) the uncomfortable furnishings nor the perpetual electric light, but that the three characters are no longer free to change their nature. The labels thrust upon them at death are now the eternal definitions of their being. This is Sartre's bleak statement about human freedom. This is also his presentation of the landscape of Cuba's history. All actors in this tough historical drama played their roles to perfection, the oppressor oppressive and the oppressed oppressed, the money-men scheming, the politicians corrupt and the military brutal. The drama is guided, of course, by the reigning principle of profit. "All over the world," Sartre reminds the reader in a beautifully concise statement, "capital has the same dream: to finance undertakings which sell at the highest price what is produced at the lowest price."[83] The system looked unassailable.

And yet the system was assailed. The rebels rode down from the hills and upset the order. Here, again, we can admire Sartre's (and the editors') attention to narrative tension. He has taken the reader by the hand back to the turn of the century and has developed this picture of a brilliantly orchestrated system of injustice and inequality. He cements the issues together with statistics and figures: so many were illiterate, so many were malnourished, and so on. The reader feels the injustice. The reader needs resolution. The reader needs a hero. Sure enough, amidst this tense backdrop, "Castro, the son of a country squire of Oriente province, heard—alone, or almost alone—the first murmurings, the first voices that said, 'This can't go on.'"[84] Stirring words. Enter Hero stage left.

Sartre and Fidel Castro

Castro is not an easy man to wrap up.[85]

Fidel Castro enters the historical landscape of Sartre's articles as powerful opposition to this reigning ideology. "He was the first to understand that the peasant condition was not defined by chronic hardship, but by the continued *growth* of hardship."[86] Here we have a compelling vision of history, presented in mythical language. Such a narrative may have impressed his readers if they had stuck with him this far and if they had so far sympathised with the plight of the oppressed in Cuba.

The characters in the Cuban drama were stuck in this Sartrean state of *enfer*, enacting a dreary drama of oppression. The system had been internalised by the Cubans. It was the order of things. There was no exit. "The Cubans had understood, in the course of their inflexible degradation, that History makes the men. It remained to show them that men make History. It was necessary to seize Destiny, that scarecrow planted by the rich in the cane fields."[87] What striking language he uses, with capitals on *l'Histoire* and *le Destin*. He is writing his own *mystère végétal*, depicting this grinning scarecrow standing contemptuously in the cane, soon to be pulled down and burnt.

History is a narrative written by men, and in the Cuban case it has been written by the rich. But history is written in the act, and Castro emerges as a new actor, a new writer. "It came. One day, from the

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highest summit of the island, lightning struck the fields. Chased by the army, by the police, the 'outlaws' of Castro decided to undertake an immediate redistribution of land, and made it known to the country."[88] It is as if Garcin, Inès and Estelle in *Huis Clos* tore down the dismal furniture, broke up the set and left the stage. The script can be rewritten. The playwright is human not divine.

Sartre presents Castro as a man so committed to action, so motivated by praxis, that he has to make things up on the spot. This becomes a central feature of Sartre's vision of both Castro and the revolution; in fact, it is what he and Beauvoir were asked in New York City on their return home. He responds bluntly that the revolution in Cuba "is a direct democracy," arising out of the shared acts of the liberated citizenry. The revolution is deed not theory, governed not by ideology but by action. The revolution is praxis.

Praxis, long a Sartrean concern, is the performance of the act. In "Existentialism is a Humanism" he offers advice to a young man torn between two courses of action by demonstrating that throughout all his deliberation, the fellow was already performing one of those choices. The decision is thus resolved in the act. Praxis is the performance of a deed that validates the idea; indeed, an idea without application is fruitless. He is clear about this. Existentialism is not quietism, he argues. It is not a retreat from the world. It is participation. It is action. "Man," he writes, "is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realises himself, he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is."

To begin with, Sartre explains in *Ouragan*, the rebels understood that the source of the problem in Cuba was the poverty of the rural population. In taking up arms against the rural military garrisons, therefore, the guerrilla rebels were attacking the old enemies of the *campesinos*. This is an act of liberation not just for the poor country folk but for the rebels. It constitutes an act of existential freedom. "The young rebels," Sartre explains, "were cityfolk – lawyers, doctors, economists, journalists."[89] These lawyers and doctors would not act out of bad faith and define their actions according to their professional status. Not only did they become rebels, but in taking up the cause of the rural poor, and in setting up their precarious base amidst the forested mountain peaks, they took on a radically new state of being: "In order for the peasants to become rebels, the rebels became peasants."[90] Clearly this is a political act, as the rebels now understand the hardships facing the *campesinos* and

accordingly fight against their antagonists. Yet it is also a philosophical act, as these rebels demonstrate to Sartre man's capacity to alter status and circumstance and assume new definitions. It is a demonstration of existential flexibility.

Furthermore, in throwing off their prior circumstance as lawyers and doctors and fighting for the peasants, the rebels also help the peasants transcend *their* circumstance as peasants and become participants in the body politic. Rebellion as enfranchisement. This is at the heart of Sartre's Cuba texts. It *is* possible to transcend circumstance, to-be-as-process rather than to-be-as-thing. The script can be altered. Such a vision is optimistic not pessimistic, he had insisted back in 1946, and here he has the proof.

Fidel Castro is the proof, or so it seems to Sartre, that man can overcome the force of circumstance and act in and for freedom. He arrives at this judgement of Castro after spending time on the road with him, witnessing the leader's direct involvement with the people, witnessing him encouraging others to act, to participate, to assume power. This is most striking in the conversations Sartre records between Castro and workers across the land in different locations. They pitch up at whichever site—a village or a newly-established co-operative farm—and Castro strides amongst the crowd, urging initiative, action, results.

They visit a beach, for example, that has recently been made public and which Castro is keen to develop for internal tourism. They are given soft drinks that are warm. Castro asks why there is no ice. Because the *frigidaires* do not work. They are waiting for someone to fix them. They haven't tried to fix them themselves, the woman tells him: "She shrugged her shoulders. 'You know how it is,' said she." Watching him remonstrate and yet animate the woman, Sartre figures out Castro's essential dynamic: "*He is an agitator*, thought I for the first time." Sartre then records Castro rummaging in the back of the machines attempting to get them to work; "he came near to taking them apart."[91] Again, from an existentialist perspective, Castro as agitator is the great upsetter of the established social order, busting open the sealed codes of conduct that have long dictated people's lives, encouraging them to recognise their *essential* freedom.

Such episodes are repeated in other situations as they make their way around the island. Castro is called by the people, sometimes even dragged out of his car so as to settle some dispute, a *deus ex machina* figure from the theatre of Lope or Calderón. Sartre presents him as a man

of action encouraging action in others. Watching him with the *frigidaires* he writes breathlessly that "Castro, for me, was the man of everything, able to view the whole," and that "in each circumstance he joined the detail and the whole inseparably." Not for the first time, Sartre seems quite starstruck by this tall *barbudo*.

With customary attention to detail, Sartre takes the reader back to the early 1950s and sets the scene for Castro's first act of rebellion, the storming of the Moncada barracks in Santiago in 1953. He inscribes the act with heroism, applauding the man's valour, and applauding his valour in all acts since then. Sartre's tone reveals his ultimate surprise that the revolution ever triumphed. He vocalises imagined Cuban naysayers uninspired by the Moncada assault: "Public opinion did not give him much support. 'Who is this blusterer? There's an escapade for you! And which leads to nothing. If Batista were angry he would have taken it out on us!'"[92] Was this perhaps Sartre's own voice, his own shoulder shrug back in 1953 when he heard news of Moncada? He again vocalises these city cynics uninspired by Castro's from exile: "'It's Castro playing his pranks again. This time he's going to lose. He thought he was making a surprise attack, but the surprise was on him—it was an act of desperation.'"[93] Was this perhaps his own reaction in 1957 when he heard news of Castro's mountain rebel base? We recall how despondent about Cuba he was at the time Franqui visited him in 1960, with the revolution already in full swing.

His despondency lingered; in the *Appendice* we read a long diary entry written whilst all fellow passengers are asleep on the Cuba-bound plane. He seems quite nervous about the ensuing trip. "What the fuck am I doing here?" he asks himself. "My heart is full of soot. Why the fuck am I going to Cuba? What the fuck can any Frenchman do? Their problems are not ours."[94] And he asks the most pertinent of questions: "What if I don't like the revolution?"[95] Even at this late stage, somewhere above the Bahamas with (I imagine) whisky and cigarette in one hand, pen in the other, Sartre has few hopes for this trip, few hopes for the revolution. And then *voilà!*—he is astonished by this whirlwind of a man charging over the land whipping the folk into action. His misgivings are swept aside as he scrutinises the revolutionary leader on the road. Although expecting to be disappointed, and although insisting to himself in the plane that he was going to Cuba with no prior judgements, I sense that he truly wanted to be impressed. By agreeing to go he had already pledged himself.

It is from this wave of enthusiasm that some of Sartre's more excited comments arise. Castro, he writes, "is at once the island, the men, the livestock, the plants, and the land, and a particular islander. In this individual the national situations will always be passionately lived, in fury or in pleasure."[96] This is dazzling stuff: Castro is not a man; he is a nation. He is the nation embodied in a man. His actions, his very being, are in the service of the nation. The people love him because he is the people. Committed to Cuba, committed to the revolution, committed to fairness and justice; Sartre presents Castro as a regular superman, prepared even to give the people the moon if they asked for it, because, he tells Sartre, "If someone asked me for the moon, it would be because someone needed it."[97]

This is the tone that earned Sartre such rebuke from critics, and yet I sense that the praise of Castro is not blind. There is a subtle tension in Sartre's narrative that shows something slowly being revealed to him which he seems keen not to acknowledge: The revolution won't last. At least, the revolution may last but only by ceasing to be truly a revolution. Once consolidated as political order and social structure, it will cease to be revolutionary. This was already well understood by Sartre from his study of the French and the Russian revolutions, but it seems to pain him to witness its emergence in Cuba. Whilst this is clearly well established with regards to the Cuban Revolution—something that has prompted Antoni Kapcia to refer on many occasions not to the revolution but to the *revolutions*—it was certainly not well recognised in the summer of 1960. Indeed, it appears in Sartre's Cuba articles only implicitly.

Such a contradiction presents itself to Sartre, and obviously to Castro, whilst they drink their warm soft drinks on the hot beach. Three slightly dazed workers staff the new concrete infrastructure. They assure Castro that they are awaiting further staff, but they do not seem particularly anxious about the non-appearance of these reinforcements. The machines do not work and no electrician has appeared. Castro cannot tolerate such unrevolutionary lethargy and bangs around the machines himself, animating them to take the initiative. Talking with them, however, he understands that he cannot animate them to oppose the system that is failing them, which is his own ministry of tourism, the INIT. He is therefore aware that he can agitate against the old system but cannot agitate against his own. The quandary presents itself quite subtly on the beach but far more starkly later that day.

They leave the coast and drive into the hilly interior. This is the moment the spider-like vegetation on the horizon threatens Sartre. They pull up before a group of labourers standing around a stationary tractor, scratching their heads. "Castro saluted seriously; the *campesinos* said, 'Hello Fidel.' And immediately he began his questions. 'How much? When? Why hadn't they done more? Why weren't they going any faster?'"[98] There is another problem like the broken *frigidaires*, but this time the tractor is not broken but the wrong man has been assigned to the task of driving it, whilst the experienced driver has been given another job. The experienced driver is bursting with revolutionary fervour and initiative: "'Let someone give me a tractor,' he said to Fidel, 'and I will have you see right away what I know.'" This is fine, one might imagine: Here is a problem and here is a worker proposing the solution. But here, as Sartre points out, the problem is with the INRA, the ministry of the agrarian reform, headed by Nuñez Jiménez, whom Sartre met in the bank offices with Guevara.

What a perfect tangle, and what a prescient observation by Sartre. He watches the tension rise visibly in Castro's expression. The great upsetter cannot upset his own order. As a result he becomes a bureaucrat of his own state power. And he knows it, and "from that moment," Sartre observes, "I felt that he wanted to leave." When they finally get away Castro is in a funk, and he remains in this funk while further villagers and agricultural workers flock around him demanding this and demonstrating that. He is a disgruntled messiah, reluctantly urging his flock to render unto INRA that which is INRA's.

What I find particularly intriguing about this episode is not only that Castro should become entangled in his own web, but also that Sartre should seem so reluctant to acknowledge it. He states it and moves on, recovering his flow to celebrate Castro's dynamic presence and personality. Again, I do not feel that Sartre was beholden to Castro to present a particular perspective, but that at this stage he still had faith that Castro would manage to keep that revolutionary wheel revolving. The agrarian reform, as Sartre presents it, was not a formal, clunky, piece of state legislation, but a wave of change, an organic self-orienting project of renewal. So positive was Sartre of this reform that he seems unwilling to admit—even whilst admitting it—that new solid structures of state were slowly being assembled around him and that soon the ghost of the past would return to haunt the present.

Sartre thus comes face to face with a theoretical and practical problem that lies at the heart of Cuban history since 1959: How can a system be revolutionary whilst continuing to be either a system or revolutionary? Or to put it another way, how does a revolutionary government build its structures with the language of revolution without spawning desire for revolution against those very structures and that very language? Or to put it at its most simple: The command to be a rebel is circular, paradoxical. The episodes on the beach and by the tractor are not the only times on the trip that Sartre witnessed this structural vulnerability. Nor is it the first time he observed it historically: It is a feature of his critique of Lenin.

There is another subtle yet visible quality that Sartre expresses during this episode on the beach with the broken fridges that predicts storm clouds on the horizon, something that menaces me as reader as the spiders on the horizon menaced Sartre. Castro, talking with the woman about the fridges, "calmly invited her to join the rebellion," and attempts to instil in her some revolutionary consciousness. But Castro's parting words to the woman on the beach are less amicable and more threatening: "He closed with this growled sentence: 'Tell your people in charge that if they don't take care of their problems, they will have problems with me.'"[99] Don't fuck with Fidel, Sartre seems to understand. He recognises the tremendous power of this man, but the growled rebuke reveals something menacing about this power.

They continue their travels, pursued by hordes of *campesinos*, and they are forcibly stopped as they pass through a village. A priest presses forward and speaks urgently. He knows that there is oil in this area, as a team of German geologists had surveyed the land. The oil should be extracted. The government should get behind it, he insists. "'Fidel, I am sure of what I say. If you believe me, let me have a million. If I don't earn twice as much for Cuba in two years, have me shot!'"[100] What a statement, spoken in earnest. What desperate loyalty. Again, though, whilst I find the priest's fervour intriguing and quite unsettling, I find Sartre's casual recollection more so. Did the priest really say this? Did Sartre understand the priest's Spanish? Did Juan Arcocha translate everything for him, even the exchanges with the crowd? Did Sartre perhaps assume that the priest had said it?

It does not matter. Sartre chose to report it, as he chose to report Castro's growled threat on the beach. It was clearly significant to him. Yet he chose also to gloss over it. It shows again a peculiar tension in

Sartre in relation to the man with whom he spent so many days in such proximity, sharing the dormitory in the Cuban Rambouillet, sharing the stuffy back seat of the car. It is reminiscent of Oliver Stone, many years later, in his movie *Comandante*, picking Castro's pistol off the back shelf of the state car as they drive down a Havana street and asking him, "Do you still know how to use this, Fidel?" Like Stone, Sartre admires the man whilst tacitly acknowledging the severity of his power, recognising that power and violence are always bedfellows. Yes, it seems clear to me that Sartre, in Cuba a year into the revolution, fully acknowledges the violence inherent in the revolution. Revolution is violent.

Revolution and Violence

Revolution is strong medicine.[101]

One is never far from violence in Sartre's writings. Sartre's deliberations on violence, which Ronald Santoni designates as *curiously ambivalent* (the subtitle of his book), are amongst the most debated and polemical issues of Sartre's work.[102] Where to start with an appraisal of violence in Sartre? His philosophy is violent, based as it is on the destruction of ontological and teleological certainties. There is violence in his theatre and in his fiction. Roquentin's nausea is physical, aggressive. The tale *Erostrate* is a meditation on an act of violence, following the solitary protagonist Paul Hilbert's plans to shoot members of the public. The ethics of violence plays a key role in the disagreement between Sartre and Camus, is central to his appraisal of the revolution still in its infancy, and is a notoriously problematic focus of his preface to Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*.[103] Violence is an important issue.

In the preface to Fanon's study, Sartre by no means celebrates violence nor justifies violence for the sake of violence. Repeatedly he emphasises that the violence of the anti-colonialists ("the natives") is the repercussion of colonial aggression. "At first it is not their violence, it is ours" he insists, and explains that the killing of Europeans in Algeria or Angola is "the moment of the boomerang; it is the third phase of

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violence; it comes back on us, it strikes us, and we do not realize any more than we did the other times that it's we that have launched it." He is emphatic that the violence of the colonisers and that of the colonised are not the same. The former are aggressive to secure and maintain power; the latter are aggressive to liberate themselves from that power. It is a causal process initiated by colonialism. Sartre's justification of violence in the Fanon preface is not celebration, and yet the bombast and righteous indignation are hard to duck when he wields them, directed as they are to *Vous*, the European reader.[104]

Sartre's preface to Fanon's text has often been seen as marginal, distinct from his philosophical works for its invective and provocation.[105] This position resembles some of the many critical commentaries concerning *Ouragan*: the material is considered marginal, confused, provocative, shocking. I am intrigued, therefore, by seeing how closely the preface to *Wretched* resembles the *France-Soir* articles. They are part of the same train of thought. The preface could almost be one of the earlier magazine pieces, bringing Algeria and Cuba together in violent conflagration.[106]

Again we must consider Sartre's readership. The Algerian crisis was of great national concern during the time of Sartre and Beauvoir's trip to Cuba, and so the articles were being published against a backdrop of heightened security, nerves, terrorist activities and reprisals. Bombs were exploding in public places in Algeria and France; and Sartre was justifying the bombs with his preface to Fanon, just as he justified the violence in Cuba. It is the same argument for Algeria as for Cuba, the same causal process, and his public statements to this effect were earning him few friends in Paris: His apartment was twice bombed and a mean cry of "Kill Sartre" rose from angry crowds. Beauvoir recalls the insult and abuse both she and Sartre were subjected to after backing the Algerian rebels, criticising the French military and leadership, and signing the Manifesto of the 121 against the French handling of the war in Algeria.

It was in Cuba, writes Beauvoir, that Sartre witnessed for the first time "happiness that had been attained by violence."[107] In Cuba Sartre "realised the truth of what Fanon was saying: it is only in violence that the oppressed can attain their human status."[108] This acceptance of violence is at the heart of Sartre's Cuba articles: Violence cannot—*should not*—be avoided. Revolutionary violence, like the violence of the Algerian resistance, is inevitable response to the violence of the colonial order.

Revolution, Sartre states axiomatically, is violent. In the *France-Soir* article of 29 June 1960 Sartre writes, "La révolution, c'est une médecine de cheval,"[109] translated uninspiringly as "strong medicine."

The overturning of structures of power is by necessity an act of violence. Violence is unleashed in the act of revolution. This is how it is, he points out, and it cannot be avoided: "A society breaks its bones with hammer blows, demolishes its structures, overthrows its institutions, transforms the regime of property and redistributes its wealth, orients its production along other principles, attempts to increase its rate of growth as rapidly as possible, and, in the very moment of most radical destruction, seeks to reconstruct, to give itself by bone grafts a new skeleton."[110] This is a brilliant description of revolution—it is more than reform, revolt or rebellion: it is the violent revolving of the whole social, political, economic, wheel. And he continues: "The remedy is extreme; and is often necessary to impose it by violence. The extermination of the adversary and of several allies is not inevitable, but it is prudent to prepare for such an event."[111]

Startling words, and certainly historically true. *Il est prudent de s'y preparer*: Whom is he addressing here? The revolutionaries—that they better be prepared to shoot some prisoners? The counterrevolutionaries—that they risk getting shot? The reformists within the revolution—that they better work out which side they're on? Perhaps he is addressing his French readership—the same readers he would harangue as colonialist oppressors a year later in his Fanon preface. Perhaps he is warning them that they may be up against the wall some day soon, when the French Fidel Castro rides down from the hills. Perhaps he is warning himself, a historian of revolutions embedded in the centre of a revolution, to be prepared for violence. Either way Sartre is fairly sanguine about "the extermination of the adversary and of several allies."

Why so sanguine? Again, revolutionary violence is presented as resistance and reaction. Violence is unleashed by the forces of imperialism desperate to restore the former order. That violence is then met and countered, unleashing in its turn greater violence. This sequence is clear, and he spells it out in a 1972 interview: "I believe that a revolution is impossible without terror, precisely because the right will resort to terror to stop it."[112] If he understood it from his study of the history of revolutions, so he came to feel it as a physical force following the explosion of *La Coubre*.

We recall Korda's photo of Guevara—the defiant look. Sartre and Beauvoir and the people in other photos of the reel wore the same expression, and they both recall the solemn sense of unity that the funeral created.[113] "In danger and in death," writes Sartre in the *France-Soir* piece dedicated to *La Coubre*, "this long prostituted city found its

strength of spirit."[114] It was a galvanising moment in which the people rallied together under their leader at the funeral speech, "sombre, heads held high," glued to his words, silent in their shared grief. Sartre seems genuinely moved by the event, stirred by the gravity of the moment.

They seem as convinced as Castro that the explosion was the work of "the Yankees." Beauvoir is clear about this: "Then Castro spoke for two hours. Five hundred thousand people listened to him, strained and serious, convinced and rightly so, it seemed to us, that the sabotage was due, if not to America, at least to Americans."[115] Eerily similar to the *Maine*, the explosion of *La Coubre* is another case that gives rise to many interpretations. Sartre always maintained his position, insisting years later to John Gerassi that *La Coubre* has been blown up by "US frogmen."[116]

Sartre and Beauvoir marvel at the indignation of Castro and the people, at the state of unified defiance. The explosion of *La Coubre*, accepted as an act of aggression against the revolution, seems in Sartre's text to be a moment of liberation, a moment of resolve and determination. This is the old order attempting—and failing—to reinstate the deadening structure of the past. Here, he indicates, is the terror.

Lanzmann recalls Sartre after the trip: "What I remember most was Sartre's clear-sightedness. His friendship and admiration, his approval for what was happening in Cuba, did not blind him. He told me that he had said to Castro, despite his energetic denials, on several occasions, 'The terror lies ahead of you.'"[117] Sartre recalls to Gerassi telling "his Cuban hosts that they still had their terror in front of them."[118] What exactly did Sartre mean by this?

Lisandro Otero, recalling the particular conversation, suggests that Sartre warned Castro that "All revolutions, sooner or later, devour their children, incurring terror as a means of survival. How could that be avoided in Cuba?"[119] What terror? How did Sartre envisage it coming? In *Ouragan* and in the Fanon preface, he presents revolutionary violence as justified response to colonial terror. The explosion of *La Coubre* was imperial terror. Is this the terror that he was prophesying to Castro? Might he have suggested to Castro that Castro's own regime would respond to terror with terror, that the Cuban guillotine would be wheeled out in the public plaza? Could he have said that to Castro?

A decade later in discussion with Gerassi he applauds the strategy of the popular tribunals as a way of preventing mob-vigilante reprisals. "Castro," he explains, "allowed popular tribunals to judge the Batista torturers as a way of getting the hatred out in the open, as a cathartic

cleansing of the lust for revenge."[120] This is another tough line, and it is hard to say whether his position is historically validated. The public and often televised tribunals were certainly effective in consoling those who had suffered under Batista's rule; it must certainly have been cathartic to see Batista's torturers confronted by victims of those they tortured or by families of those they murdered. But public trials with crowds clamouring *¡Al paredón!*—to the wall!—were denounced globally. LIFE magazine reported on 2 Feb 1959 that "Castro's Roman circus" unleashed a "lynch fever" amongst the jubilant crowd singing in unison "War Criminal" and "Kill him!" at the accused. As late as 1964, in his famous speech to the United Nations, Guevara felt compelled to justify the execution of enemies of the revolution. It was and still is a contentious matter. Justice may well have been served in some quarters, but it is hard to support Sartre's position that such public trials cleansed the lust for revenge. It is a complex issue not well served by Sartre's glib statement.

On his sleepless night on the plane to Cuba, he records in his notes wondering whether he will meet any of the revolution's opponents. He clearly was quite preoccupied with this question, as, perhaps, he was wondering whether he might find himself in opposition at any stage. However, in the *France-Soir* articles Sartre makes no mention of opposition to Castro's power. He later writes calmly that the execution of adversaries is not inevitable but is sensible to prepare for, and he is sanguine about the *batistianos* shot by firing squad. Their guilt was already proven, he implies. The sentence is just, and if not just then the sentence is justified by the need to push forward with the revolution. This is dangerously close to the old French revolutionary slogan, later attributed to Stalin: *On ne saurait faire d'omelette sans casser des œufs*. There is likewise no indication of the execution or incarceration of adversaries from *within* the revolution. It is simply absent from his text. Where, for example, is Huber Matos?

Sartre's Account of Huber Matos

The contrecoup of the Agrarian Reform was the revolt of Matos and his garrison.[121]

Matos is not named in the *France-Soir* articles, despite his recent public trial and sentence of December 1959. Matos was a guerrilla *comandante* in the Sierra, invited by Castro to ride with him (and keep an eagle eye out for would-be assassins) in the open jeep in their triumphal ride into Havana on 6 January 1960. He assumed military command of his native province of Camagüey and was active in the agrarian reform. He was increasingly concerned that the communist orientation of the revolution was a betrayal of the revolutionary principles, and he raised the matter with Fidel Castro. (Throughout this time Castro was emphatic to national and international journalists that the revolution was not communist—something Franqui had insisted to Sartre in Paris.) Matos was public in his misgivings; he later publicly resigned, along with fourteen officers, and Castro refused the resignation. He was arrested, tried in a very public trial and imprisoned for twenty years, a sentence he completed, much of it in solitary. Owing to the proximity of this event to his visit, it is odd that Sartre makes no mention of the Matos affair in the articles. Unlikely as it is, the reader might even believe that Sartre was not aware of it. His notes, however, reveal that he was fully aware of the affair, and here his tone is far more chilling.

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Matos was a moderate, not a true revolutionary, Sartre writes, representing "the fraction on the right of the clandestine movement," who wished for the revolutionary principles of "political honesty, parliamentary system, and measures to relieve poverty, and, perhaps, a moderate agrarian reform."[122] Matos' own account of his revolutionary activities bear out Sartre's judgement here: Yes, he did wish for an end to Batista's political corruption and exploitation, and was promoted to *comandante* precisely because of his revolutionary zeal. And yes, he did oppose communism, and was therefore clearly to the right of Raúl Castro and Guevara. Yet he was a powerful—not immoderate—instigator of the agrarian reform in Camagüey.

Sartre calls Matos' public resignation an insurrection, stating that the garrison "s'etait insurgée."[123] Furthermore, continues Sartre categorically, Matos was conspiring against the revolution and against the agrarian reform with infiltrators from the United States.[124] Even more stridently, Sartre suggests that Matos' insurrection may well have been a leadership challenge, an attempted coup. "Should we see in this first insurrection," he asks, "the first act of a new civil war that might have led Matos to take power, possibly with some discrete help from abroad?" Or was it, *tout simplement*, "the desperate act of a group that had risen to arms but then found themselves all alone?"[125] In a sense, both claims tally with the official version of events as propagated by the Castro brothers and broadcast on Cuban media. It was portrayed both as a cog in a vast international conspiracy and as a hot-headed, badly co-ordinated and isolated revolt.

Sartre begins his account of Matos by portraying him as a drag on the revolutionary process, unwilling to commit himself, a bourgeois moderate. The actions of Matos in the Sierra and in provincial authority suggest quite the opposite. He was fully committed yet unwilling to commit himself to the execution of prisoners as adroitly as Raúl Castro in Santiago or Guevara in Havana. There is no clear indication that Matos was *insurrecto* as part of a bid for power. According to Matos, as commander of the garrison he had simply insisted on due process of law in the trial of prisoners, and he had publicly resigned in protest at the influence of communism within the movement. His resistance was firm and his position clear, but nothing in his account nor in his character reveal desire for power. His objective was to influence Castro to hold true to the original revolutionary values. His open letter of resignation to Castro begins "I do not want to become an obstacle to the revolution"

and ends "I remain ever your comrade."[126] He had long supported Castro and he wished to continue.

On the matter of Matos conspiring with counterrevolutionary groups outside the island, this is a typically murky and bitter Cold War tangle. Matos, as might be expected, makes no mention of any foreign influence on his actions, whilst former head of the G2 (Cuba's state security service) Fabián Escalante, writes, as might be expected, that Matos was already conspiring with operatives of the future Bay of Pigs invasion, and that he had pledged his garrison to the invading forces.[127] Matos also writes that the first he knew of the invasion was when news of it was brought to him in prison.

Coincidental with Matos' arrest, the former chief of the Revolutionary Air Force, Pedro Luis Díaz Lanz, who had fled the country in June of that year, flew over Havana dropping anti-communist leaflets.[128] Castro immediately paired Matos and Díaz Lanz as co-conspirators and publicly called them traitors and enemies. Matos writes that the leafleting was unconnected with his own protest.

Castro appeared in public following the affairs of Matos and Díaz Lanz, and the crowd was vocal in its desire for the severest of punishments for both. Sartre equates the baying of the crowd with the will of the people; Castro acted with restraint in not fulfilling their demand and seeking proper justice. "They demanded of him," he writes in his notes, "a total suppression of the revolt. They were right: it was the demand of the Nation herself."[129] The will of the people is honourable, he insists, regardless of who represents this will nor how it is represented nor how many of the people this will represents. If the crowd cries *¡Al paredón!* for Matos then the crowd is right, and Matos should be up against the wall and shot. This is quite dangerous logic, coming from a scholar of the French Revolution and of Stalinism.

Not for the first time Sartre equates the will of Castro with the will of the people. Countless times in the *Appendice* he insists that Castro does not *command* the people, he represents them. Castro, to assume this role, had to surpass his own individuality and become *tout l'homme*. In the *Sierra*, Castro became the embodiment of all those killed by Batista's regime: "they died for the nation: the nation is Castro, at the summit of the island."[130] Again and again Sartre declares that Castro is *le peuple*, the people: "*il est le peuple en acte*, that's to say the source of all their courage," he writes on one occasion; "il était le peuple," on another, "il fut donc peuple," on another; "il devient le peuple," on another, and

"il fut le peuple et puis aussi l'homme qui était le peuple," on another. He makes his point extremely clear. Castro is the voice of the people, and "le peuple seul est souverain." The people are sovereign. Castro is the people. Castro is therefore sovereign.

Were Castro a leader of the old school, continues Sartre in his notes (i.e., were he like Machado or Batista) he would have had Matos liquidated and would have told the populace to go about their business.[131] But such is not Castro, he continues; he intervened himself, flew down to Camagüey and bravely walked up to the garrison walls, unheedful of the danger to his life, to parley with Matos. Matos paints a very different picture: Castro sent Camilo Cienfuegos down to Camagüey well in advance (hoping, writes Matos, that Matos' men would open fire and thus justify ensuing armed confrontation) and that the barracks had already been secured by the time Castro arrived.

After the parley, writes Sartre, the garrison gates are opened to Fidel—"le souverain"—who enters with his men "innombrable et majestueux" and accepts the surrender of Matos and his men and places Matos, "le chef des insurgés," under arrest. Sartre writes as if he were present, telling a very heroic narrative. This is the stuff of legends. The brave leader acted with great clemency all along, Sartre indicates. He was sad at the betrayal of his old comrade-in-arms, he calmed the angry populace crying for blood, then intervened at great risk to his own life and brilliantly avoided bloodshed. And this clemency was most visible in the twenty-year prison sentence handed to Matos. Sartre is clearly correct in suggesting that any prison sentence is better than the death sentence (which Raúl Castro was calling for), but he is quite cool about this colossal prison term.

Castro, writes Sartre, will be reproached, especially in the United States, for his heavy hand, "la main lourd." Pah! he responds, "revolutionary justice is rarely pleasing: it sees foreign involvement everywhere and, generally, it is not wrong."[132] One cannot blame Castro for this severe sentence he writes: "if Matos has paid a high price, the fault is with his gossipy friends defaming the regime from New York or Washington."[133] This is tough reading.

We must not criticise Sartre for his source of material. Such was the tension of 1959 and 1960 that material of a retrospective and less polarised nature relating to the affair would simply not have been available. There was a pamphlet published in December 1960 in Havana with a transcript of the trial with the curious title of *Y la luz se hizo…*

(*And There Was Light*). It is mostly Castro's long speech interspersed with "*aplausos*" and the occasional "*ovación*" (as is customary for transcripts of Castro's speeches) but also including Matos' defence, in which he makes very clear his support of the revolution, support of Castro and misgivings about the direction of the revolution. Sartre makes no mention of having read this document, nor does he give any indication as to where he gathered his information. In his notes he appears not to question the judicial verdict, nor to question the absence of evidence of Matos' conspiracies, nor to make any attempt to corroborate some of his statements about Matos and the "insurrection." There were few other sources available to him other than Cuban newspapers, radio or television, and, crucially, Fidel Castro himself. Nor is it that odd that Sartre should present the facts as historical truths: This was his style—direct and punchy like a war correspondent. It is his unforgiving tone that disturbs me.

We must remember, though, that the notes published in the *Appendice* were not necessarily destined for publication. Claude Lanzmann does not recall reading this material in the *France-Soir* texts, and is certain that they were his notes for an abandoned book, an opinion shared by Jean Bourgault, who was the most responsible for putting together the *Appendice*. As such, we can justifiably see the notes as private musings, a place where Sartre knocked ideas around and followed these ideas to their most radical conclusions. He perhaps recorded snatches of conversation with Castro—perhaps as they bunked together in the Zapata swamp—or with any other revolutionary official concerning the Matos affair, and that his account is effectively notes from the field.

The Matos affair seems to represent for Sartre the same trial by fire as the explosion of *La Coubre*. Resistance unites. Unity is ensured through a shared threat. Sartre writes in his notes that with Matos "the right-wing movement had fought his battle and lost. … Fidel and the people came out of the ordeal stronger."[134] Here again Sartre sees the strength of resistance, the terror of the right countered by the tough justice of revolution. Even with the close scrutiny of the Matos affair, he maintains this causal principle. One assumes he would have been equally sanguine had Matos been sentenced to death. Sartre recalls in *Ouragan* asking Castro what it means to be a professional revolutionary. "It means," Castro replies, "that I can't stand injustice." It is clear that both for Castro and Sartre the twenty-year prison sentence, in the very abusive

revolutionary prison system, was just. It is a great relief to me that Sartre did not publish the notes, and I reassure myself by assuming that even if he had at one stage intended these pages concerning Matos for publication, he was astute enough to withhold them as his relationship with Castro and the revolution developed. But then again maybe not; as is clear in the final interviews in 1980, *Hope Now*, Sartre never lost that radical and uncompromising bite.[135]

Sartre, Beauvoir and Che Guevara

Guevara was the most cultivated and, after Castro, one of the most lucid minds of the revolution.[136]

Sartre was a man who demanded much of himself. Before heading out to Cuba he had put himself through a rigorous regime of amphetamines to raise himself to the task of writing and barbiturates and alcohol for bringing him down after marathon stints. Beauvoir recounts how hard he pushed himself, how badly he treated his health, how poorly and how little he slept. As he stood in his luxury air-conditioned hotel suite at the beginning of his stay in Havana and observed the city's party atmosphere, he asks "Where is the Cuban austerity?"[137] seemingly disgruntled that the drinkers and gamblers observed none of the toughness of spirit that he expected from revolutionaries. He then meets Guevara. Here he finds the revolutionary fervour. Here he finds the austerity. Here he finds a man so rigorous that Sartre himself seems frail in comparison.

The original *France-Soir* article concerning Guevara bears no title, just the publication date *10-11 juillet 1960*, and it begins with a short preamble detailing Guevara's invitation to his bank offices at midnight. The editions in Spanish, like the Cuban publication *Sartre visita a Cuba*, likewise have no chapter header. In the English 1974 reprint *Sartre on Cuba*, Chap. 12 is entitled "CHÉ GUEVARA,"[138] and it continues the previous chapter's discussion of the youth and energy of the

W. Rowlandson, *Sartre in Cuba—Cuba in Sartre*,
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revolutionaries. I would venture that a fair number of the readers of Sartre's Cuba reports—following Guevara's death in 1967—would hurry through Sartre's long examination of Cuban history and the ghosts of the cane fields to find Guevara. Surely it is bound to be a fascinating text. Sartre and Guevara met. Two striking characters. Quite an encounter. There are the fantastic Korda photographs showing Guevara lighting Sartre's enormous cigar, one of which is on the front cover of the 2005 Italian edition *Jean-Paul Sartre Visita a Cuba*. Did they like each other? What did they discuss? Did they agree with each other?

These are fair questions, I would suggest, as Sartre and Guevara had much in common. Surely, therefore, Sartre would have recounted their conversation. They would have discussed colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, Marxism, the Cuban economy, industrialisation, sugar. They may have discussed literature—Guevara was fond of French novelists and read Stendhal on his campaigns. They may have discussed Victor Hugo. They may have discussed humanism, existentialism, Freud and Alfred Adler. They may have discussed de Gaulle and Algeria (Guevara visited Algiers after independence and became close to President Ben Bella). They may have discussed the Congo. They may have discussed Frantz Fanon, violence and revolution. They may have discussed Matos (Guevara had been in favour of execution rather than incarceration. He had also taken the directorship of the national bank following the departure of Felipe Pazos, who had resigned over the Matos affair). They surely discussed the agrarian reform. The question of economic sovereignty was central to both; Guevara gave a speech for national television the day before Sartre spoke to the assembled writers at the *Lunes* offices entitled "Political Sovereignty and Economic Independence," in which he presents the same argument that Sartre makes about the need to overcome the economic system of before. This surely would have been a topic of their conversation.

The range of possible conversations is vast. And yet Sartre records scarcely anything of their midnight meeting. Guevara, who kept constant diaries, likewise might have recorded their conversation, although I am not aware of any such record. Sartre writes that Guevara made them some fine coffee, and then gushes about Guevara's amazing capacity to stay awake and the revolutionaries' wholesale disdain for sleep and food. It is an odd text. Was Sartre too tired to engage with Guevara, too tired to take notes? Was their conversation actually quite dull? Were they all too tired or too hungry?

Cuban writer Jaime Sarusky, who accompanied Sartre and Beauvoir as translator on many of their Cuban adventures (and stood by them

and Guevara at the *Coubre* funeral), went with them to the "inmenso salón" of the bank and describes the ritual of Guevara offering and lighting Sartre's cigar. He writes that they talked in French for nearly two hours "about various subjects," in particular the relationship between Cuba and the United States, but he gives no further details of the conversation.[139] Guevara biographer Paco Ignacio Taibo makes no mention of the meeting at all. Beauvoir writes simply that "the newspapers carried pictures of Sartre with Guevara,"[140] and neither do her biographers unearth anything more revealing. Deirdre Bair simply writes that "They were wined and dined and shown Castro's triumphs, often by Guevara,"[141] which seems to overblow their relationship beyond a couple of other meetings in Havana, most notably the funeral of the victims of *La Coubre*. Another Guevara biographer, Jorge Castañeda, writes of Guevara's months as head of Cuba's central bank:

> During those years, Che had "friends" throughout the Latin American, European, and American left – from Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir to C. Wright Mills and John Gerassi. … He would receive them in his offices at midnight, maté and cigar in hand, relaxed and always avid for information, ideas, and messages. Countless projects, conspiracies, and complicities were hatched during those nocturnal meetings, as well as abiding loyalties and affections which would survive Che's demise.[142]

I am intrigued to think of the possible project, conspiracy or complicity hatched between Guevara, Sartre and Beauvoir that midnight in the bank president's office. If Guevara spoke of his future international activities, perhaps they arranged to meet up on his forthcoming trip to Algeria. Perhaps Beauvoir invited him to visit them in Paris. Perhaps, as Sartre seems to present it, the most inspiring aspect of the meeting was the lateness of the hour.

Guevara admired Sartre and had done since before his revolutionary days. Although he makes no mention of reading Sartre in the *Motorcycle Diaries* nor the *Latin American Diaries*, his old travelling companion Alberto Granado does recall himself and Fúser (Guevara's nickname then) discussing the politics and philosophy of Sartre and Camus "as we camped under starry skies, sharing maté, ideas and dreams around a cosy camp fire."[143] It is quite an inspiring image: these two adventurous young men guided by Sartre on their adventures and on their growth of political consciousness. It is an appropriate role for Sartre to play.

Hilda Gadea, Guevara's first wife, writes in her memoirs that early in their relationship "we disagreed about Sartre and Freud." She continues: "Sartre's works were fashionable in Argentina, and Ernesto, an avid Sartre admirer, was an expert on existentialism. … Ernesto was a great believer in Sartre, although as our discussions continued, he became less of an existentialist."[144] It is interesting to consider Guevara an expert on existentialism and, at least initially, an existentialist himself. She does not go into any detail about what she means by calling him an existentialist, but there is something quite Sartrean in Guevara's political philosophy.

Jon Lee Anderson, perhaps the best-known of the Guevara biographers to publish on the thirtieth anniversary of his death, writes that, "For Che, it must have been a very gratifying experience, playing host to the renowned French philosopher whose works he had grown up reading."[145] It must have been gratifying, yet Guevara appears to make no mention of the meeting in his writings. Perhaps the meeting was not the summit of intellects that the Korda photographs would seem to suggest. Perhaps Guevara was in fact a little wary of Sartre. Hilda Gadea writes that Guevara—at this stage loyal to the Party—was critical of Sartre's attack of the communists. Perhaps this was at the back of his mind when taking midnight coffee with Sartre.

Cohen-Solal, meanwhile, in the Sartre biography, writes that "Che was rumored to have declared: "Let Jean-Paul Sartre philosophize about revolution; we who carry it out have no time for theories."[146] The citation is unfortunately from "private archives." Whose, which or where, she does not specify. Such a punchy, bullish comment does sound quite typical of Guevara, and so if he did say this, it would indicate that during his years in the Sierra he was unaware of Sartre's intense political activism. Did he perhaps assume that Sartre and Beauvoir were in town to talk philosophy? Guevara did, however, read the 21 March 1960 edition of *Lunes* dedicated to Sartre, and declared it "muy bueno" in a dedicatory statement in the 28 March edition.[147]

What is clear is that Guevara knew far more of Sartre than Sartre of Guevara. It was Guevara who arranged the meeting in the bank offices, and it was he who was keen to impress the two French visitors.

Sartre and Beauvoir are ushered past bedraggled and exhausted rebel soldiers as they make their way through the bank lobby, past a telephonist snoring with a cigar clamped between his teeth, "his long black hair spread on his shoulders." The peculiar atmosphere reminds Sartre of a night train, "the half-opened pink eyes, the piled up or

twisted bodies, tossed about, the nocturnal uneasiness,"[148] and they are brought into the director's office. A bright and vital atmosphere; no sleep on Guevara's face. Had he just showered? Sartre asks himself. "Night doesn't enter his office. Among these fully awake men, at the height of their powers, sleeping doesn't seem like a natural need, just a routine of which they had more or less freed themselves."[149] He, like the other rebel officers, had dispensed with the "imbecilic hours" that Sartre was accustomed to devoting to sleep (not many, according to Beauvoir). Thus continues this strange narrative. Guevara never sleeps. Work is more important than sleep. They formed "a discreet cult of energy, so much loved by Stendhal." "They live energy, they exercise it, they invent it, perhaps." They have torn themselves away from the "latifundias of sleep." "They have curtailed their sleep." And so on…

Sartre is dazzled by this issue of sleep, and he moves from talking of Guevara to an account of Carlos Franqui's similar disavowal of sleep. He discusses the readiness of the revolutionaries to eschew food, eating only when the appropriate opportunity arises. He discusses their natural temperance, how drunkenness was the hallmark of the Yankee gamblers. He discusses their disdain for material comforts, their shared living spaces in humble houses, the lack of privilege and hierarchy, and above all, their eagerness to instruct through example. With this the article ends.

Were a reader to dig out this particular text to explore the meeting between Sartre and Guevara, to fill in the story behind the photos, they would come away bemused; Sartre says very little about Guevara, but he gushes for paragraph after paragraph about the rebels' capacity to overcome their own basic needs and appetites. It is clear that Sartre was impressed that others were capable of putting themselves to the same rigorous work regime that he reserved for himself. He admired their endurance knowingly, perhaps impressed that their nocturnal energy was not assisted by amphetamines.

Here is *praxis* in its boldest form. So dedicated is Guevara to overturning this old unjust system that he has even overturned the demands of his own body. No time for sleep. No time to waste on meals—there's work to be done! Again I am keen to focus on the narrative development of the articles and to consider this episode in the light of Sartre's philosophical analysis of history, of ideology and of the revolution.

All these issues are about the seizure of control, the refusal to be determined by the master narrative. The sugar economy was presented to the Cubans as a natural order rather than a contingent human system,

and yet Castro, Guevara and the rebels had the strength to declare that the order was not inviolate. From this basis the demands of sleep and food are presented as bourgeois luxuries, pleasures of the indolent. Thus Guevara becomes the embodiment of will, the archetype of the existentialist hero who has risen up and taken control of destiny. Guevara biographer Jorge Castañeda shares Sartre's admiration of Guevara's will, writing that "a guiding principle in the life of Ernesto Guevara was the exaltation of will, bordering on wilfulness or, as some might say, omnipotence. … There was no obstacle too great for willpower."[150] This will to act was immediately apparent to Sartre when visiting Guevara, and Sartre presents Guevara defiant before injustice, wholly committed to action over theory.

Even an act as mundane as inviting Sartre and Beauvoir to the bank offices in the middle of the night struck Sartre as indication of Guevara's powerful assertion of self and his commitment to influence others with this strong will. Even Guevara's inappropriateness for the directorship of the National Bank is indication of Guevara's will: He is too cultured, too passionate, too removed from "the precise technical knowledge indispensable to a state banker."[151] I suppose the battle fatigues and whiff of the mountains influenced Sartre's vision, but it is also perfectly likely that Guevara admitted to Sartre this professional mismatch. In a public speech he gave on 20 March 1960, whilst Sartre and Beauvoir were in Cuba, Guevara admits "I do not pretend to be an economist. Like all revolutionary fighters, I am simply in this new trench where I have been assigned."[152] This is clearly the spirit that Sartre found so compelling, the adaptability to changing circumstances guided by indomitable will. Fidel Castro even quipped that Guevara took the job in the bank after Castro had asked for an economist which Guevara misheard for *communist*.[153] This might account for why Sartre recorded little of the conversation—perhaps in effect Sartre was not impressed by Guevara's practical economics but was impressed by the youth, energy and drive of Guevara and these men.

It is quite significant that Sartre glosses over Guevara's specific political activities during this time. He was likely well aware of the many *fusilamientos* presided over by Guevara the previous year in the Spanish fortress of La Cabaña, but as he reveals in *Ouragan* and in the *Appendice*, such elimination of the enemy is a necessary act to consolidate the revolution. He was fully aware of the executions and purges, discussing the matter in an interview a decade later and

applauding the strategy of the tribunals as a way of preventing mob-vigilante reprisals.[154] Guevara (assuming Sartre knew of his former role) would have been central to this "cathartic cleansing," a process that does not appear to Sartre and Guevara to be at odds with the revolution's commitment to social justice and freedom.

Likewise, whilst there had been a run on the bank when Guevara assumed office in November 1959, he had cemented the historic trade relations with Soviet deputy premier Anastas Mikoyan just prior to Sartre and Beauvoir's arrival. With this important deal Guevara secured lasting economic support, but coincidently he betrayed his own commitment to national sovereignty and helped place Cuba once again in sugar dependency. Had Sartre known the full repercussions of this act and of Guevara's involvement in purges of non-communists from the July 26 party, he may have felt less to praise of Guevara's commitment to freedom.

It is not *what* Guevara and the rebels are doing so much as *how* they are doing it. It is not the economic policy that strikes Sartre but the long-haired soldiers in the lobby and the gritty commanders in the midnight bank office. So committed, indeed, are they to this massive undertaking that they will burn themselves out. Sartre is clear about this: they will not survive this furious pace. "But do they have such a great desire to die old?" he asks. "A rebel who retires, that prospect hardly pleases them."[155] Again, this is a stirring narrative. It is rock'n' roll: young rebels who would sooner burn out than fade away. Yet they are also presented as martyrs, offering up their very existence to the revolutionary cause: "Their existence is already given over," he writes. "The young leaders have their objective: to fulfil the current phase of the revolution, to lead it to the edge of the following moment, and to transcend it in eliminating themselves."[156] Sartre writes with the same enthusiasm that he observed in Guevara and Franqui and others. He scarcely draws breath. His words are laudations, his story an epic.

"If indeed existence precedes essence," writes Sartre in "Existentialism is a Humanism," "one will never be able to explain one's action by reference to a given and specific human nature; in other words, there is no determinism—man is free, man is freedom."[157] It seems that Sartre recognised in Guevara this essential freedom and the capacity to act upon it. Guevara seems resolutely *free* to Sartre. He is the archetype of the revolutionary, in constant revolution, rebelling even against the physical order of food and sleep. He and his *compañeros* have gained extraordinary powers and have achieved the impossible. They have become new men, supermen.

In *Ideología y Revolución*, the essay published in Cuba during Sartre's stay, Sartre writes: "We have seen how a lucid practice has changed in Cuba even the very notion of man."[158] At the same time that *Ouragan* was published in Paris, in August 1960, Guevara gave a speech to assembled medics and health workers in Havana in which he raised the question that the revolution would succeed only with the creation of a new man and a new woman, acting on moral rather than material incentives, fully committed to opposing injustice: "a new type of human being should be created. If each one of us is his own architect of that new human type, then creating that new type of human being—who will be the representative of the new Cuba—will be much easier." He continues: "It is good for you—those present, the residents of Havana—to absorb this idea: that in Cuba a new type of human being is being created … which can be seen in every corner of the country."[159]

There are many examples of this humanist, socialist new man in Guevara's speeches from 1960 right through to "Socialism and Man in Cuba" in 1965. Whilst it would be remiss to suggest that Guevara's New Man was derived from Sartre, we can nevertheless see a parallel with Sartre's depiction of Guevara and the other revolutionaries.

The New Man is conscious of his impact and conscious of his relationship with his fellow man. As such, Guevara exhorts the medics in the same way that Sartre exhorts the readers of Fanon; it is not good enough simply *not* to be an exploiter or a slaver, one must specifically oppose exploitation and slavery. Unless fighting against colonialism, Sartre reminds his readers, they are themselves colonialists. Guevara likewise insists that one cannot simply support the revolution, one must be revolutionary. The two men's principles are similar, not least that they were both committed to embodying their vision of the revolutionary man themselves, to lead by example: the tough work ethic, political activism, international travel, acceptance of violence (even ruthlessness), deep critical reading of Marx, disdain for comfort, disdain for money. I can't overlook their heavy devotion to tobacco as disdainful of health and old age.

"When a man commits himself to anything," writes Sartre in 1946 with a tone reflected in Guevara's speeches, "fully realising that he is not only choosing what he will be, but is thereby at the same time a legislator deciding for the whole of mankind—in such a moment a man cannot escape from the sense of complete and profound responsibility."[160] It was that sense of responsibility that drew both Guevara and Sartre to Cuba,

that drew them both to commit to the revolution. This, to my mind, is the essence of the Sartre-Guevara meeting in the bank offices.

Whilst Sartre writes of his meeting with Guevara in such an abstracted line, and whilst Guevara appears to keep no record of the meeting, they both clearly inspired each other. Korda's photos show a charge of mutual respect between Guevara, Beauvoir and Sartre, and Guevara was clearly keen to put aside other pressing concerns of state to talk with them. They do not appear to have maintained correspondence after this encounter, which is not surprising given the many military and political adventures of Guevara in the ensuing years and his clandestine months prior to the Bolivian campaign, and given Sartre's ceaseless writing and travelling.

Sartre was, however, on Guevara's mind in Bolivia, as a possible ally to help raise the international profile of the struggling revolt. He writes plainly in his diary that "I am to write letters to Sartre and B. Russell,"[161] though it does not appear that the letters ever got through to either philosopher. It is also noteworthy that Régis Debray, who became entangled in the Bolivian campaign, had been inspired by Sartre to take up the cause of Guevara and the Cuban Revolution. Sartre, Malraux and even de Gaulle led an international campaign to secure Debray's release from a Bolivian prison in 1970 after being sentenced for thirty years as a conspirator in Guevara's failed revolt. Sartre, it would seem, was more sympathetic to the plight of Debray than he had been to the plight of Matos.

Following Guevara's death in Bolivia in 1967, Sartre was interviewed for Prensa Latina and was asked about his fallen friend. "I think, effectively, that he was not only an intellectual, but also the most complete human being of our age," he responded.[162] Here once again we are in the world of heroes, reaffirming the stance Sartre took seven years before when he met Guevara. As "the most complete human being of our age" Guevara is the epitome of the fully committed, fully *engagé* revolutionary. So committed that his own death is both inevitable and welcome.

Sartre and *Lunes de Revolución*

Literature is a fight, a position.[163]

Guillermo Cabrera Infante, known also as the movie critic Guillermo Caín, arranged the conference at which Sartre, with an interpreter, answered questions from an audience of novelists, playwrights, poets and other literary figures. These audience members are a roll call of writers central to the energetic cultural output of the first few years of the revolution. Amongst other names we see the playwrights Antón Arrufát and Virgilio Piñera, the poets Nicolás Guillén and Pablo Armando Fernández, and the literary editor José Rodríguez Feo. They were not only prominent cultural figures; they were also attentive readers of Sartre.

Piñera, for example, claimed a debt to Sartre's theatre in his own plays, and was delighted that Sartre attended a performance of Piñera's *Electra Garrigó* in Havana in February 1960.[164] Carlos Franqui informed Sartre when they spoke in Paris that his and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's works had accompanied him in the *Sierra* during the revolutionary campaign.[165] Lisandro Otero had studied in Paris in the years before the revolution immersed in the ideas of existentialism. He writes that Sartre had been "a model and a reference. His propositions concerning the thinking man had convinced me."[166] Jaime Sarusky writes that he had seen Sartre's plays in Paris in the 1950s, that Sartre had made a big impact on his writing, and that *Nausea* was a strong influence on his 1962 novel

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La Búsqueda.[167] Rodríguez Feo lived off and on in New York throughout the 1940s and 1950s, often attending performances of Sartre's plays and providing critical commentary in letters to his friend in Havana José Lezama Lima.[168] Cabrera Infante's recently published collection of short stories entitled *As in Peace so in War* had been written, he later claimed, "completely under the influence of Sartre."[169] Pablo Armando Fernández, who contributed his own material to the *Lunes* edition on Sartre, writes that for José Baragaño, another writer in this audience, Sartre was "el San Agustin del marxismo."[170] Baragaño published in the *Lunes* edition dedicated to Sartre (21 March 1960) a detailed overview of Sartre's works and an account of the influence of Sartre's essays, plays and books on Cuban letters.[171]

Lastly, Humberto Arenal draws on an interview that he conducted with in 1960. He writes that Sartre's definition of revolution, as outlined in his 1947 article "Materialism and Revolution," was widely circulated and discussed amongst Cuban intellectuals during these early days of the revolution.In particular, he writes, was Sartre's indication that "the possibility of separating oneself from a situation and gaining a perspective of it is what, precisely, one may call revolution."[172] As we will see, this appeal to critical distance becomes of crucial importance in the hurly-burly of politics in revolutionary Cuba of the early 1960s.

This was quite an audience, and if Sartre had been astonished in Paris when Franqui told him he was well known and well read in Cuba, he must have been doubly so in this crowd, with questions pertaining to his philosophy, literature, theatre and, importantly, his views on the surrounding political climate. Many questions are posed and his answers are, in many cases, very long, all of which would have been extended further by the interpreter. There are photos in the Cuban *Sartre visita a Cuba* showing an earnest Sartre sitting hunched over a desk with a cigarette in a room full of earnest writers with cigarettes and chunky black spectacles. It must have been a long event, but I assume they did not run out of tobacco.

He is asked about Husserl and phenomenology, revolution and ideology and Latin American literature. Cabrera Infante asks him about de Gaulle and Algeria. Guillén asks him about racism. Fausto Masó asks him about Heidegger. Lisandro Otero asks him about Stalinism. Regardless of the troubled trajectories of most of these writers beyond this moment, these were important figures of the time, asking direct, relevant and

urgent questions. They knew his work and were interested in his responses. And of course, they were *on his side*. Sartre had been receiving hostile responses in France from both the Gaullists and party-loyal communists, and so it must have been consoling to have such a sympathetic audience.

The event was organised under the auspices of *Lunes*. It was *Lunes* writers Carlos Franqui, Virgilio Piñera, José Álvarez Baragaño and Walterio Carbonell who greeted Sartre and Beauvoir at the airport upon arrival, and it was *Lunes* who publicised their trip in the 22 February edition. On 24 February the Catholic *Diario de la Marina* published a huffy reaction to Sartre's visit to Cuba, appalled by his godlessness, and labelling him "heretical and immoral" on account of the appearance of Sartre's works on the Vatican's Index of Prohibited Books. On the 29 February *Lunes* published a short, stinging, rebuttal, lambasting the *Diario*'s "reactionary" and "pseudo-philosophical" arguments.

It is worth exploring the history of *Lunes* to contextualise Sartre's involvement with these writers and artists and to bring into relief Sartre's radicality even within radical Cuba. Devised by Franqui, with Cabrera Infante as editor and Pablo Armando Fernández as sub-editor, with a team of writers already mentioned including Heberto Padilla, *Lunes* ran from 1959 until its closure in 1961, and it pursued an energetic policy of publishing challenging, independent and above all provocative art from across history and cultures. Franqui, in his memoir *Family Portrait with Fidel*, describes the incendiary mission of the journal:

> From its inception Lunes had been very polemical. Our thesis was that we had to break down the barriers that separated elite culture from mass culture. We wanted to bring the highest quality of culture to hundreds of thousands of readers. We published huge editions with pictures and texts by Marx, Borges, Sartre, Neruda, Faulkner, Lezama Lima, Martí, Breton, Picasso, Miró, Virginia Woolf, Trotsky, Bernanos and Brecht. We were motivated by a motto we got directly from José Martí: "Culture brings freedom."… Even *Lunes*'s typography was a scandal for left- and right-wing prudes. We played with letters in the same way that Apollinaire, the futurists, the Dadaists, and the surrealists had done. And we included black and Cuban folk traditions as well.[173]

Cabrera Infante, one of the small group of translators including Virgilio Piñera of much of this non-Spanish material, explained: "We had the Surrealist credo as our catechism and Trotskyite politics as our aesthetics,

mixed like bad metaphors—or heady drinks. … 129 issues of *Lunes* were published before it was closed down by the government because of its independent stance and its insistence on artistic freedom."[174]

They did not publish only art and literature, writes William Luis, but included such diverse areas as agriculture, politics, photography and ballet, and they published political and economic articles by Marx, Fidel Castro and Guevara.[175] They had even published extracts from Sartre's own journal *Les Temps Modernes.* It is interesting to note that in the third edition in April 1959 they published the segment from Henri Alleg's account in *La Question* where he describes being waterboarded by the French military. One can see how the journal would have chimed with Sartre and how it chimes today.

Here, at a cultural level, one can see the binding principle of *revolution* behind the writers and artists published in *Lunes.* This was revolutionary material. Whether Picasso or Borges, Woolf or Brecht, these are artists who challenge one's certainties aesthetically, conceptually, politically, even ontologically. Here, visibly, one can see the famed absence of ideology that Sartre claimed was true of the revolution as a whole. Anti-fascist, to be sure, but anti-fascism is no single ideology. *Lunes* was quite a phenomenon, and as Franqui and Cabera Infante make clear, despite the official nature of *Revolución* and *Lunes de Revolución*, there were tensions visibly growing between the journal's cultural orientation and the emerging cultural directive of the state.

It seems to me entirely appropriate that the same forces that drew Sartre to Cuba also drew him to this misfit assemblage of writers in Cuba. It fits the Sartre narrative perfectly, and I imagine Sartre feeling quite animated amongst this boisterous crew of *Lunes*, in some respects inheritors of his rebel comrades of Socialism & Liberty—"a quarrelsome mix of anarchists, Marxists, and Trotskyists"[176]—campaigning for a political "third way" in occupied France. I would consider this description apt also for the *Lunes* collective, who occupied a similar position of non-ideological, freewheeling, revolutionary fervour, and who, as history demonstrates, were bound to bump against the rigid systems of state sooner or later. Sartre and Beauvoir surely detected these tensions during their stay in Havana.

The central focus of the discussion, as is to be expected, is the role of the intellectual and the artist within a revolution. Poet and essayist Mirta Aguirre asks Sartre: "Señor Sartre, you spoke earlier of the writer who refuses to commit himself. Do you honestly feel the possibility for the

existence of the writer or artist who is not committed? [*no compremetido* – which also means *not compromised*].” Sartre responds with the clear declaration “I think that writers are always committed.”[177] He refers, not for the first time, to Beauvoir’s investigation of the Marquis de Sade. Some had criticised de Sade for being preoccupied only with matters of “eroticism and sadism,” whereas, he argues, de Sade was a committed revolutionary manning the barricades as president of the Section des Piques. Sartre’s response is quite an essay on de Sade, and he argues that Sadism itself is a splendid assault on bourgeois respectability, revealing the ultimate degeneracy of society’s moral arbiters.

Baragaño follows Aguirre’s question with one concerning the role of the poet and poetry within the revolutionary process and the problematic of poetic freedom. Sartre’s response is long and measured and not a little verbose, covering many perspectives including the philosophical implications of the writer’s need to overcome the limitations of his reality. All writers, he repeats, are committed, and so the writer’s duty is to become conscious of this commitment, to recognise the social role and responsibility, and to engage consciously. And yet the writer must be a reliable witness, and so cannot become so swept up in the tumult of the event so as to lose critical and dispassionate judgement. Neither should the artist become “formalistic”; there should be no loss of experimentation in style and form. Neither should literature become tattle-talk, such as certain provincial newspapers that gush over socialites’ dinner parties and the elegant dress of madame so-and-so; “Has literature been made for *that*?”[178]

For Sartre, therefore, the writer really has an obligation to be *comprometido* in the revolutionary process. He insists that such *compromiso* will arise in the art as an organic principle of the art, that it cannot be proscribed by the state. That it *must not* be proscribed by the state. “Laws of state cannot be created to define what is reality, what is objectivity, and what is the best method of discovering them or changing them,” he argues, as the laws will become “an absolute objectivity for the writers” that will “interfere in the interior of these writers” and will, ultimately, lead to “the gravest thing that can happen to a writer: autocensorship.”[179] The laws become ideology. State bureaucrats thus serve as literary critics, and they will judge the art not according to its deeper revolutionary nature but by rude binaries of ideology.

He illustrates his concerns with cases of the French Revolution, including that of de Sade, and the case of a writer in Mao’s China who was forced to accept censorship. He also draws on his own play

La putain respectueuse (staged in Havana on 18 March with Castro, Sartre and Beauvoir together in the audience) which, when shown in Russia, had been censored by the authorities. What concerned him was not only that they changed it, but that they did so anticipating what the public would want, which is another way of determining what the public may have. It is a conditioning process beholden to dim-witted ideological principles.

And so Sartre speaks in strong, stentorian, words before a gathering of the leading intellectual figures of the day. He is didactic, repeating statements about the role of the artist, punctuated with schoolmasterly admonishments like "I'm asking you because," "you must understand" and "listen carefully to what I'm saying." He is in town to instruct these writers on how to be revolutionary, and he knows that they will listen. Baragaño, for example, who asked the question that provoked this grand response, had uttered in his question "The answer I need in relation to projects I'm working on at the moment is…"[180] This is a practical gathering, a workshop of sorts.

There is something, to my mind, significant in the strident tone of Sartre's responses, the dynamics of the gathering, the involvement of *Lunes*, the concerns for the duties of the intellectual towards the revolution and the duties of the revolution towards the intellectual. It stands as a curious prelude to a series of three gatherings that would take place in June the following year, when Fidel Castro summoned a similar, but far larger, group of writers and artists and explained to them the role of the intellectual in revolutionary Cuba. These meetings—which culminated in a speech delivered by Castro known as *Palabras a los intelectuales*, Words to the Intellectuals—are often depicted as marking one of those shifts in the direction of the revolution, such as the explosion of *La Coubre*, the invasion of the Bay of Pigs, the Missile Crisis, and, later, the Padilla affair.

Words with the Intellectuals

We will always evaluate a person's creation from the revolutionary point of you.[181]

There are striking similarities between Sartre's responses and Castro's speech, and, evidently, striking differences. In the many critical studies of *Palabras* and the fewer studies of Sartre in Cuba, there is little consideration of these curious parallels between the two meetings.

Much ink has been spilled on the whole process that led to the meetings of *Palabras*, not least by Cabrera Infante, who refers to the process and the meetings in countless angry essays, interviews and newspaper articles throughout the 1970s and 80s. Just the briefest of contextual summary is thus required here.[182]

If in March 1960 Sartre was addressing the relationship between art and politics, the debate reached a conclusion of sorts in the meetings in the library in June 1961. In the intervening period, numerous sabotage attempts had attempted to destabilise the revolution, corroborating Castro's eagerness to have ascribed the explosion of *La Coubre* to US interference. The threat of invasion became real with the Bay of Pigs in April 1961, which was defeated by Castro's forces. Castro gave a speech in which he declared for the first time the socialist nature of the revolution. Political and military alliances with the Soviet Union, which had already begun economically when Sartre and Beauvoir visited a year before, were formalised. The US trade embargo was established. The island entered

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a tense period often referred to as under siege; militias were mobilised, security tightened and systems were consolidated to identify possible traitors to the revolution from amongst the citizenry.

In this charged atmosphere, Guillermo Cabrera Infante's brother Sabá and Orlando Jiménez Leal made a short experimental film called *PM*, financed with some *Lunes* money, which was shown on television. When the filmmakers applied to the Review Commission of ICAIC (the Film Institute) for a general licence for cinema release, the application was denied, the film was denounced and the print confiscated. Various voices were raised in concern, mostly from *Lunes*, a petition was launched, the case became heated and the meetings were arranged in the central library, partly to discuss the merits of the film but more so to debate the wider role of the artists and intellectuals.

At the meetings were assembled, writes Michael Chanan, "practically the whole intellectual and artistic community,"[183] or, as Cabrera Infante writes, "the sacrificial goats."[184] The chair was poet Nicolás Guillén, accompanied on the stage by Fidel Castro, President Dorticós, novelist Alejo Carpentier, Núñez Jiménez (whom Sartre met with Guevara in the bank), the president of Casa de las Américas, Haydée Santamaría and her husband and minister of education Armando Hart, and other members of the *nomenklatura*, or, as Cabrera Infante writes "the wolves."[185] Aside from those who had left the country, the writers and artists invited to Sartre's *Lunes* event of 1960 were then present at the library meetings the following year. The event, after all, revolved on the *Lunes* group.

It is clear that at this stage Castro held Sartre in high esteem. He had been keen for Sartre and Beauvoir to tour the island with him, and they spent much time in close proximity on the road. He approved of Sartre's *France-Soir* articles, and later altered plans to catch up with them when they returned to Havana in October 1960. Sartre, certainly, wrote glowingly about Castro, and indicates that they had many instructive exchanges. One of these conversations in the Zapata swamp was transcribed by Lisandro Otero and published in *Revolución*.

Of concern to Castro and to Sartre is this role of the intellectual within the revolution and the thorny issue of artistic freedom. Sartre and Beauvoir were, after all, in Cuba as prominent intellectuals, not as technocrats, bureaucrats, ambassadors or soldiers, and so the issue would naturally have concerned them deeply. Sartre writes that Castro asked their opinion on this matter in their conversations. Sure enough, when Castro addresses the large audience in the Biblioteca Nacional and outlines exactly why they are assembled, he refers to "the fundamental question

of freedom of artistic creation" and that "when writers from abroad have visited our country, political writers in particular, this question has been brought up more than once."[186]

He even refers to his published conversation with Sartre: "By chance, shortly before we returned to this hall, a compañero brought us a pamphlet containing a brief conversation on this subject between Sartre and myself that Lisandro Otero included in the book entitled *Conversations at the Lake*."[187] Sartre was clearly present in his thoughts when he delivered his address, and he proceeds to discuss this *problema* of culture in terms that echo Sartre's discussions. This is not to say that his ideas derived from Sartre—it is notoriously challenging to consider influences upon Castro's thought—but that he and Sartre shared and discussed between themselves similar concerns and addressed them publicly in broadly similar ways.

Because of the haste of events, Castro says, the revolution is essentially improvised. It is organic in its nature and not directed by external ideologies. The revolutionary process will thus rely on the cultural production of the artists for orientation and direction; and art will thus serve a social role in upholding revolutionary principles. Art will be for the *pueblo* and the artist must not be removed from the *pueblo*. All have embarked together on this revolutionary project. They must abandon their previously held convictions and prejudices and venture forth together. "We are all learning. Actually, we have a great deal to learn, and we have not come here to teach. We have come to learn also." The artist, Castro insists, is as much of a warrior in the new revolutionary society as the rebel soldier, a sentiment that echoes Sartre's declaration to the *Lunes* writers that "literature is a fight, a position."[188]

Nobody can compel an artist to be revolutionary, Castro admits, yet the true artist will be revolutionary through genuine artistic nature and through a genuine desire to oppose injustice and oppression. It is thus in the natural spirit of the artist to be or to become revolutionary. This echoes Sartre's repeated declarations of the natural commitment of the writers and their obligation within the revolution. "Why oppose it?" Sartre had asked of them. Why would a writer wish to write gossip pieces in provincial rags? Sartre and Castro thus present the same binary. Art is either idle bourgeois entertainment or it is socially committed. It is a choice performed in the act.

"The question under discussion here," Castro continues, "and that we will tackle is the question of the freedom of writers and artists to express themselves."[189] Again we are seeing echoes of the concern that was central to Sartre not just of artistic freedom but of all freedom. And yet there is a subtle contradiction that emerges in Castro that is not present in Sartre. Castro asks accusingly: "The fear in people's minds is that the

revolution might choke this freedom, that the revolution might stifle the creative spirit of writers and artists."[190] This was certainly the concern of many sitting before him, bearing in mind the hostile response to the film *PM*; "What could be the basis for such concern?" he asks. "Only those who are unsure of their revolutionary convictions can be truly worried about such a problem. Someone who lacks confidence in their own art, who lacks confidence in their ability to create, might be worried about this matter."[191]

This is an alarming statement. Any artist committed to the revolution and to revolutionary principles will, because of this commitment, feel assured of his or her work. No more writer's block—there's work to be done! Concern about form or content, Castro argues, arises because the artist is uncertain of his or her revolutionary principles. Concern about censorship of form or content will arise from the same uncertainty; if the artist is truly revolutionary he won't write anything that will need censoring. "Permit me to tell you," Castro assures his audience, "that the Revolution defends freedom."[192] But at the same time he makes it clear that the revolution will demand specific things of the artist and the art; and the revolution can judge art according to these revolutionary principles:

> Does this mean that we are going to tell the people here what they have to write? No. Everyone should write what they want, and if what they write is no good, that's their problem. If what they paint is no good, that's their problem. We do not prohibit anyone from writing on the topic they prefer. On the contrary, everyone should express themselves in the form they consider best, and they should express freely the idea they want to express. We will always evaluate a person's creation from the revolutionary point of you. That is also the right of the revolutionary government, which should be respected in the same way that the right of each person to express what he or she wants to express should be respected.[193]

You are free, he indicates, to be revolutionary. You are also free not to be revolutionary, but if not revolutionary then you are not free. "We believe that it is tragic when someone understands this and yet has to acknowledge himself to be incapable of fighting for it." This is the first indication in the speech of the sentiment that is concretized as "dentro de la Revolución, todo; contra la Revolución, nada (within the revolution, everything; against the revolution, nothing),"[194] a statement that Cabrera Infante publicised loud and long as being Stalinist[195] but that Chanan argues requires a more sympathetic contextualisation.

To contextualise is to recognise the existential threat upon the nation of Cuba; one invasion thwarted and the next, who knows, maybe nuclear. To contextualise is to try to understand all the conflicting forces at play in this crowded library. To contextualise is to acknowledge that Castro goes to great lengths to explain, step by step, why a writer must be revolutionary, why he must accept certain obligations, and why the state must assume the right to judge. He leaves no stone unturned. Castro also reviews, step by step, the very discussions in the library, acknowledging the tension between *compañeros* and pitying those wounded in the process. To contextualise is to recognise the many cultural projects that were celebrated in the meeting and the many others that were energetically instigated afterwards.

To contextualise it is also to recognise that Castro presents a choice—be with us or against us. To be with us is to ride the wave of progress, to be part of history. To be against us is not only to resist this wave, but it is to forfeit all the rights afforded to those with us. "One has only to return it to its context to understand the message," says Cabrera Infante. "Those who are with me are good, but those who are against me will be very bad—at the same time I reserve the right to think and to decide who and where are my friends and my enemies. It is paranoia turned into a political system!"[196]

Individual freedom is thus preserved, of sorts. Such a circular argument would not have been lost on Sartre had he been present, who had insisted the previous year that the state must not dictate the conditions of art. Party hacks make poor critics. He had raised similar concerns about the cultural directive of Soviet Russia.

Fifteen months earlier, when Sartre had delivered his long and forthright exposition of the obligation of the revolutionary artist, the playwright Virgilio Piñera, whose plays Sartre admired in 1949 and 1960, waited for Sartre to finish his lengthy response, then reminded him that, for all Sartre's talk of commitment, he is nevertheless an artist and not a "hombre de acción política." "Would you change your condition as an intellectual to be a man of political action?" he asked him. "Not for anything," replied Sartre.[197] At heart of Piñera's question is the understanding—and the hope—that Sartre will remain a philosopher and an artist and will position himself on the side of the intellectual who critically examines and acts appropriately, over the ideologue who acts on impulse and instruction. Sartre will be true to his principle of revolution outlined in his 1946 article "Materialism and Revolution" that, according

to Arenal, was circulating in Cuba. Sartre will thus never be a loyal party member, Piñera tells him. Sartre agrees with him. His agreement seems to reassure Piñera. It reassures me.

The following year, during Fidel Castro's longer and more forthright exposition of the obligation of the revolutionary artist, Piñera again raises a question, but this time it is not really a question but a simple statement of fear. Theatre director Francisco Morín, who had worked with him, remembers the specifics of Piñera's words. Castro looks out over the audience and asks:

> "There is a rumour circulating … that some of you are afraid of something. Is this true? What are you afraid of?"
>
> There was a silence, and in the first row a hand was hesitantly raised and a timid voice was heard.
>
> "I am afraid."
>
> It was Virgilio Piñera.
>
> "Scared of what?" asked the big man on the platform.
>
> "Of what will be asked or demanded of us."[198]

Cabrera Infante paints a similar scene, but in this case Piñera "was almost on the verge of panic. Then he added: 'I think it has to do with all this.' It seemed that he included the Revolution in his fear, though apparently he meant only the crowd of so-called intellectuals."[199] Each recollection of Piñera's speech includes a different detail, but all agree that he spoke out that he was afraid. According to Franqui, Piñera had also asked the most pertinent of all questions that could have been asked. "Dr. Castro, why is the Revolution scared of its writers?"[200] What a question! Why are all political systems scared of their writers? Piñera already knew the answer to this. The answer is articulated in Sartre's *What is literature?* What a shame Franqui does not recall Castro's response.

Piñera was clearly afraid, and he clearly had good reason to be afraid, as four months later he was arrested in a citywide swoop on gay men and women and sex workers. Franqui and Cabrera Infante had to pull strings to secure his release. Would he have been afraid of Sartre? It seems to me that despite hearing similar instructions from Sartre and from Castro, Piñera would have been assured that Sartre would be loyal to art for art's

sake. How could it be otherwise? Sartre was a man who opposed autocracy in all its forms; indeed, Sartre had warned of this rising power of state when he had spoken in the *Lunes* offices.

It is a curious exercise to chart the development of these meetings, as the whole episode is entangled by the bitchiness, mudslinging and backstabbing that seem to characterise Havana's artistic and literary community across the decades. Even Castro acknowledges this rancour: "I believe that there have been personalism and strong feelings in the debate." Both Franqui and Cabrera Infante write with loathing about the whole affair, and attack their antagonist Alfredo Guevara as a mindless commissar. (Cabrera Infante calls him a "tropical Machiavelli." Franqui calls him "sneaky, bureaucratic, frustrated, Machiavellian.") Alfredo Guevara, meanwhile, mocks the *Lunes* writers as being *contrarrevolucionarios* and cowards who never took up arms during the insurrection, who dedicate their energies to ridiculing Cuban culture and whose intentions are "intellectual terrorism." Francisco Morín, sick of the whole business, escaped through the back door as soon as Piñera announced his fears, praying that neither Castro nor the other officials saw him escape.

Cabrera Infante presents the meetings as Stalinist intrusion into culture, and he depicts Castro dictatorially placing his pistol on the desk before thundering out his stern directive. Miguel Barnet, however, who was then a 21-year-old anthropologist eager not to fall on the wrong side of the future, recalls the meeting with fondness and pride.[201] Pablo Armando Fernández presented the meetings as having a potent and galvanising essence, bringing the disparate and heterogeneous artists within a ruling principle.[202] "Rather than call this the Revolution's first act of film censorship," writes Chanan, "it is more enlightening to see it as the denouement of the incipient conflict between different political trends that lay beneath the surface."[203] I do not see the distinction. It was censorship *and* denouement. Denouement by diktat. Denouement that spelled the banning of the film *PM*, the closure of *Lunes* (on the grounds of paper shortage) and the creation of a new cultural body, UNEAC (Union of Cuban Writers and Artists), that would eventually oversee all publishing in the country.

Similar currents run through the meeting in the *Lunes* offices in March 1960 and the meetings in the Biblioteca Nacional in June 1961. Similar concerns, in particular, are addressed for the duties of the artist to the state and the state to the artist. Concerns are raised in both encounters about how the revolution can protect freedom of expression

even of those artists deemed to be not revolutionary. It seems that the many conversations that Castro had with Sartre were present in Castro's mind when delivering his address to the intellectuals, not least because he refers to one of the conversations. How would Sartre have reacted had he been present in the library meetings? This is to me an intriguing question, and it is not without a parallel of sorts.

Franqui writes that the young Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko was present in the meetings, and that he had been visibly bristling during "Alfredito" Guevara's attack on *PM* and the paper *Revolución*. Franqui recalls that in addition to Piñera, only Yevtushenko, Haydée Santamaría and José Lezama Lima supported Franqui in his appeal to Castro for sense and fairness.[204] Yevtushenko was appalled and spoke out, for which, according to Franqui, Castro never forgave him. Yevtushenko was a keen reader of Sartre and claimed the philosopher as an influence. Just four years later he co-signed with Sartre, Anna Akhmatova and Dmitri Shostakovich an open letter of protest to the Soviet authorities against the gulag imprisonment of the poet Joseph Brodsky. I imagine Sartre's response would have been similar to Yevtushenko's.

Sartre and Beauvoir had already witnessed a shift towards dictatorial state power when they returned to Cuba in October 1960. Rather than wondering how Sartre would have reacted had he been present in June 1961, it is more reasonable to accept that he would never have made it to the meetings to begin with. He would have been protesting on the steps outside. He would probably have been arrested or, like Allen Ginsberg in 1965, bundled at dawn onto a plane out of the country.

The one issue that may have given Sartre some cause for hope, though, is a curiously anomalous comment that Castro seems to let slip by mistake and that garners applause from the audience. "If," he thunders, "anyone is so concerned about the existence of the slightest state authority, he should not worry and he should be patient, because the day will come when the state does not exist either." Where did this comment come from? Was Castro really, at heart, an anarchist? Given his authoritarian nature this seems unlikely, but then, like Sartre, he seems throughout his life not to have permitted anyone to assume power over him.

Sartre, in a 1975 *New York Review of Books* interview, acknowledges himself as an anarchist his entire life, even when he was not aware of it.[205] In addition to their shared concern for humanism and revolution, had Castro and Sartre discussed anarchism during their long tobacco-filled conversations on the road and in the Zapata swamp? Did they

recognise a similar anarchist spirit in each other? Needless to say, this comment by Castro has generally been overlooked given, perhaps, its inconsistent nature. Might Sartre have held out for Castro dismantling his own state? Unlikely, I would imagine.

Castro remembered Sartre fondly the following year when he spoke to the assembled writers and artists, many of whom had also assembled with Sartre. Castro drew on the conversations he had had with Sartre, evoking this particular question of artistic freedom within the revolution and the political commitment of the artist. Their positions are based on a very similar platform in which the true artist, by nature of the art itself, will already be committed to the revolutionary values of equality and social justice. Yet for Sartre, such a commitment was determined always by the artists themselves, never by the state. He was insistent on this matter. It is entirely up to the artist to decide their own direction and their own social engagement. Castro respects this position, arguing similarly that the artist has such choice and such freedom. However, in his grandiosely amplified vision of the relationship between art and the revolutionary state, should artists choose not to follow the principles of the revolution, then they will sacrifice all rights afforded them by the revolution. Furthermore, it is the state, and not the artist, who will be the ultimate arbiter of this engagement. Whilst sharing a similar basis, therefore, the positions of Sartre and Castro become radically different.

Brazil, Cuba and Revolution

Sartre preaches revolution.[206]

Just as Cuba made an impression on Sartre, so Sartre made an impression in Cuba. Novelist Alejo Carpentier, whom Sartre would continue to see from time to time in Paris through the 1960s, published a year later a brief interview with Sartre they had made whilst wandering through the streets of Old Havana. He had read Sartre's Cuba articles and his praise is glowing: "Gifted with prodigious power of understanding, smiling, active, interested in everything, Sartre observed the realisations of the Cuban Revolution with extraordinary judiciousness."[207]

There are other similar warm recollections, such as Enrique Oltuski, whom Beauvoir depicts as lucid and simpatico and Sartre writes as "one of our best friends,"[208] records his time with them with a photograph in his autobiography[209]; or Lisandro Otero, who was one of their three interpreters, who provides a fond and informative record of their time together[210]; or Carlos Franqui, whose warm recollections of his meeting with Sartre and Beauvoir in Paris and their later excursions in Cuba have been useful for this study; or novelist and playwright Humberto Arenal, another of the three interpreters of their trip. Arenal arranged to interview Sartre and Beauvoir in the gardens of the Hotel Nacional. They met and began talking but never concluded the interview as they were interrupted by Tennessee Williams, drunk at 11 in the morning with an

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equally drunk woman, crashing and cursing his way through the hotel garden. Arenal writes affectionately of the French couple and bitterly of Williams.[211] The aborted interview was never published. These and other recollections testify to the fact that Sartre and Beauvoir found themselves amongst friends in Cuba.

Sartre, meanwhile, was steadfast in his support of the revolution. He discussed Cuba in a variety of interviews, press conferences, bulletins and articles over the next few years.[212] Just weeks after returning from Cuba, for example, he and Beauvoir visited Yugoslavia, where, as in Cuba, Sartre spoke to an assembly of writers and artists. He told them his plans to write a book about Cuba.[213]

In the late summer of 1960, riding the same wave of energy that kept them on the move and kept them writing, Sartre and Beauvoir accepted the invitation of novelist Jorge Amado to visit Brazil. Their trip to Brazil is as fascinating as the trip to Cuba and as full of adventure and curious incidents. Beauvoir, not Sartre, is the chronicler, dedicating many pages of her memoirs to the visit. The political situation in Brazil was radically different from that of Cuba, but the Cuban Revolution was adding fuel to progressive movements in Brazil as it was throughout Latin America. "Viva Cuba! Viva Sartre!" Beauvoir recalls students proclaiming at a lecture he gave. "You've talked about the *bohios*; now talk about the *favelas*."[214]

Amado and his wife Zelia arranged a demanding schedule, and at all times Sartre and Beauvoir championed the Cuban cause. Driven by his experience in Cuba, Sartre was really agitating in Brazil, urging strikes and revolts across Latin America, indeed one newspaper, much to the chagrin of their host, a venerable professor, ran the headline "SARTRE PREACHES REVOLUTION."[215] "Did he really know the dangers?" asks biographer Cohen-Solal, perhaps suggesting that his actions resembled Guevara's in 1967.[216] Unlike Guevara, though, it was not the hosts nor the United States that posed the danger but the French, as whilst praising the revolution in Cuba, Sartre lambasted the French in Algeria, cabling to Lanzmann a furious deposition in defence of Francis Jeanson, charged with high treason for his clandestine work with the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale Algérie).

"The war in Algeria has made France rotten," Sartre said to Lanzmann, and he called state behaviour Fascist. The charges against the signatories of the Manifesto of 121 were broadcast, and Sartre and Beauvoir learned in Brazil that they ran the risk of arrest if they returned home. Their voluble public presence in Brazil and their ceaseless critique of France ran dangerously contrary to the official ambassadorial

structures. "In Brazil," writes Cohen-Solal, "Sartre behaved exactly as he had six months earlier in Cuba, as the most honest and most vehement counterambassador of the French Republic."[217]

In October, exhausted and ill from their activities in Brazil, their return journey to France was altered by the arrival in Recife of the Cuban *chargé d'affaires*, insisting that they stop over in Havana. It seems that tiredness and illness were not the only reasons for their reluctance to return to Cuba. Cohen-Solal writes enigmatically that whilst in Brazil Sartre's thoughts were already changing vis-à-vis Cuba: "He praised the Cuban Revolution according to his own principles," she recalls, "no longer Castro's."[218] She says no more on the matter.

One would assume, therefore, that whilst praising the revolution to the Brazilians, Sartre and Beauvoir kept abreast of events in Cuba and had begun to question certain developments. Although it is not sure what, exactly, troubled them, it may have been in part due to the conversations with the pragmatic Amado. Beauvoir recalls the students bursting with revolutionary fervour and eager to hear Sartre's views on agrarian reform. '"They all seem to be revolutionaries to a man!" I said to Amado. "It will pass when they've become doctors or lawyers," he answered.'[219] This world-weary vision of revolution as mere youthful rebellion runs contrary to Sartre's energetic accounts in *Ouragan*, where youthful rebellion seems more authentic, more durable.

Beauvoir's brief and edgy account of this October visit to Cuba is quite revealing. She recounts, perhaps ominously, that a tornado swept through the airfield on the night of their departure from Brazil, delaying them for hours. They were then vexed by bureaucracy in Venezuela to continue their flight to Havana, a problem solved only by Sartre's rage.[220] "Havana had changed," Beauvoir writes, "no more nightclubs, no more gambling, no more American tourists."[221] That should surely have delighted them, but there was tension in the air. "It was known, through Guatemalan diplomats, that an army of Cuban émigrés and the American mercenaries was being trained in Guatemala."[222] Militias were drilling and mood was grisly. "The honeymoon of the revolution was over,"[223] she writes forlornly.

They were still very supportive, but certain events seem to have dampened their spirits. They spoke to some mill workers, and Sartre asked them how their lives had changed under the revolution. "Some of the workers were about to reply," writes Beauvoir, "when a union leader stopped them and answered for them instead."[224] This must have been

galling for both. They met with poet Nicolás Guillén, whom Sartre and Beauvoir had spoken of highly. "Talking about poetry, Guillen declared: 'I consider all research into technique and form counter-revolutionary.'"[225] What an extraordinary and reactionary statement, one that chimes with many of Cabrera Infante's bitter recollections of Guillén in the 1960s. Again, this must have been galling for them, especially in light of their defence of artistic freedom and Sartre's repeated statements of such to the *Lunes* group and even to Castro during their previous visit.

Guillén was insistent, she continues, "that writers should comply with the rules of socialist realism." They also met with writers who "told us in private that they were beginning, against their will, to censor their own work, each asking himself the question: 'Am I really a revolutionary?'"[226] I am intrigued to consider whom they met on this whistle-stop. Doubtless they met with friends, perhaps from the *Lunes* meeting, many of whom, like Cabrera Infante or Franqui ended up in the following years in exile or, like Piñera or Lezama, in what is often called internal exile.

"Less gaiety, less freedom," recalls Beauvoir, "but much progress on certain fronts."[227] This is a familiar tangled response to Cuba that has been repeated across the decades: great literacy rates but severe controls on what can be read; great achievements in workers' rights, gender rights, race rights, whilst permitting little criticism of the measures or the methods; justice and injustice delivered by the same regime. Such contradictions are lacking from Sartre's *France-Soir* articles, even if, as I identify, his misgivings are already subtly presented.

They were in Cuba on the anniversary of the death of Camilo Cienfuegos, whose light aircraft had disappeared on its return from Camaguey the year before after his negotiations in the Matos affair. Beauvoir describes the solemn funeral processions and the ritual of throwing flowers into the sea in commemoration. Ever keen to pick up rumours—viz his conviction that the *Maine* and the *Coubre* were both sabotage—might Sartre have picked up rumours about the death of Cienfuegos—that Castro may have had a hand in his death? Those rumours still circulate today.[228] Likely they heard nothing, but I am intrigued to imagine them overhearing furtive whispers. Perhaps there were no furtive whispers.

Ever the prescient political analyst, Sartre kept his head whilst news of the imminent invasion buzzed around them, declaring in a press conference that neither party in the United States would risk such a venture during the concurrent presidential elections. But he, like the Cubans, knew that it would come eventually.

The final scene in Cuba reads like a novel or film script by Graham Greene. Sartre and Beauvoir met with President Dorticós but not with Castro, no doubt engaged elsewhere. With the clock ticking before their departure flight, Castro burst into their hotel as they were collecting their luggage, and whisked them off to see some new university buildings, casually brushing aside their fears that the flight would leave without them with the authoritative words "it will wait!"[229] Eventually they headed for the airport following "a series of deserted byroads punctuated by great puddles," driving through the hastily opened barriers, across the airport and to the steps of the waiting plane. Castro then stood tall and proud, smoking his cigar by the plane's engines "oblivious of all the signs forbidding it."[230] The scene depicted by Beauvoir is corroborated by Jaime Sarusky, again translating for them, who adds that Castro stood defiantly talking with them on the plane's steps, delaying the flight whilst the pilots, crew and passengers were eager to depart.[231]

It is not only the power demonstrated by the act that strikes me, and clearly struck Beauvoir—the spontaneity and defiance of convention—but that all this was clearly visible to the crowds of people waiting in the departure lounge to board the plane to Miami, waiting to leave Cuba, waiting to leave the revolution. A display of power. A perfectly staged piece of impromptu drama.

They flew to Spain and, having met with Bost and Pouillon, who warned them of the dangers awaiting them back home, lingered in Cataluña for some days, crossing the border in the Pyrenees without ado owing to the intervention of a friendly customs officer who thrust cartons of cigarettes on them "no doubt confiscated from returning tourists" and even asking them to sign the visitors' book.[232] Back in France they were immediately embroiled in political strife, principally concerning Algeria. Cuba, though, is never far from their discussions.

During the winter months of 1960–1961, the covert operations for invasion of Cuba were underway. The Cuban fear, so manifest during Sartre and Beauvoir's October visit, was confirmed with the invasion that beached on Playa Girón in the Bay of Pigs on 17 April 1961. The following day Sartre was interviewed for *L'Express*, and the piece, entitled "L'Assaut contre Castro," was published on 20 April.

Sartre drew on his deep knowledge of Cuban history, already demonstrated a year before in *France-Soir*, to explain the root cause of US hostility to Cuban independence and to denounce the propaganda against Castro. "The violence Cuba has been criticized for," he boldly declares, "has been in every instance counterviolence."[233] Bearing in mind that

the Bay of Pigs took place only a few months before Sartre published the preface to Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, it is interesting to note the genesis of his thought concerning revolutionary violence as response, as reaction. This is another indication that Cuba was prominent in his mind when writing the Fanon preface.

In the interview he again shows keen political perception, arguing that the United States was clearly behind the invasion, that the invasion would fail because of the popular support for the revolution in Cuba, and that the actions would surely push the Cubans further into the arms of the Soviet Union. Interestingly, he states that he was unaware whether Kennedy was behind it and therefore to blame.[234] Beauvoir is far more direct on this matter, having written on 14 April to her partner Nelson Algren in the United States, "It seems your dirty Kennedy is going to make serious trouble for Castro. … I hate this grinning boy and his grinning wife."[235] Neither knew, evidently, whether Kennedy was aware of the invasion plans. They were likely of the same view yet Beauvoir more willing to share her opinion in a private letter than Sartre was in a public interview.

Sartre remained steadfast in his loyalty to Castro and to the strength of their friendship, declaring "Castro, to me, is an admirable man, one of the rare men for whom I have a feeling of respect."[236] Like the explosion of *La Coubre*, Sartre was clear that the invasion of the Bay of Pigs signalled another moment of consolidation for Castro and the revolution, another moment in which the Cubans would rally around their leader. At this stage, though, Sartre still held out that the Cubans would not rush into Soviet bondage "because Cuba's sovereignty is dear to her" and that the revolution would remain organically socialist and not communist.[237]

The Bay of Pigs was another turn of the screw of Sartre's animosity towards the United States, which had been growing for well over a decade. Such animosity, whilst to my eyes justified, appears to have produced in him a particularly unyielding stance when, eighteen months after the Bay of Pigs, the United States and the Soviet Union entered the dangerous days of the missile crisis.

Nuclear missiles, clearly, are a profoundly existential matter. They threaten existence. Sartre spoke out against nuclear warfare on a number of occasions in the 1940s and 1950s, exploring the interweaving narratives of communism, peace, Cold War hostilities, existentialism and the threat of nuclear annihilation.[238] Sartre's complex concerns with nuclear

warfare are beyond the scope of this study, but it is pertinent to consider here his response to the crisis of October 1962.

He was in France during the crisis, he tells Gerassi in 1972, and, unlikely as it sounds, he suggests that the mood was calm.[239] This calmness is similar to that calmness he displayed when insisting on continuing with a press conference in Cuba in October 1960 whilst those around him were panicked by the threat of attack, suggesting that the United States would not risk invasion during elections. In 1962 he intuited that "[Nikita] Khrushchev would never risk war, and that he would back down after Kennedy's speech."[240] This was true, and open war was avoided, but rather than celebrate such an outcome, Sartre seems bitter and defeated. So complex is his response, I will reproduce it in full:

> I was very unhappy that the Russians did give in. I was opposed to what was beginning to look like peaceful coexistence. I had met Fanon by then, and I had been convinced by his argument that peaceful coexistence would be a disaster for the Third World, that it would mean no money for development. I could see that America, which even before peaceful coexistence always black-mailed Third World leaders to join the anti-communist phobia or get no money, and anti-communism meant not only kill your communists, which Nasser for example did, but vote as we tell you or else. There was no better example than the Aswan Dam, was there? No, I hoped that the missile crisis would lead to more confrontations, to create a rivalry between Russia and America, which would help the Third World develop. But because Khrushchev gave in, America felt free to invade the Dominican Republic and of course Vietnam. I remember Fanon telling me then, Russia has accepted its role in history as a second power. That means America is free to be militarily imperialist now, and we are going to suffer for it, badly. The money imperialism of Roosevelt is over, he said, or rather, it will now be accompanied by guns.[241]

What he says is reasonable and has arguably been validated by history. As Fanon and Sartre predicted, the United States continued to demonstrate aggressive foreign policy in countless theatres from Vietnam to Chile and Grenada, and whilst this may justifiably be considered a defeat of the Left it is, to my mind, to ignore the alternatives. Had Khrushchev not backed down during the missile crisis do we imagine that the United States would have capitulated? Is it not quite likely that war would have ensued with devastating consequences? Had the Soviets pressed and the United States backed down do we imagine from the Soviets a more benign imperialism?

Sartre suggests that at the time of the crisis "most folks here thought that Cuba had every right to buy whatever self-defense weapons it wanted, especially since America was so bellicose."[242] I am vexed by that horrible—and yet perfectly logical—appeal to nuclear symmetry. The question is valid: What gives nuclear states the right to have nuclear arms when other states are denied them? What peaceful credentials have nuclear states demonstrated to justify their weapons over other non-nuclear states? The simplest answer would be to say that nuclear arms have not been employed in anger. And yet they have. The next simplest answer would be that the nuclear states have acted peacefully. And yet they haven't; Sartre would readily demonstrate countless acts of French, British or US aggression. Another answer would be that nuclear states have reduced their stockpiles. And yet they haven't; the total armoury has grown staggeringly, and the current British government is committed to renewing Trident. Symmetry is surely to be achieved through global disarmament, not global proliferation, and so I do not share's Sartre's sanguine comments about Cuba's rights to nuclear weapons any more than I would accept any nation's right to nuclear weapons. In my eyes every state should be denied the right, including the states that have hitherto arrogated to themselves the right to decide which states have the right.

In this respect I am drawn to Bertrand Russell's position. Russell is closely related to this study: Like Sartre he was philosopher and activist, sympathetic to certain Soviet initiatives whilst maintaining a fractious relationship with communist parties, active in peace congresses in the 1950s and a close observer of the Cuban Revolution. Russell chose Sartre as panellist, and at one stage chair, of the Russell War Crimes Tribunal in 1967, investigating initially war crimes perpetrated by the United States in Vietnam and subsequently extended to many other conflicts.

Russell's 1963 book *Unarmed Victory* contains a series of chapters setting out the historical case for the revolution in Cuba in a style very reminiscent of Sartre's. It is not improbable that he had read Sartre's account, and it is not improbable that he was inspired by it, but like Sartre, he does not cite his sources. Indeed, given his antipathy towards Existentialism, it was likely on the strength of Sartre's politics and activism, and not his philosophy, that Russell invited Sartre to the tribunal. Whilst sharing a historical perspective of Cuba and sharing sympathies for the revolution, their response to the Missile Crisis differs.

Russell favoured peace and the preservation of life at all costs, beyond "the merits of either side" of the conflict. As such, he declared defiantly that he would align himself with whichever power advocates peace, even if that meant surrender. "In the nuclear age, the human race cannot survive without peace. For this reason, I shall always side with the more peaceful party in any dispute between powerful nations. It has happened that in both the disputes with which this book is concerned, the Communist side has been the less bellicose, but it cannot be said that this is always the case. And, where it is not, my sympathies are anti-Communist."[243] This is to me logical and pragmatic.

Russia's withdrawal, Russell points out, was in reality victory for everyone. Anything is better than nuclear war, especially during the time of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), a system that was revised as a direct consequence of the Missile Crisis. Sartre, however, seems to have been drawn into the drama of brinkmanship—who will blink last. "So long as the practice of Brinkmanship continues," writes Russell, "the risk also will continue, and, during a Brinkmanship contest, nobody in any part of the world can be confident of existing a week hence."[244] As a theatre of postures, nuclear brinkmanship, the brother of nuclear deterrence, is preposterous and exceedingly dangerous, and I unreservedly share Russell's simple position.

Fidel Castro was disgusted by what he took to be cowardice on behalf of the Soviets, and during the crisis he put pressure on Khrushchev via the Soviet ambassador to launch the missiles as soon as the inevitable US attack of Cuba began, failing to understand that Khrushchev had never meant the missiles to be anything other than bargaining chips in the game of brinkmanship. Castro and Guevara raged at the secret agreements drawn up without Cuban consultation. Clearly I do not imagine Sartre as angry as them, but Sartre's sense of disgust at Soviet defeat has the same strident tone as the two *comandantes*: all positions dangerous if the alternative, and far worse, outcome of the crisis is considered. Indeed, Sartre's statement that he hoped that the crisis would lead to more confrontations chillingly resembles Guevara's plea for "two, three, four Vietnams"[245] as a means of bringing about the myriad small fires of revolutionary movements across the globe that he so wished to see.

And so I follow Sartre's glum gaze as he spans the wide panorama of US aggression from 1962 onwards and nod my head in agreement with him; yes, the United States and her allies have pursued horrible

campaigns and supported murderous regimes across the globe. Yet I am brought suddenly back by a consideration of what might have happened had the agreements in 1962—however asymmetrical—not been brought about. I share Russell's simple logic: Any settlement is better than nuclear warfare. I imagine Sartre and Russell shared some lively debates during the quiet moments of the Russell tribunals.

Sartre's relationship with Cuba through the 1960s

You don't arrest and jail those who disagree with you.[246]

Over the following years of the 1960s Sartre continued to discuss Cuba and the revolution in interviews and articles, some of which were published and circulated in Cuba. A brief interview, in which he was quizzed about the conflict between Marxist and bourgeois ideologies, appeared in Unión, the journal of the Writers' Guild UNEAC, in 1964. *What is Literature* was republished by the Instituto Cubano del Libro in 1967. All the while the 1960 Cuban edition of *Sartre visita a Cuba* continued to be read and discussed.

With the ongoing interest in Sartre and Sartre's ongoing interest in Cuba, he was invited to attend the Congreso Cultural de La Habana in January 1968. This international and internationalist congress, put together in the wake of Guevara's death in October 1967, took as its guiding themes the centrality of culture within revolutionary movements of national liberation. The discussions were also to focus on the ongoing crisis of the war in Vietnam. Eminently Sartrean concerns. Sartre and Beauvoir were once again to travel together.

Yet Sartre's health problems prevented the trip. Beauvoir's biographer Deirdre Bair cites "inflammation of the arteries."[247] Sartre, in a letter to the congress director, blames his arthritis. "I ask you, Señor Ministro, to be so gracious as to express to the delegates my total solidarity and

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the profound interest with which I will follow their struggle from afar."[248] Whilst pledging his unyielding support, there is a cagey tone to the brief letter that heralds, in my eyes, something unsettled in his vision of the cultural direction of the revolution. With the threat of other conflicts like Vietnam, he argues, "understandable errors may be committed in the ardour of combat." He continues: "What I wished for, above all, was to attend this *Congreso* and to understand possible errors, to articulate them, and prevent them occurring. This, I hope, will surely happen anyway."[249] Strong words. What errors might he be considering? Ministerial diktat upon cultural production? Censorship? Self-censorship? It is a curious letter that reveals Sartre's disquiet and his ambition to help guide the revolution.

I have no reason to suspect that his health was a useful excuse to avoid the trip. Despite this enigmatic declaration in the letter he does express in a very genuine tone his disappointment at not attending. In an interview published some months after the congress (in which he discusses the role of culture in the creation of revolutionary consciousness, and, repeating what he had said in the *Lunes* offices back in 1960, declaring that any artist worth his salt will by necessity be committed) Sartre expresses his firm commitment to Cuba, to the revolution and to Castro: "I want to add that I am very keen to return to Cuba. I hope to see Fidel Castro again, who, in addition to being a great statesman, is a great friend."[250] Again, these words seem genuine. One suspects that he would have been keen to meet up with Castro again and to quiz him about the ongoing revolutionary process. Perhaps he was looking forward to another helicopter ride around the Zapata swamp.

There is, however, one scarcely mentioned and yet potentially significant indication that Sartre had grave misgivings about Castro. Ian Birchall, in his book *Sartre against Stalinism*, writes about Sartre's reaction to Guevara's death: "When Che Guevara was killed in Bolivia, Sartre insisted that the body photographed was not Che, and that Guevara had been killed by Castro in Havana for having criticised the Castroite bureaucracy."[251] This is an astonishing statement. Birchall cites as source *Mardi chez Sartre: Un Hébreu à Paris, 1967–1980* by Ely Ben Gal, a French Jewish historian, who does not cite any source for the statement. Once again we are plunged into the murky world of conspiracy and speculation.

That Castro had encouraged Guevara to leave Cuba and to export the revolution globally is a compelling case, detailed in the three critical Guevara biographies of Anderson (1997), Castañeda (1998) and

Taibo II (1999). That there was tension between Castro and Guevara is similarly compelling, indicated by Guevara's farewell letter to Castro. That Castro was responsible for Guevara's death is not a compelling case with, to my eyes, very flaky evidence. That the body photographed in the schoolhouse in La Higuera was not Guevara is nonsense. It has been scrutinised so many times over the decades, even being compared to masterpieces of painting. If Sartre had suggested it, he may likely have been in one of his periodic states of mental agitation. He was certainly deeply upset by news of the death of Guevara, as indicated by his statement that Guevara was "the most complete human being of our age."[252]

If Sartre had indeed suggested that Castro was responsible for Guevara's death, then it would suggest that he may have been equally open to the possibility of conspiracy behind Cienfuegos' death (remembering that he and Beauvoir were in Havana on the anniversary of his death), and that his declaration of friendship with Castro in 1968 concealed a deep mistrust of the man. Ian Birchall, responding to my email, did not know Ben Gal's source. Ben Gal died in 2015. And so the matter rests.

The year of the Congreso Cultural de La Habana, 1968, represents a clear divergence of perspective between Sartre and Castro. The hopes for reform in Czechoslovakia that began in January as the Prague Spring were obliterated in August when the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact allies invaded the country. Sartre denounced the invasion and, along with Beauvoir and countless others, formally broke with the Communist Party. Fidel Castro praised the invasion—albeit as he later puts it, "sadly"—claiming that the regime of Dubček "was headed towards a counter-revolutionary situation, towards capitalism and the arms of imperialism."[253] The positions of Sartre and Castro reveal profoundly differing political visions that must have been unsettling for Sartre given his recent claims of close friendship.

And 1968 was also the year in which the problems began in earnest between the writer Heberto Padilla and the Cuban state, a quarrel that has become known as the Padilla Affair and which would lead to Sartre and Beauvoir's public denunciation in 1971.[254]

Sartre had met Padilla in 1960 and had responded to his questions in the conference in the *Lunes* offices. In 1968 Padilla's volume of poetry *Fuera del Juego* won UNEAC's Julián del Casal poetry prize. UNEAC's president felt that Padilla's work did not merit the award, nor did the

play *Siete contra Tebas* by Antón Arrufat (whom Sartre also met) merit the theatre award. Padilla, meanwhile, had criticised Lisandro Otero (one of Sartre's travelling companions and translators) and had praised Guillermo Cabrera Infante (who arranged the *Lunes* gathering with Sartre and who was now in exile and *persona non grata*.) Eventually, Padilla's work was published but with a prologue condemning it as "ideologically contrary" to the revolution, and criticising Padilla for his friendship with Cabrera Infante. Padilla was removed from his post at the university.

The upshot of this rather typically Cuban battle of insult and praise, alliance and rupture—in some respects similar to the *PM* case that led to the library meetings in 1961—was that in January 1971 Padilla and his wife Belkis Cuza Malé were arrested on charges of "actividades subversivas" against the government. Padilla was later brought before an assembly at UNEAC where he publicly renounced his counterrevolutionary activities, begged forgiveness and named other writers as likewise guilty of subversion. This *autocrítica* was immediately perceived as coerced and redolent of Stalinist processes, and elicited protest from erstwhile supporters of the revolution.

An open letter to Fidel Castro was published in *Le Monde*, and another later in the *New York Review of Books*, signed by Sartre and Beauvoir alongside Italo Calvino, Julio Cortázar, Carlos Franqui, Carlos Fuentes, Gabriel Garcia Márquez, Juan and Luis Goytisolo, Octavio Paz, Alain Jouffroy, Alberto Moravia, Maria Vargas Llosa and many other prominent intellectuals. Central to their concerns were that the resistance to "the criminal blockade imposed on Cuba by North American imperialism" was weakened by "the use of repressive measures against intellectuals and writers who have exercised the right of criticism within the revolution," which in turn "can only have deeply negative repercussions among the anti-imperialist forces of the entire world, and most especially of Latin America, for which the Cuban Revolution is a symbol and a banner."[255]

As was intended, the letter provoked heated debate in numerous newspapers, with supporters and detractors loudly proclaiming their position. Most significantly, Castro provided his own response in the First National Congress of Education and Culture in April 1971: "*señores* bourgeois intellectuals and agents of the CIA … you are not welcome in Cuba. Cuba's door is definitely, definitively and eternally closed to

you!"[256] Customarily, the transcript of the speech includes the rapturous applause. The message could not have been clearer.

Castro does not name Sartre or Beauvoir in the speech, but he refers to "shameless pseudo-leftists who earn their laurels in Paris, London or Rome" and repeats "Paris" moments later. Might he have had Sartre in mind, his former friend? There is a striking irony that the hard-nosed Sartre, self-professed enemy of imperialism and the bourgeoisie, long-time critic of the United States, might have been likened to a bourgeois agent of the CIA. The insult seems quite funny. In response to international pressure the Cuban government released the embittered Padilla from jail and he left Cuba for the United States in 1979.

Around the time of the Padilla affair Sartre held a series of interviews with John Gerassi, and he examines in depth the conflicting internal and external forces pulling the revolution one way and another. Overall his tone is nostalgic, recalling those "honeymoon" days when the bearded youths blew open the old system and set about establishing what he hoped would be the new, fairer and more just model. In April 1971, for example, he tells Gerassi: "Our talks with Fidel and especially Che were great, and very inspirational. But it didn't last long. The repression to hide the inefficiency became so pervasive. Revolutionaries inevitably become guilty of the same crimes as those they overthrow, and that's more depressing even than de Gaulle."[257] He also commented on the situation of Padilla: "You don't arrest and jail those who disagree with you and charge them with being responsible for such beginner's mistakes, as Cuba did. Or arrest its intelligentsia because they criticize the government, great writers and poets, like Padilla, for example."[258]

In December 1978 Sartre and Beauvoir published, along with Michel Foucault, Octavio Paz, Norman Mailer and others, an open letter in the *New York Review of Books* against the imprisonment of Cuban gynaecologist and campaigner Dr. Martha Frayde entitled "In a Cuban Prison." Once again international pressure was instrumental in securing Frayde's release, and she left Cuba in 1980 as part of the Mariel boatlift.

The rupture was complete. Neither Sartre nor Beauvoir ever did return to Cuba.

In one of his many interviews between 2003 and 2005 with Ignacio Ramonet, Fidel Castro recalls his encounter with Sartre and Beauvoir: "I met Sartre when he came through here in 1960. He came with Simone Beauvoir. I saw them very little; I met them, we talked, I'd have liked to have had more time to talk with them. He wrote a friendly book

about Cuba, *Huracán sobre el azúcar*, a warm report for a Paris daily on the early years of the Revolution."[259] By all accounts they spent a lot of time together in 1960. According to Beauvoir he was eager to catch up with them on their October visit; and Castro, we recall, drew on his lengthy conversations with Sartre in his meetings with the intellectuals in 1961. It is interesting, therefore, that Castro should reflect that regrettably he "saw them very little." This hazy memory may be a strategy of sublimating his post-Padilla attack on Sartre as traitor, counterrevolutionary and bedfellow of the CIA.

Although they had been influential in the 1960s—Sartre was, for example, an influence on Edmundo Desnoes' 1965 novel *Memorias del subdesarrollo*—he and Beauvoir were excluded from the official story following the fracas of Padilla and the ensuing period of cultural austerity of the early 1970s, a period labelled by Ambrosio Fornet, who lived it, as *el quinquenio gris*, the grey five years (though always referred to as a decade.)[260] Their books were not printed and distributed, and their names were not evoked in congresses, conferences, speeches, lectures nor battles of ideas.

Beauvoir, in addition to signing the open letters in defence of Padilla and Frayde, expressed her misgivings about the treatment of homosexuals in Cuba. The translator Anthony Kerrigan, who was born and brought up in Cuba, published in 1988 an account of the important books prohibited to Cubans, amongst which he focuses on Beauvoir:

> Why should the women of Cuba, presumably all now feminist, be unable to read Simone de Beauvoir's famous manifesto-tract and world best-seller *The Second Sex*? … when she found out the facts from her homosexual friends, she uttered a somewhat weird witticism: "Cuba has no Jews, it has homosexuals instead." … Her remark, once it appeared in the world press, was enough to cause her books to disappear in Cuba. She was no longer a "Friend of the Revolution." End of stocks and sales. The same fate befell her mate, Sartre.[261]

Kerrigan's article explores many other writers—including Borges, whom he translated—unavailable to Cubans. Curiously, Heberto Padilla attributes the homosexual/Jew analogy to Sartre.[262] Perhaps both Beauvoir and Sartre said it.

The influence of Sartre on Cuban literature and poetry in the 1960s was strong but tapered off as Sartre and Beauvoir entered the list of

prohibited writers such as Mario Vargas Llosa and Cabrera Infante. However, explains Zuleika Cruz in her assessment of Sartre's influence in Cuba over the decades, Sartre does pop up sporadically. For example, in a tale published by UNEAC in 1994, entitled "Umbral," Cuban author Rolando Sánchez Mejías imagines a dialogue in 1960 between the tale's Cuban protagonist and Sartre and Beauvoir. Sartre forlornly predicts that the Cuban writers will suffer state persecution: Sartre asks the writer: "Have you writers thought about how you will confront the machinery of state? I'm referring to a *praxis*. If not, in the end you'll be fucked. Yes, in the end you'll be fucked."[263] Retrospective as this tale might be, given Beauvoir's dour memories of the visit in October 1960 it is certainly plausible that dialogues such as this did occur.

Leonardo Padura depicts in his 1997 novel *Máscaras* (*Havana Red* in translation) an old gay playwright and theatre director called El Marqués talking with Sartre in Paris in the 1960s. In the novel Sartre pulled strings to have a gay Cuban man released from a Paris prison. The characterisation of Sartre seems appropriate: active, agitating, supporting the oppressed and in particular, nostalgic for Cuba whilst critical of the Cuban authorities.

Castro's reflections with Ramonet in 2005 coincide with the centenary of Sartre's birth and a renewed interest in Cuba in Sartre, his work and his impact. On that year a flurry of articles and books appeared reappraising his position within the history of the revolution, many of which have been invaluable for this study. In addition to the personal recollections of working and travelling with Sartre by Otero and Sarusky, a significant Cuban publication of 2005 was Eduardo Torres Cuevas' edited volume containing both a re-edition of Sartre's Cuba articles in Spanish and material related to the Congreso Cultural of 1968. The volume also contains chapters by different scholars considering the presence of Sartre in Cuba both in the 1960s and in the present.

And so, three decades after Sartre's star had fallen in Cuba, Sartre was once again being debated and published in Cuba.[264]

Were the *France-Soir* Articles Propaganda?

Sartre's self-imposed role was not simply to announce his stand but to reveal Cuba.[265]

In the light of this wider historical and biographical context, how might we respond to some of the criticisms and accusations levelled at Sartre for his *France-Soir* articles on Cuba? Is he guilty as charged?

Ronald Aronson decries the jumble of reportage, personal opinion and "invented dialogue and action,"[266] suggesting that Sartre was blinded by his own wishful thinking about what was really happening around him. I do not share Aronson's perspective. The articles buzz with the energy that Sartre and Beauvoir experienced in Cuba and, whilst spurred by the demands of glossy journalism, they are not puff pieces. Yes they are opinionated, yet I sense Sartre's judgment presented in quite lucid terms. Where there is anger there is cause. Where there is invective there is rationale. Where there is praise there is (generally) justification.

The *France-Soir* articles, Aronson argues, "were composed as a journalistic report, which on tactical grounds concealed the full extent of their author's political identification with the Cuban Revolution."[267] Again, I do not sense that. Sartre made very clear his political identification. He opposed colonialism. He saw the United States as colonial in Cuban affairs from 1898 onwards. He opposed crony capitalism. He supported Fidel Castro. He supported the agrarian reform. He supported the revolution. He concealed nothing.

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Bernard-Henri Lévy unforgivingly calls the articles "the crazy, incomprehensible texts" and condemns Sartre's "idolatry" of Castro.[268] I find the articles perfectly comprehensible; indeed, they stand out as being far clearer and more concise than, for example, the first part of *Critique*, and certainly more comprehensible than Lévy's book on Sartre. Did Sartre idolise Castro? No, he praised him. An idol is created for worship, and Sartre was no worshipper. I sense that Sartre never idolised anyone. Yes, he is effusive in his defence of Castro. Where he praises him, he does so as response to aspects of Castro that Sartre genuinely seems to have found impressive.

For example, Sartre writes quite breathlessly that Castro "is at once the island, the men, the livestock, the plants, and the land, and a particular islander. In this individual the national situations will always be passionately lived, in fury or in pleasure."[269] Yet in context this comment seems more balanced, as it concludes Sartre's description of Castro befriending two visiting wealthy US fishermen in the Zapata swamp, not missing the opportunity to promote the revolution. "We thought that he was amusing himself with a new fishing rod when he was actually winning a skirmish in the war of tourism."[270]

The comment also comes after spending time with Castro on the road, watching wayside folk call out to him "Fidel!" and haul him into urgent local affairs, describing a *campesino* haranguing him for not taking greater personal protection. "'You rash fool!' he told Fidel with anger. 'Protect your life. It belongs to us, not to you!'"[271] This may have some "invented dialogue" as Aronson suggests, but it fits the historical bill perfectly.

Others consider the journalistic nature of the texts as somehow betraying Sartre's more studious nature. Annie Cohen-Solal even calls the articles "unabashed pro-Cuban propaganda."[272] Were they really propaganda?

Yes. Absolutely. That was the intention. Propaganda need not mean deception. Propaganda is the art of persuasion. The words affect. Sartre wanted his reports to be not so much *about* the revolution as *part* of the revolution. He chose *France-Soir* precisely because of the large and likely unsympathetic readership. He wanted his reports to be widely read. He wanted to encourage support for the Cuban Revolution.

Sartre's objective was to explain the revolution, to demonstrate its deep roots in the rich, bloody and obstinately fecund soil of US-Cuban relations. This is not travel writing for lazy Sunday morning reading

over coffee, even if the articles accompanying Sartre's in *France-Soir* covered the Tour de France.[273] Sartre's Cuba articles are dispatches from the front, short and punchy like telegrams, urging response, action, engagement.

The narrative is structured to illustrate, step by step, this process of revolution. It was all about sugar. The old system was rotten and it had been for a long time. The politicians were in the pay of the *latifundistas* who were in the pay of US business interests. Sugar still enslaved, just as it had done under the Spanish.

The police and the army protected the elites. Havana was awash with the gangster's dollar, all of it funnelling up through the high-ranking Cubans, lining their pockets, before returning to the United States. Even utilities and construction were in on the game. Flying into Havana from the provinces, Sartre sits up with the pilot, who eagerly shows him the lights of the city: "I saw the lights appear, but I said to myself, 'It's foreign gold that's shining.'"[274] It was a racket, neatly designed and running (more or less) smoothly, oiled with the slick ideology: *no sugar, no country*. The county was diabetic, sickened by sugar. It was a liver-fattened Strasbourg goose.

The Cubans had internalised the ideology, and thus could not even see it as an ideology, and in his unpublished notes he reveals his Cuban friends resigned to racism and corruption. "The future is dead," they told him. "[T]he same days roll on."[275]

Yet Castro, this "far-off archer who was shooting arrows in the mountains,"[276] rides down from the cloudy peaks and demonstrates that things can be changed, that human nature is just a story and that the story can be rewritten. The rebels in Sartre's account refused to perform their established roles in the established order. They abandoned their professions and headed for the hills. They encouraged the peasants to abandon their servitude and join the struggle. They tore up the script. They took power, and when Sartre and Beauvoir visited they were flush with victory and animated, if a little bedazzled, by the job ahead of them. Stirring times. "It was impossible not to love Cuba then," writes Lanzmann. "[A]ll those who made the trip were equally enthusiastic – and Sartre was no exception."[277]

Sartre fully accepted that the revolution had come about through violence. He had been working through these issues in his articles about Algeria and in the first part of *Critique*. This was the violence of resistance, the response of the oppressed. The United States did to Cuba

what European colonialism had done and was doing in Asia, Africa and the Americas. The colonised were fighting back. It was inevitable, "the violence of the boomerang," Sartre calls it in the preface to Fanon. The violence of rebellion is just, he argues. The system cannot be reformed but destroyed. "La révolution," he writes in *Ouragan*, "c'est une médecine de cheval."

He made clear that you cannot sit on the fence over matters of colonial aggression. You cannot denounce the violence of the Algerian resistance without becoming a colonist. To condemn the violence is to support the occupation.

The revolution was tremendous improvisation, fuelled, Sartre implies, by those luminous revolutionary values of *liberté, egalité et fraternité*. His message was compelling: Régis Debray prickled with indignation and headed off to Cuba, wrote *Révolution dans la révolution?* and later became entangled in Guevara's Bolivian adventure. This was the sort of reaction Sartre hoped to inspire.

It is for these reasons, I surmise, that he kept hidden any misgivings he may have had about the revolution and about Castro. Perhaps he kept them hidden even from himself. If I interpret the alarming vision of huge spiders and suffocating vegetation as cousins of the lobsters and crabs, which, he explained, generally accompanied a sense of fear and doom,[278] then I can suggest that he felt such fear in Cuba, a forewarning perhaps that the terror would come. The explosion of *La Coubre* was evidence for him, as was the Bay of Pigs the following year, and he later told both Lanzmann and Gerassi that he had warned Fidel of this forthcoming terror (as if Fidel didn't know).

He knew that external pressures would come, as they were already coming, but he also sensed that external pressures might become the *raison d'etre* of the revolution: "If the United States didn't exist, the Cuban revolution would perhaps invent it. It is the United States which preserves Cuba's freshness and originality."[279] He also sensed that external pressure would provoke internal pressure; that the terror would also come from within. Lisandro Otero recalls him warning Castro that sooner or later all revolutions devour their children. The crisis of threatening spider-like vegetation was perhaps derived from anxiety in Castro's company. In such a way he mentions only *en passant* Castro's growled threat to the woman of the broken *frigidaires* on the beach, Castro's stumbling over his own bureaucracy, the priest's willingness to

be shot if unsuccessful in the mining venture, and Castro's fishing with a shotgun. There is a menacing violence to all these sub-narratives.

Lanzmann makes a compelling statement on this matter. That eventful year of 1960, "Sartre published *Critique de la raison dialectique*, with its trenchant analyses of the fleeting, liberating moment in every revolution – what he calls '*la groupe en fusion*' – followed ineluctably by '*fraternité-terreur*' – which in turn disintegrates to become institutionalized suspicion, bureaucracy and dictatorship. And yet Sartre wanted to help the Cuban revolution and make it known to as wide a public as possible."[280]

Sartre's enthusiasm was, in this sense, to draw sympathetic attention on Cuba to prevent the possible *fraternité-terreur*. His repeated declarations that social justice guided the revolution were thus an attempt to make social justice the guiding principle. By stating repeatedly that the revolution was direct democracy, he hoped to encourage direct democracy. Franqui made him acknowledge his statesman-like stature in Cuba, and so he assumed that responsibility and hammered out his articles, wishing for his words to participate in the production of the political reality. It seems to me that Sartre was motivated by the idea that if he could encourage sympathy and support for the Cuban revolutionaries, the likelihood of invasion from the United States would diminish and so would the likelihood that the revolution would turn on its own people.

His ceaseless repetition of "Castro est le peuple" thus becomes a spell, an incantation, a magic word formula to make something happen. He fervently desired that Castro would represent the will of the people and so wrote his fervour into his reports. Writing as praxis. Writing as action. Writing as activism.

Beauvoir was perhaps a little more candid, writing about the revolution as "a mass of seething and slightly confused hopes. It wouldn't last forever, but it was a comforting sight."[281] She appears more reserved about the Cuban adventure than Sartre, although many turbulent years separated the trip from the writing of her memoirs.

Cabrera Infante claimed that Sartre was hoodwinked by Castro, and that his knowledge of Cuba derived from "accepted ideas emanating from the professional propagandists of the Cuban Revolution rather than from Cuban realities."[282] But he would say that; from his London exile Cabrera Infante was bashing out angry letters to *The Times*, *The Daily* and *Sunday Telegraph*, *London Review of Books*, *El País*, *ABC*, *Le Monde*

and other organs, lashing the whip at anyone who praised the Cuban Revolution in any manner. Graham Greene's praise of Castro, he argues, was like Ezra Pound's praise of Benito Mussolini.[283] Susan Sontag he berates as a "leftist dilettante."[284] LeRoi Jones was more dandy than revolutionary.[285] Cortázar "spoke French with a Castroist accent."[286] Hemingway was old and sick and befuddled by the revolution.[287] García Márquez was a fellow traveller, enthralled by the tyrant.[288] Jane Fonda, Françoise Sagan, Michelangelo Antonioni, Nancy Cunard and even Bertrand Russell were, in Cabrera Infante's stinging rebuke, deceived by "Chic Guevara."[289] Sartre was a "cockeyed seer" guilty of "primitive ignorance" about Cuba,[290] whilst Sartre and Beauvoir "strive to make guinea pigs of those Cubans who are not already guinea worms."[291] They were all "closet commissars," guilty of ignoring the Cuban reality.[292]

Cabrera Infante was uncompromising. But he had himself been energetically behind the revolution. He had been brought up by communist parents (founders of the town's Communist Party) and had helped in the urban revolutionary struggles.[293] He had been publishing revolutionary material as editor of *Lunes*. He must have agreed with much of what Sartre wrote about Cuba, for that was his political reality at the time he and Sartre met. So his rebuke of Sartre is, in part, self-rebuke for his own revolutionary history, lamentation at the separation between himself and the revolution in which he had participated. The anger comes from a deep wound.

Sartre was likewise uncompromising, a trait visible throughout his life. In this way he calmly accepted the violence of the judicial processes and tribunals following the rebels' victory in 1959—qualifying his position by calling the Batistianos "scum."[294] In this way he calmly accepted the twenty-year prison sentence of Huber Matos. In this way he regretted the Soviet withdrawal of missiles during the crisis of October 1962. In this way he justified violent acts against French and Algerian citizens by the National Liberation Front (FLN).

Sartre at times in *Ouragan* presents complex dynamics as simple binaries. In claiming that Castro's guerrillas held "all the hopes of a nation,"[295] and in depicting the July 26 party as the only effective revolutionary movement, he overlooked the many separate yet allied urban networks. He presents diverse rebel factions as naturally gravitating towards the July 26 event and towards Castro with no hint of coercion or resignation. He paints a picture of a united, rural, peasant,

revolution fully commensurate with *guerrilleros*' story told and retold throughout the decades. Castro is equated all too readily with the will of the people, and thus resistance to Castro is smoothly linked with resistance to the Revolution.

Sartre was so hopeful that the revolution was to be organic, bottomled, free from ideology and just, that to convince others he had to be convinced himself. Doubts were thus sublimated. His praise of Castro is at times a little unhinged, especially in his private notes, demonstrating perhaps that he is forcing the issue a little hard, overcompensating his confidence to silence his own doubts.

Was he accommodating any party line? Was he keeping his Cuban hosts happy with the *France-Soir* articles? (After all, Fidel Castro did comment to Ramonet years later that he had been impressed with Sartre's accounts.) I do not believe so. Yes, his examination of Cuban history tallied comfortably with the revolution's, but that is why Sartre was in Cuba. Had he had an understanding of Cuba's colonial and neo-colonial history radically different from Castro's then he would not have been invited. Had he sung the praises of Machado and Batista then Castro would have ditched him beside the road soon into their tour of the island. Sartre's politics were known in Cuba. This was why *Lunes* published him before, during and after his stay. That is why *Sartre visita a Cuba* was well read in Cuba in the early 1960s, before Sartre later made public his critique of the revolution's cultural policies and his books disappeared from view.

"For twenty years," Franqui told Sartre in Paris in 1959, "you have been crying in the desert that things are not as they should be. Well, they are going as they should be in Cuba. … You have written about liberty and justice. Well then, cease writing or come and see liberty and justice in Cuba."[296] Sartre, already familiar with Cuba's tough history, arrived and witnessed precisely what Franqui had promised. Indeed, considering his nail biting on the plane to Havana, as recorded in the *Appendice*, it seems that he was more impressed than he had expected to be. Sartre writes of the Cubans who rallied behind Castro during the guerrilla campaign: "it was necessary to begin by saying yes. Yes to Castro."[297] Sartre likewise appraised the historical problem and the depth of the despair, overcame his own reservations and said *Oui, à Castro. Oui à cet archer lointain*. Sartre pledged his support to the revolution.

Would that more countries could do this, he suggests. The revolution should inspire folk elsewhere, not just the colonised but also the

colonisers. In the Fanon preface, Sartre was insistent that the European was also being "decolonised. By which I mean to say that the *colon* in each and every one of us is being finally excised." Colonialism as a system debases all parties, and thus the readers of Fanon's work should take up the cause of the Algerians and of the colonised everywhere and in so doing decolonise themselves.

For Sartre's reports went beyond Castro and beyond Cuba. At the heart of all Sartre's work on Cuba, writes John Ireland, was France.[298] "In every way," Ireland writes of the *Appendice*, "De Gaulle serves as a negative counterpart for the portrait of the Cuban leader that Sartre painstakingly details."[299] Ireland presents a compelling case here, and his position serves to contextualise and to understand the strong currents moving in Sartre at the time of his trip to Cuba. The qualities that Sartre saw as lacking in de Gaulle were present in Castro—youth, energy, rapport with the people, enthusiasm for projects of renewal and, importantly, natural power.

The matter of youth, in particular, is reflected in his other writing project while in Cuba, the preface to Nizan's *Aden Arabie*, in which he praises youth and the rebellion of youth fulsomely; indeed, Hayman writes that Sartre "had begun to formulate reasons for feeling hostile to almost everyone in France except the young."[300] It is the youth of Castro, Guevara and the rebels that sings out from Sartre's articles, and it is the age and conservatism that characterise his critique of de Gaulle. In this sense, Castro becomes the vehicle for Sartre's anti-Gaullism. The notes are as much about France as about Cuba.

Ireland also speculates that "these pages reflect a quandary for Sartre which sheds some light, I think, on why the projected book was finally abandoned."[301] We return to the initial question, therefore: Why did Sartre bury the books?

Sartre's Other Book About Cuba

Sartre very soon condemned the worst aspects of Castrism. The Cuban fiesta was over, his eyes were rapidly opened.[302]

In emphasising Castro's strength and leadership so as to contrast with de Gaulle's weakness, Ireland suggests, Sartre was over-investing in Castro, making claims that he would later regret. This may be so, but it is significant that whilst changing his opinions on Cuba as the decade progressed into the next, Sartre never did retract any of his statements about Cuba or Castro, nor did he seek to amend any of the prior publications. He simply abandoned the promised book and allowed the *France-Soir* articles to slip into the shadows.

He buried two book projects: the French edition of the *France-Soir* articles and the proposed larger book on Cuba. I find far more compelling reasons for not publishing the second book, if, indeed, it is the case that the *Appendice* constitutes the draft material for it.[303] In the *Appendice* we find the unhinged laudations of Castro and the unforgiving account of Matos. Here also is revealed his anxiety at the start of the trip and his apprehension at what he might encounter. Nevertheless, there is nothing in the *Appendice* that is not eminently Sartrean in its tone or measure, nothing that would seem unlike his many other punchy and controversial political or philosophical positions.

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The *France-Soir* articles, likewise, contain nothing that would warrant Sartre's own later repudiation. Yes, he is effusive in his praise, and yes he makes some awkward statements about, for example, the lack of elections, but everything is lucidly argued and coherent within its context. My sense is not that he considered his texts problematic in their content, but that their subject matter altered so quickly as to render aspects of the text obsolete.

In the 1972 interview, John Gerassi asks Sartre "By the way, your book on Cuba has never appeared in French. Why?" "It wasn't meant to," replies Sartre. "I had broken relations with *L'Express*, and there was no *Libération* yet, right? This is 1960, so I asked, via Lanzmann, to ask Lazareff if he wanted articles describing my trip. Sure, he said, and printed them all, eighteen [sic] I think, mostly very favourable to Cuba."[304] His answer to Gerassi's question is splendidly vague; the book was simply not meant to be.

His experience in Cuba did lead him to perceive "direct democracy." He did perceive Castro as representative of the people. Like everyone else gathered at the solemn funeral for the victims of *La Coubre*, he did believe the accident to have been sabotage. *Lunes* was thriving and the artists and writers he met were producing challenging, liberating, politically engaged art. The agrarian reform was sweeping through the land, busting apart the old *latifundia* system. The students he spoke with were engaged and fired up. Guevara and his men were burning the midnight oil, drawing up new procedures and new structures. The revolution was freewheeling, energetic, energising, chaotic, exciting and violent. It was more or less free from ideology. It was, at this precise stage in history, just as Franqui had promised.

Ouragan sur le sucre has been called "a vividly populist history of the revolution."[305] Wall suggests that the fundamental flaw in Sartre's articles was the enthusiasm that he showed towards a leader and a movement that would soon display oppressive social policies that Sartre had long critiqued in the Soviet Union. "Once and once only," writes Wall, "did Sartre allow himself to be carried away."[306] Is this a fair statement? Was he carried away, or was he, as I would argue, at this particular stage of the revolution justified in his enthusiasm? Should we condemn Sartre for having hope in these long-haired, bearded rebels? I think not. Was his vividly populist portrayal of Cuban history was in any way misguided and misleading? I see no historical inaccuracy, no untruth, no deception.

Was his account moulded to fit his political sympathies? Yes, and that is why we might justifiably call the articles propaganda.

The menacing side he detected in Castro became later clearer and more prominent. Soviet-inspired ideological structures were being constructed across the political and cultural landscape. Things tightened up considerably, even by October of the same year, that Sartre doubtless felt that his texts were no longer relevant. These are the reasons, I conjecture, that the books did not appear.

The *France-Soir* Articles Today

Man is capable of changing the conditions of his life. But he cannot change whatever he wishes and however he wishes; indeed, only by changing himself can he change objective needs.[307]

Where do we go from here? Why have I considered it necessary to shine the light once again on a neglected series of articles from nearly sixty years ago? Why bring them in from the cold?

Sartre's articles are excellent analyses of Cuban history, and as such are useful additional material for understanding Spanish colonial rule, the Wars of Independence, the intervention of the United States, the carefully structured sugar economy and the forces that led to revolution. Sartre does a particularly good job in emphasising that Castro's revolution really began in the struggles for independence in the nineteenth century, thus showing the historical roots of the revolution.

In this capacity Sartre's reports were influential. The Spanish and Portuguese editions sold widely in Latin America. A 1962 report entitled *Cuba and the Rule of Law* by the International Commission of Jurists, a non-governmental organization reporting to the United Nations Economic and Social Council, refers to Sartre's texts and cites his description of the nation as a "diabetic monster."[308] I sense, owing to their similarity, that Russell borrowed from Sartre's texts in his presentation of Cuban history in *Unarmed Victory*.

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I also feel that Sartre's texts have been over-enthusiastically maligned. Whilst I sympathise and agree with many of the criticisms raised, I feel that by contextualising and examining in greater depth, there is greater subtlety and nuance to his accounts than has generally been acknowledged.

Ouragan sur le sucre and the *Appendice* are fascinating accounts of a fascinating moment in history. Events proceeded so quickly in those early days of the revolution that Sartre's articles and notes constitute a valuable testimony to a period of radical change before the momentous events of the Bay of Pigs, the Soviet alliance and the Missile Crisis. Although in this book my focus is on Sartre, my concerns reach beyond Sartre and de Beauvoir and extend to other non-Cuban intellectuals who were drawn to Cuba, visited Cuba and publicly responded to the revolution in these early days: Graham Greene, C. Wright Mills, Saul Bellow, Susan Sontag, LeRoi Jones, José Yglesias, Julio Cortázar, Octavio Paz, Pablo Neruda, Gabriel García Márquez, Laurence Ferlinghetti, Allen Ginsberg and, to a lesser yet no less intriguing way, Ernest Hemingway.

In their writings they engaged with concepts of revolution, politically, philosophically and aesthetically. They expressed support for the Cuban Revolution, as the rebel forces grew towards victory in 1959 and afterwards. They appreciated connections between their ideas and images of revolution, and the concrete political expression of the Cuban Revolution. They also saw cracks. Their response to the Cuban Revolution over the 1960s was reflected in their evolving aesthetic, political and philosophical vision of revolution. In many cases the cracks became so wide that they were unbridgeable. Their works develop in sympathy with their shifting visions of Cuba. I am fascinated by how these disparate writers grappled with the emerging tensions and contradictions, how many signed the open letters during the Padilla affair, how others, like García Márquez and Cortázar, remained loyal—if critical—supporters of the revolution throughout.

In all cases, this period of rapid transformation in the early years is presented as a process of resistance to powerful geo-political forces of the era. The revolution in Cuba is consistently perceived as a practice of sovereignty and self-determination against forces of neo-colonialism and imperialism. Sartre's texts, like these others, are interesting windows onto that particular moment of history.

The world is very different today from how it was in 1960; and yet it is also very similar. We have different words today to describe

the geo-political processes opposed by the Cuban revolutionaries in their youth: neo-liberalism, free-market economics, globalised corporate power—just as they had different words in the 1950s and 1960s to describe turn-of-the-century gunboat diplomacy. The Cuban Wars of Independence of the nineteenth century evolved into the Cuban Revolution. Systems of the Cold War have morphed into the Wars on Drugs and Terror. Sartre's analysis of the power of US-controlled sugar economy in Cuba throughout the first five decades of the twentieth century might be translated into a critique of the imposition of free market trade policies today.

Sartre's description of oligarchy and corruption is equally valid in so many geographical contexts today; indeed, we could describe today a state of global corporatocracy undreamed of by Sartre. His presentation of history is a compelling critique of colonial power and of capital's insatiable desire to grow and to build supporting systems around this desire to grow. Consequently, by studying Sartre and other writers who responded to such forces, tensions and crises sixty years ago, we can better our means of responding to such forces, tensions and crises today.

The cynicism of Cabrera Infante, for example, is a useful hermeneutic to expose propaganda and peel away layers of lies and deceit. But he was so bitter, so untrusting of anything that smacked of Castroism or revolution that his own position becomes itself ideological. Ferlinghetti, LeRoi Jones, Ginsberg and Sontag, for example, express the many shared aspects of the radical, countercultural voices of the 1950s and 1960s United States and the Cuban Revolution, whilst exploring the tensions and discords. Sartre allowed himself to be enthused by the moment whilst remaining alert. Yet his alertness does not prevent fervour and even joy; and if in interviews in the 1970s he addresses some of the more troublesome aspects of the revolution, he nevertheless does not see his support as having been misplaced, nor does he deny his hope at the time for genuine radical change. "It was great, really great to be in Cuba in the '60s," he tells Gerassi.[309]

He enthused that old systems of oppression can be broken, that structures of inequality can be dismantled, that power can be redistributed, that ideology is not destiny, that, in his own words, "Man is capable of changing the conditions of his life. But he cannot change whatever he wishes and however he wishes; indeed, only by changing *himself* can he change objective needs."[310] This is a tremendous statement, reflected in

his enthusiasm for a revolution that he saw genuinely encouraging such personal transformation, politically, socially and, importantly, artistically.

The texts are not only about a particular episode of Cuba's history. The issues can be extrapolated. Sartre was writing about the modern world. Systems that exploit and impoverish people and land, cabals of bankers, industrialists and media barons directing politicians, directing politics, ensuring the protection of the military, the police and the judiciary.

His examination of ideology that he presented to the university students is brilliant. The question was important to him, and so, writing from hotel rooms, bars and cafes and the back of Fidel's car, he dashed off a punchy essay about ideology and revolution that he published in *Lunes* whilst still in Cuba. What is an ideology? A system that accepts no challenge to its reign. "Ideology tries to discourage rebellion against the social order by presenting the latter as the expression of a natural order." Ideology is "misery in the form of a destiny."[311] His text is praise but also warning—be wary of ideologies, they will corrupt the revolution. Ideologies are prisons. "Ideologies are not what this century lacks."[312]

Ideologies, unfortunately, are not what this century lacks either. This is how it was then. This is how it is now. That is Sartre's ultimate message in *Ouragan sur le sucre*. The story is written by actors. Ideology is simply story. History is not destiny. The status quo, however awful, however corrupt and however seemingly unassailable, *can* be changed.

I take certain inspiration from these words.

Notes

1. 'Vous n'avez pas le droit d'ignorer la Révolution cubaine.' Carlos Franqui to Sartre, Paris, autumn 1959 (Sartre 2008: 181). All translations from French to English from *Appendice* are my own.
2. Sartre 2009: 175. He explains more fully earlier in the Gerassi interview: "No, not until I went to Central America and especially Mexico [did he understand U.S. politics]. No, Cuba was even worse. In those countries it is impossible not to see the damage that American businesses do, impossible not to understand that American capitalists, aided by their government, defended by the American army, just want to exploit the people living there. And by the way, it is impossible not to understand why American businessmen are racists; they justify their exploitation on the ground that the people of those countries are inferior. That alleviates their consciences" (Sartre 2009: 139).
3. Ammar 2011.
4. Beauvoir 1978: 499.
5. Beauvoir 1978: 499.
6. Beauvoir 1978: 500.
7. Beauvoir 1978: 503.
8. Contat and Rybalka 1974: 346.
9. Annie Cohen-Solal writes: "This is how he wrote *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*: a wild rush of words and juxtaposed ideas, pouring forth during crises of hyper-excitement, under the effect of contradictory drugs, that would zing him up, knock him

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down, or halt him in between … up, down, stop, and so on and so forth in a constant struggle against himself, against his tired body, against time and sleep. Everything in excess. His diet over a period of twenty-four hours included two packs of cigarettes and several pipes stuffed with black tobacco, more than a quart of alcohol—wine, beer, vodka, whisky, and so on—200 milligrams of amphetamines, fifteen grams of aspirin, several grams of barbiturates, plus coffee, tea, rich meals. Heavy doses for a tough man, hyperlucid and nearly impervious to pain, who, however, would occasionally lapse into moments of absence, from which he then promptly re-emerged, ready to assume control, with vivacity and pride" (1991: 374).

10. Hayman 1986: 338.
11. Cohen-Solal 1991: 386.
12. Beauvoir 1978: 501.
13. Sartre 1974: 7.
14. Beauvoir 1978: 502.
15. Beauvoir 1978: 502.
16. Franqui 1981: 134.
17. *Lunes* No. 51, 21 March 1960 (Luis 2003: 12).
18. "In France, from the third to the fifth of our successive Republics, guests were honored, are still honored, for example, by being installed in Rambouillet" (Sartre 1974: 136).
19. Wall 2000: 383.
20. Cohen-Solal 1991: 396.
21. Otero 2005b: 8.
22. Beauvoir recalls: "In Havana, Sartre had often been irritated at having to write this piece [preface to *Aden Arabie*] when there were so many other things to do" (Beauvoir 1978: 511).
23. Beauvoir 1978: 504.
24. Beauvoir 1978: 504.
25. Contat and Rybalka 1974: 379.
26. Sartre 1974: 27.
27. "Au nom des mêmes principes de liberté, nous accueillons aujourd'hui Jean-Paul Sartre—qui doute volontiers de l'indépendance de la presse d'information. Il est libre d'exprimer dans nos colonnes certaines opinions auxquelles nous ne souscrivons pas" (Sartre 2008: 5–6).
28. Aronson 1980: 232.

29. Aronson 1980: 233; Murphy 1996: 32; Paolucci 2007: 246.
30. Cohen-Solal 1991: 403.
31. "The FBI's 'secret' files on Sartre were immediately updated to include an account of the visit and of the philosopher's positive response to the Cuban regime" (Cohen-Solal 1991: 399).
32. Beauvoir 1978: 511.
33. Sartre 2008: 156–223.
34. Paolucci 2007: 249.
35. Cohen-Solal 1991: 398.
36. Sartre 1974: 25.
37. "the country was dying of indigestion from dollars and sugar" (Sartre 1974: 83).
38. "that archipelago of fire against the black glass of the sea" (Sartre 1974: 11).
39. 'I have seen black rivers covering the chest down to the diaphragm" (Sartre 1974: 110).
40. "Simone de Beauvoir and I watched uneasily as the sun went down, a burning tomato over the young tomato plants" (Sartre 1974: 130).
41. Sartre 2005.
42. Sartre 2005.
43. "Qui se souvient aujourd'hui d'un texte de grand écrivain intitulé «Ouragan sur le sucre»? On ne le trouve nulle part, dans aucune maison d'édition, chez aucun libraire, aucun bouquiniste" (Lanzmann 2008: 1). My translation.
44. Sartre 1974: 7.
45. Sartre 1974: 7.
46. I recently wandered the cold lobby of the Hotel Nacional to see if any photos of Sartre were on display. None were. The Nacional's website does have a well-written page dedicated to him on its section of "personalidades"; politicians, film stars, musicians, etc. who have stayed at the hotel: www.hotelnacional-decuba.com/portal/personalidades/jean-paul-sartre.
47. Aronson 1980: 234.
48. Aronson 1980: 234.
49. Aronson 1980: 236.
50. Sartre 1974: 10.
51. Sartre 1974: 9.
52. Sartre 1974: 10.

53. Sartre 1974: 12.
54. Sartre 1974: 13.
55. 'mon pauvre ami, en Amérique latine on fait la révolution tous les ans: c'est leur manière de voter' (Sartre 2008: 180).
56. I tend to temper the exercise of reading *Critique* by treating the chapters as individual essays rather than the book as a whole. "Racism and Colonialism as Praxis and Process," one of the later chapters, is a valuable stand-alone study of how racism is both cause and effect of the colonial enterprise.
57. Hayman 1986: 316.
58. "*Critique* would be of no interest to the general public" (Hayman 1986: 316).
59. Sartre 1974: 23.
60. Sartre 1974: 23.
61. Sartre 1974: 23.
62. Sartre 1974: 25.
63. In the notes of the *Appendice* Sartre refers to the explosion as "cette chanceuse malchance [that fortunate misfortune]" (Sartre 2008: 160).
64. Sartre 1974: 28.
65. Sartre 1974: 26.
66. Sartre 1974: 27.
67. Sartre 2008: 175.
68. "où se trouvait la cause? Sur le sucre je ne sus rien d'autre" (Sartre 2008: 177).
69. Sartre 1974: 78.
70. Sartre 1974: 41.
71. Sartre 2004: xiv.
72. Sartre 2009: 229.
73. "The alienation of the exploited and that of the exploiters are inseparable; in other societies the relation between master and slave … also presupposes a reciprocal conditioning in alienation" (Sartre 2009: 332).
74. Sartre 1974: 21.
75. Sartre 1974: 21.
76. Sartre mistakenly calls it *guaramo*, corrected as *guarapo* in the English and Spanish editions but not in the 2008 French re-edition.
77. Sartre 1974: 125.

78. Sartre 1974: 125. "Au loin, comme une menace — que j'ai retrouvée partout — les buissons, le maquis, prêt à reprendre toute la surface de l'île à la moindre négligence: une invasion d'araignées à l'horizon, on voit leurs pattes immobiles qui attendant" (Sartre 2008: 133).
79. Sartre 2009: 79.
80. Sartre 2009: 79.
81. Sartre 1974: 41.
82. Sartre 1974: 39.
83. Sartre 1974: 26.
84. Sartre 1974: 41.
85. Sartre 1974: 116.
86. Sartre 1974: 42.
87. Sartre 1974: 43.
88. Sartre 1974: 43.
89. Sartre 1974: 50.
90. Sartre 1974: 50.
91. Sartre 1974: 122–123.
92. Sartre 1974: 15.
93. Sartre 1974: 18.
94. "Qu'est-ce que je fous ici? Je me sens le cœur plein de suie. Que vais-je foutre à Cuba? Qu'est-ce qu'un Français peut y foutre? Leurs problèmes ne sont pas les nôtres" (Sartre 2008: 185).
95. "Et si le régime n'allait pas me plaire?" (Sartre 2008: 185).
96. Sartre 1974: 140.
97. Sartre 1974: 135.
98. Sartre 1974: 126.
99. Sartre 1974: 123.
100. Sartre 1974: 129.
101. Sartre 1974: 14.
102. Paige Arthur (2007) reviews three books that take violence in Sartre as their central focus: Bernard-Henri Lévy's *Sartre: The Philosopher of the Twentieth Century*, Ronald Aronson's *Camus & Sartre: The Story of a Friendship and the Quarrel That Ended It*, and Ronald Santoni's *Sartre on Violence: Curiously Ambivalent*. In addition, there are many other works where the issue of violence in Sartre has been extensively debated, notably: *The Cult of Violence* by Jack J Roth; *Camus and Sartre: Crisis and Commitment* by Germaine Brée; *History and the Dialectic*

of Violence by Raymond Aron; *Fanon: A critical reader* ed. by Gordon, Sharpley-Whiting and White; and *Fanon and the crisis of European Man* by Lewis Gordon.

103. Arthur suggests that too much weight has over the years been placed on the Fanon preface as indicative of Sartre's view of violence. She asks why it still drives the debate and concludes that it is simply "the most spectacular, the most publicly disturbing, the most divisive. But do these qualities make it the most paradigmatic? I do not think so" (2007: 235). I agree with her judgement, as it is a powerful text riveted together with hammer-blow statements about terror, resistance and violence. But I would argue that the preface does not stand alone; it owes much to the Cuba articles.
104. Birchall (2005: 257) sums up Sartre's views of complicity: "This text can be read as a glorification of violence only by those who have internalized the values of the existing order to such an extent that they do not perceive the violence inherent in it. They see violence solely in the disruption of that order."
105. The preface, writes Paige Arthur, "is generally unrepresentative of his philosophical views. Rather than a serious work on the ethics of violence, it should be read for what it was: a muckraking, inflammatory text, whose sole basis for existence was to provoke and scandalize French people, via a strategy bound up in a politics of shaming and alarming – not through reason and reflection" (2007: 236).
106. Curiously, none of the three books reviewed by Arthur pays much attention to Sartre's experience in Cuba as being very significant in the development of his thinking about the justification of revolutionary violence. Cuba is scarcely mentioned. Simone de Beauvoir, however, recounts that the trip was the catalysing moment.
107. Beauvoir 1978: 503.
108. Beauvoir 1978: 606.
109. Sartre 2008: 14.
110. Sartre 1974: 14.
111. Sartre 1974: 15.
112. Sartre 2009: 183.
113. 'Then came the foggy day,' Beauvoir recalls, 'when we stood shivering in the stand with Castro, watching the funeral' (Beauvoir 1978: 503).

114. Sartre 1974: 142.
115. Beauvoir 1978: 503.
116. Sartre 2009: 229.
117. Lanzmann 2012: 422.
118. Sartre 2009: 187.
119. Otero 2005b: 8.
120. Sartre 2009: 183. Sartre continues: "as long as Robespierre incorporated the violence of the masses into his terror, he and that terror were popular, as were Cuba's trials and executions of the 375 Batista henchmen. But Robespierre substituted popular terror with juridical terror, and he lost everything, including of course his life. *Did you express this to your Cuban hosts, when you were there?* Oh yes, I told them that they still had their terror in front of them. Meanwhile, it was great, really great to be in Cuba in the '60s" (Sartre 2009: 187).
121. 'Le contrecoup de la Réforme agraire fut la révolte de Matos et de sa garnison' (Sartre 2008: 213).
122. "Il semble plutôt qu'il représentait—quoique soldat de la guerre civile—la fraction la plus à droite du mouvement clandestin. Il semble avoir été de ceux qui souhaitaient la restauration de l'honnêteté politique et du parlementarisme, quelques aménagements pour soulager les pauvres, peut-être la promesse ou même la mise en route d'une réforme agraire modérée" (Sartre 2008: 213).
123. Sartre 2008: 214.
124. "Fuite ou manœuvre, on sut qu'un des conjurés s'était envolé pour les Etats-Unis: dès l'atterrissage, il fit des déclarations incendiaires contre le régime" (Sartre 2008: 213).
125. "Faut-il voir dans cette aurore d'insurrection le premier acte d'une nouvelle guerre civile qui eût conduit Matos à prendre le pouvoir, peut-être avec une aide discrète de l'étranger? … Ou n'était-ce pas, tout simplement, l'acte désespéré d'un groupe qui s'était mis «en flèche», se retournait vers sa classe et s'apercevait qu'elle ne l'avait pas suivi?" (Sartre 2008: 214).
126. Thomas 1971: 1244.
127. Escalante 1995: 32–35.
128. According to Matos (2004: 358) and detailed in Thomas (1971: 1245), the anti-aerial defence from Havana's forts caused injuries and death in the city, which were later falsely attributed to bombs dropped from the plane.

129. "Mais on lui demandait, en somme, une soumission totale et sincère à l'entreprise qui le révoltait. On avait raison: c'était une exigence de la Nation elle-même; l'unité passait avant tout" (Sartre 2008: 214).
130. "Ces résistants sont morts pour la Nation: la Nation c'est Castro, au sommet de l'île" (Sartre 2008: 195).
131. "à l'ordinaire, l'orateur conclut par un appel au calme. Que chacun reste chez soi, la police et l'armée se chargeront du reste" (Sartre 2008: 215).
132. "La justice révolutionnaire plaisante rarement: elle voit la main de l'étranger partout et, en général, elle n'a pas tort" (Sartre 2008: 218).
133. "Si Matos a payé trop cher, la faute en est à ses amis bavards qui diffamaient le régime à New York, à Washington" (Sartre 2008: 218).
134. "The courage of Matos was admirable, though his passivity well expressed the weakness of the liberal opponents to the new course. They could not bring themselves to desert the revolution; therefore they could not desert Castro since Castro was the revolution" (Thomas 1971: 1245).
135. Sartre and Lévy 1996.
136. Sartre 1974: 58.
137. Sartre 1974: 10.
138. In Spanish the Argentine word and name *che* rarely has an accent. In English, Ché often does, especially in publications from the 1960s and 1970s. The accent does not affect pronunciation here so the English diligence on the matter is quite superfluous.
139. Sarusky 2005: 226.
140. Taibo 1999: 502
141. Bair 1990: 474.
142. Castañeda 1998: 169.
143. Granado 2003: xx.
144. Gadea 2008: 60.
145. Anderson 1997: 468.
146. Cohen-Solal 1991: 399.
147. Cabrera Infante gathered together thirty-six such dedications from such figures as Fidel and Raúl Castro, Haydée Santamaria, Armando Hart, Enrique Oltuski, Sartre and Beauvoir, Carlos Franqui and Carlos Fuentes. Guevara cagily writes "*Lunes de Revolución* is sometimes very good, like the number dedicated to Sartre."

148. Sartre 1974: 98.
149. Sartre 1974: 99.
150. Castañeda 1998: xv.
151. Sartre 1974: 98.
152. Guevara 2003: 104.
153. James 2001: 117.
154. "Castro allowed popular tribunals to judge the Batista torturers as a way of getting the hatred out in the open, as a cathartic cleansing of the lust for revenge" (Sartre 2009: 183).
155. Sartre 1974: 104.
156. Sartre 1974: 104.
157. Sartre 1946: 33.
158. Sartre 1974: 159.
159. Guevara 2007: 113.
160. Sartre 1946: 30.
161. Guevara 1994: 150.
162. "El Che fue el hombre más completo de su tiempo" (Sartre 1967).
163. Sartre 1961: 40
164. Anderson 2006: 98.
165. Ammar 2011: vii.
166. "J'ai fait des études à Paris dans les années qui suivirent l'existentialisme. Sartre était à cette époque un modèle et une référence. Ses propositions concernant l'homme qui pense m'avaient convaincu" (Otero 2005a: 120).
167. Sarusky 2005: 223.
168. Feo 1991. Feo was not impressed by Simone de Beauvoir's lecture on existentialism, writing that he suppressed his yawns (1991: 59).
169. Souza 1996: 49.
170. Luis 2003: 164.
171. Baragaño 1960.
172. Arenal 2003.
173. Souza 1996: 37.
174. Souza 1996: 38.
175. Luis 2003: 10.
176. Wall 2000: 380.
177. Sartre 1961: 29.
178. Sartre 1961: 41.

179. "que no se pueden crear leyes de Estado, leyes estatales para definir cuál es la realidad, la objetividad y cuál es la mejor manera de descubrirla o de cambiarla, pues si se establece de esa manera una forma general o bien esa será una objetividad absoluta para los escritores que cubrirá la praxis real y que ellos estimarán insuperable, que interferirá en el interior de ellos mismos con sus propias maneras de vivir y de ver la situación y que provocaría en ellos lo más grave que puede existir para un escritor, es decir la auto-censura" (Sartre 1961: 35).
180. Sartre 1961: 32.
181. Castro 2008: 229.
182. For fuller explanation, see Chanan 2004: 132–143.
183. Chanan 2004: 138.
184. Cabrera Infante 2007: 177.
185. Cabrera Infante 2007: 177.
186. Castro 2008: 215.
187. Castro 2008: 215.
188. Sartre 1961: 40.
189. Castro 2008: 216.
190. Castro 2008: 216.
191. Castro 2008: 217.
192. Castro 2008: 217.
193. Castro 2008: 229.
194. Castro 2008: 220.
195. "A phrase which has been glorified everywhere as a sort of oral monument to the intellectual and artistic liberalism of the Castrist regime, whereas it really expresses totalitarian logic disguised by a visibly Orwellian sophism: 'Four legs good, two legs bad'" (Cabrera Infante 1973: 355).
196. Cabrera Infante 1973: 355.
197. Sartre 1961: 44.
198. Morín 2007: 180.
199. Cabrera Infante 1981: 5.
200. Franqui 2007: 184.
201. Barnet 2001.
202. Armando Fernández 2001.
203. Chanan 2004: 138.
204. Franqui 2007: 185.

205. "I have never accepted any power over me, and I have always thought that anarchy, which is to say a society without powers, must be brought about" (Sartre 1975).
206. Beauvoir 1978: 558.
207. Carpentier 1961: 11.
208. Sartre 1974: 53.
209. Oltuski was one of the principle leaders of the *Llano*, the urban networks of resistance across the island collaborating with the *guerrilleros* in the Sierra. He joined Urrutia's cabinet in early 1959 but was later dismissed by Castro after defending Matos during the trial. At the time of Sartre and Beauvoir's trip he was minister of communications. He remained loyal to the revolution and worked in various ministries until his death in 2012. Oltuski clearly made an impression on Sartre and Beauvoir as they both depict to him in their accounts as a decent man and a lucid guide. They do not appear to have made such an impression on him; he dedicates just one captioned photograph of his meeting with them in his memoirs, *Mi Vida Clandestina*, and mistakes the year for 1959. The book, however, was first published in Havana in 2000. The rehabilitation of Sartre in Cuba had not yet begun, and, as the title *Gente del Llano* indicates, its principal focus is the war years.
210. Otero 2005a, 2005b.
211. Arenal 2003.
212. Contat and Rybalka 1974.
213. Contat and Rybalka 1974: 388.
214. Beauvoir 1978: 557.
215. Beauvoir 1978: 558.
216. Cohen-Solal 1991: 402.
217. Cohen-Solal 1991: 401. Cohen-Solal titles the chapter of her biography dedicated to his trips to Cuba, China and Brazil and other nations "The Anti-Ambassador" (1991: 391).
218. Cohen-Solal 1991: 402.
219. Beauvoir 1978: 557.
220. Beauvoir 1978: 583.
221. Beauvoir 1978: 583.
222. Beauvoir 1978: 583.
223. Beauvoir 1978: 583.

224. Beauvoir 1978: 584.
225. Beauvoir 1978: 584.
226. Beauvoir 1978: 584.
227. Beauvoir 1978: 584.
228. "Cienfuegos was lost over the sea in a flight to Havana. … Foul play was immediately suspected. Was not Cienfuegos anti-Communist? Had he been killed by Raúl Castro personally in a fit of jealousy? For these allegations, no evidence has been forthcoming. Castro certainly seemed upset and surprised when his brother brought the news to a cabinet meeting, then he was an excellent actor, and one observer who accompanied Castro on a search for Cienfuegos by air later recalled that Castro seemed in fact in no way upset by the course of events and spent no time at all in the actual search" (Thomas 1971: 1248). "Speculation about Cienfuegos' death has continued. The chief argument of those who allege foul play is that Cienfuegos' aide, Major Naranjo, was shortly afterwards killed and *his* assassin, Major Beatón, also killed in 1960. A nurse, later found insane, said in Miami in 1960 that she had nursed Cienfuegos in a Havana clinic. Roberto de Cárdenas, captain of the base from which Cienfuegos was supposed to have taken off, suggested that the flight was a put-up job, that no one saw Cienfuegos in the aeroplane, and that several others either killed themselves or were overpowered. No doubt this is one of the many matters that history will elucidate" (Thomas 1971: 1246 footnote 41).
229. Beauvoir 1978: 585.
230. Beauvoir 1978: 586.
231. Sarusky 2005: 222.
232. Beauvoir 1978: 587.
233. Contat and Rybalka 1974: 401.
234. Cohen-Solal 1991: 402.
235. Seymour-Jones 2009: 411.
236. Contat and Rybalka 1974: 402.
237. Contat and Rybalka 1974: 402.
238. Lethbridge 2012.
239. Sartre seems quite proud of Gallic insouciance to the threat of nuclear war. In a 1965 *Playboy* interview he is asked "Don't you share the concern of most Americans about the dangers of nuclear power in the hands of several nations?" Sartre responds

coolly: "No, because I'm French and we French seem to have a complete lightheadedness about the bomb. I remember a cartoon showing a café in which Americans, British and Frenchmen are sitting. The Anglo-Americans are reading papers headlined THE BOMB, but the French are reading papers headlined THE PRICE OF MILK HAS GONE UP. We French display an amazing lack of interest in the bomb and even regard our indifference as a slight superiority" (Sartre 1965: 74–75).

240. Sartre 2009: 229.
241. Sartre 2009: 230.
242. Sartre 2009: 229.
243. Russell 1963: 16–17.
244. Russell 1963: 142
245. Anderson 1997: 724.
246. Sartre 2009: 77.
247. Bair 1990: 531.
248. Torres-Cuevas 2005: 179.
249. Torres-Cuevas 2005: 179.
250. Torres-Cuevas 2005: 177.
251. Birchall 2004: 205.
252. Anderson 1997: 468.
253. Ramonet 2007: 580.
254. Much ink has been spilled on the Padilla Affair; for more detail I refer the reader to chapter three of Ángel Esteban and Stéphanie Panichelli's analysis of the relationship between Castro and Gabriel García Márquez, *Fidel and Gabo* (Esteban 2009).
255. http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1971/05/06/an-open-letter-to-fidel-castro.
256. "Ya saben, señores intelectuales burgueses y libelistas burgueses y agentes de la CIA y de las inteligencias del imperialismo, es decir, de los servicios de inteligencia, de espionaje del imperialismo: En Cuba no tendrán entrada, ¡no tendrán entrada! como no se la damos a UPI y a AP (APLAUSOS). ¡Cerrada la entrada indefinidamente (APLAUSOS), por tiempo indefinido y por tiempo infinito!" www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1971/esp/f300471e.html. My translation.
257. Sartre 2009: 77.
258. Sartre 2009: 77.
259. Ramonet 2007: 511.

260. Fornet accompanied Sartre and Beauvoir to the airport for their departure from Cuba, accompanied by Enrique Oltuski, Miriam Acevedo, Edith Depestre (who interviewed Beauvoir in Cuba) and Walterio Carbonell, see www.cubaliteraria.cu/editor/ambrosio_fornet/galeria1.html.
261. Kerrigan 1989: 501.
262. Almendros and Jiménez-Leal 1984.
263. "'¿Han pensado ustedes los escritores cómo van a enfrentar la maquinaria del Estado? … Me refiero a una praxis. O al final van a joderse' (esta última palabra la dijo en perfecto español). 'Sí, al final van a joderse.'" (Cruz 2007: 154). My translation.
264. On my last visit to Havana in January 2017 I scoured bookshops for Sartre texts. I found old dusty Argentine editions of *¿Qué es la literatura?* (Buenos Aires, Losada, 1969) and *El ser y la nada* (Losada 1968). For many decades Losada have been the principle publisher of Sartre texts in Spanish, in particular Latin America. I could not find the Ediciones R edition of *Sartre visita a Cuba*, but neither are copies easily available in any language. I could find no books, either new or second-hand, by Beauvoir.
265. Aronson 1980: 236.
266. Aronson 1980: 236.
267. Aronson 1980: 234.
268. Lévy 2003: 339.
269. Sartre 1974: 140.
270. Sartre 1974: 140.
271. Sartre 1974: 130.
272. Cohen-Solal 1991: 398.
273. Hewitt (2007) examines the history of *France-Soir* and the complex story of how and why Sartre came to publish the Cuba articles in the journal.
274. Sartre 1974: 11.
275. "L'avenir est mort, les jours se suivent et se ressemblent" (Sartre 2008: 175).
276. Sartre 1974: 55.
277. Lanzmann 2012: 421.
278. Sartre 2009: 79.
279. Sartre 1974: 113.
280. Lanzmann 2012: 422.
281. Beauvoir 1978: 503.

282. Cabrera Infante 1973: 368.
283. Cabrera Infante 1995: 297.
284. Cabrera Infante 1973: 347.
285. Cabrera Infante 1973: 348.
286. Cabrera Infante 1995: 202.
287. Cabrera Infante 1995: 239.
288. Cabrera Infante 1995: 213.
289. Cabrera Infante 1973: 367.
290. Cabrera Infante 1995: 266.
291. Cabrera Infante 1995: 18. The original Spanish is no clearer: "Juan Pablo apóstol – del próximo Milenio – y su carnal Simona, que se empeñan en tomar a los cubanos como conejillos, inevitablemente, de Indias" (Cabrera Infante 1992: 31).
292. Cabrera Infante 1973: 375.
293. Janes and Cabrera Infante 1981.
294. Sartre 2009: 99. In the original French interview with Gerassi Sartre says "ces bourreaux étaient des ordures."
295. Sartre 1974: 19.
296. "Depuis vingt ans, vous criez dans le désert que les choses ne vont pas comme il faut. Or, elles vont comme il faut chez nous: si vous restez ici à vous tordre les bras sans jeter un coup d'œil sur ce que nous essayons de faire, cela revient à casser votre plume. Vous avez écrit sur la liberté, sur la justice: eh bien, cessez d'écrire ou venez les chercher à Cuba" (Sartre 2008: 181).
297. Sartre 1974: 55.
298. Ireland finds "these pages of special interest in that they constitute a kind of French prologue to the Cuban adventure, reminding us that the lens through which Sartre viewed Cuba was forged in France and that the French context itself, notably the paralysis of French political life that precipitated De Gaulle's return to power in 1958 and the shameful quagmire of the Algerian war, shaped Sartre's vision of Cuba and his hopes for its new social order" (Ireland 2011: 94).
299. Ireland 2011: 102.
300. Hayman 1986: 348.
301. Ireland 2011: 94.
302. Sartre a très tôt condamné les pires aspects du castrisme. La fête cubaine terminée, ses yeux se sont dessillés rapidement (Lanzmann 2008: 4).

303. John Ireland writes in *Les Temps Modernes*: "Nobody has been able to date precisely the temporal lag between these two components of the Cuba manuscripts but it is virtually certain that the pages reconstituted as the appendix to 'Ouragan sur le sucre' were also written in 1960, some months after Sartre's return from Cuba and that they post-date the manuscript from which the *France-Soir* articles were culled" (Ireland 2011: 94). Jean Bourgault and Gilles Philippe, meanwhile, state that the pages "do not constitute the draft of the reports, but a later text" (Durante and Bellon 2009: 2). On the other hand, Beauvoir writes that, "as exhaustive as ever, he had begun an enormous work on Cuba that was going to be far larger in scope than the reporting he had offered to do for *France-Soir*. Lanzmann helped him abstract a series of articles from it'"(Beauvoir 1978: 511), which would imply that the notes *were* the background material for the *France-Soir* articles. Contat and Rybalka suggest that in mid-February 1960 Sartre "starts the work from which he excerpts *Storm over Sugar*" (Contat and Rybalka 1974: 22). They also write that in Yugoslavia in May 1960, speaking at the Writers Union, Sartre talked of his Cuba trip. "He also says he is writing a book on Cuba which he plans to draw upon for some *France-Soir* articles" (Contat and Rybalka 1974: 388). My conclusions on the matter are that he was writing about Cuba from spring until summer, some of which was taken for *France-Soir*. He continued to work on these notes after the summer with a view to writing a book on Cuba, which never materialised. The *Appendice*, according to this perspective, is both before and after the *F-S* articles. Certainly his notes concerning his 1949 Cuban trip would fit perfectly into the beginning of the articles, providing much-needed context to Sartre's relationship with Cuba. It would not surprise me if the 1949 section was destined for *F-S* but discarded before publication.
304. Sartre 2009: 229.
305. Wall 2000: 385.
306. Wall 2000: 385.
307. Sartre 1974: 159.
308. https://www.icj.org/cuba-and-the-rule-of-law/.
309. Sartre 2009: 187.
310. Sartre 1974: 159.
311. Sartre 1974: 147.
312. Sartre 1974: 149.

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