
Sugar Mills to Grow

14/10/2018



The *Primero de Enero* sugar mill, former *Violeta*, was one of the sugar mills in Ciego de Avila that kept grinding after the dramatic reduction of the sugar industry in Cuba. It stopped its production for a few years amid a restoration process that pushed the panic button on many people. Some feared the sugar mill would have followed the steps of other sugar mills such as the *Bolivia*. But its startup was a success and it is now one of the most profitable sugar mills in the country.

As it is “idle period”, the *Primero de Enero* seems to be asleep. It only seems, as it never stops working in the inside getting ready for the next campaign. “This repairing works are as important as the grinding itself”— a former worker stated. “We need to guarantee the upcoming sugar cane harvest, so we do not waste time with last-minute repairing.”

He looks so enthusiastic that I spend few more minutes with him. It is a fact: he loves his sugar mill. It is alive! By its sound, I already know if it is working right or not. Those who have not spent their lives near a sugar mill cannot understand, but the sugar mill is the heart, nerve and lung of this village. This would be a dead village without the sugar mill.

There are families in Violeta that have devoted to the sugar mill generation after generation: “my father and my grandfather worked here. I have worked my entire life here and my son now works as the mechanic of the sugar mill. My grandson says he wants to leave town but we may end up convincing him to do otherwise.

He stares at the smokestack. How would the village look from upstairs?

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