Toward a Soviet Model, 1961–62

The year 1961 was dedicated to upgrading the Cuban educational system, especially the literacy campaign. Education became compulsory and state controlled. In the spring of 1961 all but a few private schools had been taken over by the government. The major setback was the lack of qualified teachers as well as other professionals, such as doctors and scientists, who fled the country beginning in 1959. However, what the revolutionaries lacked in specific skills they compensated for with dedication. Estimates made at the end of the year claimed that 80 percent of all school-age children had been given the opportunity to enroll in the schools and that the rate of illiteracy had dropped to 3.9 percent. Even though the emphasis of the revolutionary educational program was on technical training and ideological indoctrination, the revolutionary leadership also promoted the arts, created the Cuban Film Institute, and began operating all available publishing houses in an effort to generate new values for the Cuban masses (see Education, ch. 2).

The Cuban revolutionary government also showed concern for health care, and it started building a network of rural health clinics staffed with at least a doctor, a midwife, a laboratory technician, and visiting nurse. The clinics were responsible for educating the rural communities on matters of health, and they relied on local cooperation to carry out their program in tropical and social medicine. By 1963 there were 122 rural centers in operation, and medical graduates had to perform a year of rural service. This program was under the umbrella of the INRA, which provided the centers with the necessary facilities and equipment (see Health and Welfare, ch. 2).

In April 1961 Castro stated the socialist character of the Cuban Revolution, and the following December he declared himself a Marxist-Leninist. Analysts claimed that these were clear attempts to gain economic and military support from the Soviet Union and its allies. At that point a new revolutionary phase unfolded for Cuba under the auspices of the Soviet Union. There was a shift from the "trial and error" style of the first two years of the Revolution toward an attempt to apply efficiently a Soviet-style system of politico-economic organization and development planning. Centralization was one of the basic tenets of the effort. In July 1961 the revolutionary organizations came together under the umbrella known as Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (Organizaciones Revolucionarias Integradas—ORI), with members of the PSP, the DER, and the M–26–7 under the leadership of Aníbal Escalante of

the PSP. On March 26, 1962, Escalante was ousted by Castro on the grounds that he had attempted to exercise excessive control over the ORI by packing it with PSP veterans. Several months later the ORI was dissolved by Castro and replaced by the United Party of the Socialist Revolution (Partido Unido de la Revolución Socialista—PURS), under the control of Castro and his inner group. However, the void left by the withdrawal of United States economic and technical aid was replaced by a centralized system of planning and technical assistance provided by the Soviet Union. Under this new orientation, Cubans were to be prepared to hold managerial positions, and the union movement was to be used as a channel for the central administration. Economic growth and industrialization would be generated through lower consumption and higher rates of investments.

On January 3, 1961, Eisenhower broke diplomatic and consular relations with Cuba in response to Castro's demand that the United States reduce its embassy staff in Havana to fewer than 20 persons. On February 2 recently inaugurated president John F. Kennedy approved previously laid plans for an invasion of Cuba, with April 17 chosen as the date for the invasion. President Kennedy's support was conditioned on their being no direct involvement of United States forces in the invasion itself, even though various United States agencies participated heavily in training and providing support to the exile force. To comply with Kennedy's specifications, the invasion was to be small and covert.

The first air strike by airplanes flying from Nicaragua on April 14 was ineffective, destroying only five of the 30 airplanes in the Cuban air force. The air attack provoked a protest at the United Nations, and a second such attempt was canceled. On April 17 a landing expedition of 1,297 disembarked at Playa Girón, on the Bay of Pigs. The operation was doomed from the start. President Kennedy had reduced the landing's air protection and had forbidden the use of United States aircraft. The exiles were poorly organized and their military support by the Cuban underground opposition elsewhere on the island failed to materialize. Castro, who commanded the forces that met the invasion, knew the area around the Bay of Pigs well and easily suppressed the exile invasion. The invading forces surrendered on April 19. Their casualties were between 85 and 150, and the survivors were taken as prisoners in Havana. Castro established a ransom of approximately US$62 million in medical supplies for their release. Even before the arrival of the ransom, however, the prisoners were freed to return to the United States in time for Christmas in 1962.

The victory of Castro's forces at the Bay of Pigs had important consequences for the consolidation of Castro's regime, for the disbanding of opposition groups on the island, and for the fueling of propaganda on "imperialist aggression." Castro doubted that the invasion would be the last attempt to overthrow his government and he set out to build one of the largest armed forces in Latin America. In the United States, despite the debacle, Kennedy gained popularity for his strong stance against communism.

The Cuban government then turned its attention to the island's economic problems. There had been a sharp decline in sugar production, which hampered the provision of financial resources to developing industries. In spite of innovations in economic planning, the country was still heavily dependent on sugar. Guevara was the architect of a four-year plan designed by the Central Planning Board, which called for agricultural diversification and industrialization. However, by 1962 the results were far from encouraging. Between 1961 and 1963 sugar output dropped first from 6.8 to 4.8 million tons and then to a low of 3.8 million tons. Thus, in three years production was cut almost in half. To compensate for the loss of export earnings, consumption was restricted, and a system of rationing was introduced to Cuba in 1962.

In January 1962 the Organization of American States (OAS) voted to exclude Cuba from participating in the OAS system. The sanctions resulted from Venezuela's well-documented charges against Cuba that its support of Venezuelan insurgents constituted foreign intervention in Venezuela's internal affairs. Sanctions were fully supported by the United States. It reinforced this decision in 1964 when it recommended that member states abstain from trade and diplomatic relations with Cuba. United States pressure resulted in the withdrawal of all except the Mexican diplomatic corps from Cuba.

Castro's acquiescence to Soviet wishes to install nuclear missiles in Cuba proved near-disastrous, as the Soviet Union and Castro himself brought the whole world to the edge of a nuclear war. The United States government had grown alarmed at the rapid and heavy Soviet military buildup and installation of surface-to-air antiaircraft missile bases in Cuba, and on September 13, 1962, Kennedy requested that Congress give him emergency powers to call up reserve troops. The confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union began on October 22, 1962, when the United States announced a naval quarantine of Cuba that was to remain in effect until all rockets, Soviet military technicians, and troops for manning the missiles and guarding the sites were removed from Cuban soil.

After six days of nuclear brinkmanship between the superpowers, Khrushchev accepted the conditions imposed by the United States on October 28 without asking for Castro's consent. Nevertheless, the settlement between Kennedy and Khrushchev is thought to have brought about some important assurances for Cuba: the alleged secret agreement prescribed that Cuba would have immunity against military aggression by the United States as long as it did not become a base for Soviet offensive weapons. Cuban-Soviet relations were seriously strained by the missile crisis, however, because the Soviets had initiated and resolved the situation with little regard for Cuba's interests or its national sovereignty. After the 1962 missile crisis, relations between Cuba and the United States remained frozen. Furthermore, throughout the 1960s—a period when Cuba was committed to exporting revolution—observers recorded a number of covert operations against the Cuban regime, allegedly undertaken by United States intelligence agencies.

Radicalization of the System, 1963–66

The policies of the mid-1960s were marked by a major reshaping of the country's political and economic life. The period witnessed massive mobilization, new attempts at different ideological models, economic dislocation, and social radicalism. Major changes took place in the productive system, in land-tenure arrangements, and in the distribution process. Institutions such as the army and the communist party went through internal transformations. The political leadership in Cuba became imbued with the idea that society's material base was responsible for shaping its nonmaterial side, e.g., culture, morals, and the political framework. The leadership, in short, became more idealistic. Militancy and revolutionary consciousness were encouraged in politics, culture, and relations between the state and the labor force as well as in party development. Coercion was used as a weapon against dissidents and counterrevolutionaries.

Failures in planning and development strategies, initially modeled on those of the Soviet Union, led Cubans to reassess the effectiveness of the Soviet system as applied to the traditional Cuban economy. The estrangement in the Soviet-Cuban relations over the missile crisis led to closer relations with China, whose revolutionary strategies were closer to Cuba's. In 1963 Cuba followed the Chinese in refusing to sign the Limited Test Ban Treaty. The new directions of Cuban economic development were left under the

leadership of Guevara, whose idealistic approach was influenced by Mao Zedong's ideology at the time of China's "Great Leap Forward." There were three main objectives: total elimination of the market of "commodity production," creation of a "new man," and export of the revolutionary model to other Latin American nations (see The New Revolutionary Man, ch. 2).

Elimination of the commodity-production market was to be achieved by collectivizaton of the means of production. Efficiency was to be increased through a highly centralized and automated planning system coupled with government financing of all state enterprises and the elimination of material incentives. The idealistic "new man" was to be an unselfish, self-sacrificing, frugal, socialized, and egalitarian human being whose training would be achieved through education, mobilization, voluntary labor, and moral incentives. The combination of these would then lead to capital accumulation and the economic development of society as a whole. It was hoped that the last objective, the spreading of the revolutionary model to other countries in Latin America, would guarantee the survival of socialism in Cuba. This was to be achieved through the creation of rural guerrilla cells, such as those that had existed in the Sierra Maestra.

This was a period of intense ideological questioning of economic policy and of the viability of the Soviet economic model for Cuban society. The leadership was divided between radical *guevaristas* and a more pragmatic group of cautious bureaucrats led by economist Carlos Rafael Rodríguez. The *guevaristas* were extremely critical of the Soviet Union's domestic and international policies on the ground that they did not represent real socialism. They defended the principle of a continuous social revolution, criticized institutionalization, appeared to have no process, and were against unionization. As a result, the government de-emphasized the CTC and created the Advanced Workers Movement. The group under Rodríguez, who represented the old Soviet-line communists, supported the view of central planning through computerization and advocated self-financing for one-third of all government enterprises, whereby loans given by the central bank had to be paid back with interest and enterprises were allowed to retain part of the profits for reinvestment. Economic efficiency would be attained through institutionalization, with the help of a skillful bureaucracy, and high labor productivity, based on a system of work quotas and material incentives. (In the Soviet Union, economic goals were established by a quota system, and productivity above and beyond such goals represented material benefits to workers, such as better pay and housing.) As expected, Rodríguez' group defended the need for a

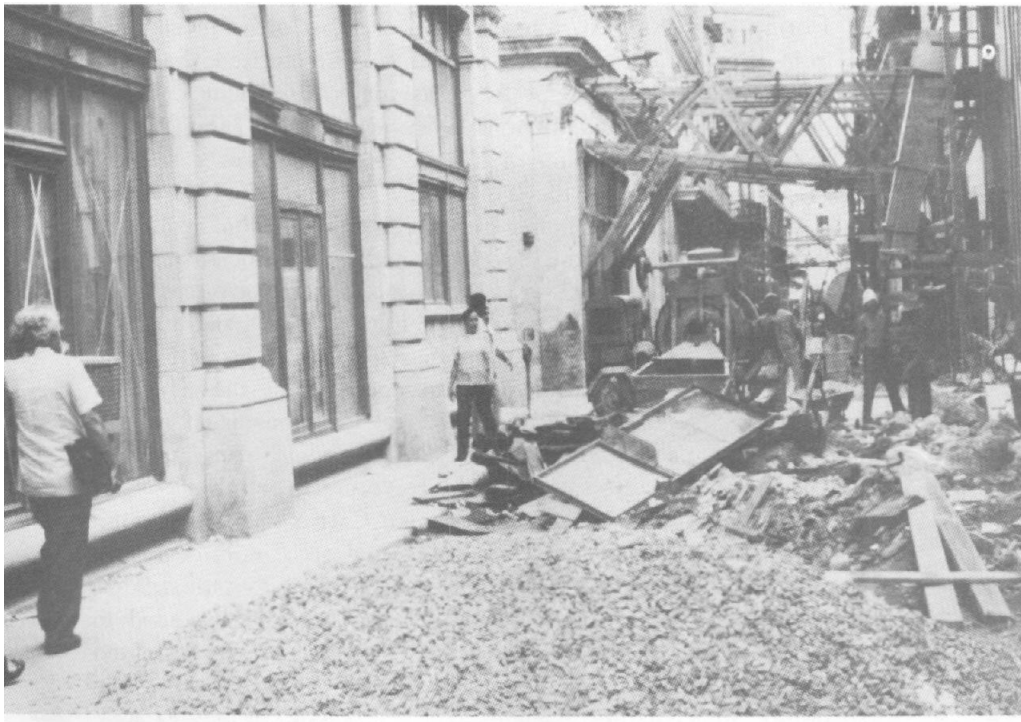
strong Communist Party, rapprochement with the Soviet Union, and closer ties with the rest of Latin America (see National-level Politics, ch. 4).

During the second phase of the revolutionary process, the second Law of Agrarian Reform, decreed in October 1963, eliminated 10,000 middle-sized farms. Castro promised that this would be the end of expropriations for as long as people kept cultivating their land under the control of ANAP. The newly available lands were transformed into *granjas del pueblo* (people's farms). The new organization of land tenure proved disastrous to middle-sized cattle and dairy farms, but once more, political considerations took precedence over the economy. To make matters worse, Hurricane Flora hit Cuba and caused great destruction to the island. According to Herbert Matthews, "It was one of those years which proved that the Cuban Revolution did not stand or fall on its economic performance."

By mid-1963 economic experimentation had already failed. Castro's trip to the Soviet Union and the trade agreement that followed had given him enough incentive to change the policies of the previous phase. The Soviet Union promised to purchase 24 million tons of sugar between 1965 and 1970. Prospects for economic assistance and a market for Cuban products were better, so Castro decided to accept the Soviet recommendation to increase sugar production and postpone further industrialization. Back in Cuba, he announced that by 1970 the country would produce a record 10 million tons of sugar and that the effort to reach the goal would lay the cornerstone for Cuba's future economic development. Results of the emphasis on sugar proved discouraging, however. After experiencing a 9-percent growth rate in 1964, economic growth fell to 1.5 percent in 1965 and plunged to rock bottom at −3.7 percent in 1966.

An important development of the period was the reorganization of the PURS to form the PCC in October 1965. The party's mission was to orient and carry out government policies, but not to govern. The structure of the new PCC consisted of the eight-man Political Bureau; as the highest decisionmaking body in the party, it included Fidel Castro as first secretary. Raúl Castro as second secretary, and President Dorticós, Armando Hart Dávalos, and four other *fidelistas* as members. The Central Committee consisted of 100 members, a majority of them *fidelistas*. Above the party structure and all government organizations stood Fidel Castro, who had his inner circle of devoted *fidelistas* to interpret his wishes and carry out policies accordingly. Despite the apparent *fidelistas* domination during the mid-1960s, a major power struggle pitted the *fi-*

Photo by Phillips Bourns



Old Havana, which is undergoing restoration with funds provided by the United States
Photo by Philip Brenner

delistas, who were aligned with the *guevaristas*, against the old communists and the technocrats. The special breed of Cuban-style socialism was exemplified by Castro himself, who stated in a July 1966 speech that "we do not pretend to be the most perfect interpreters of Marxist ideas; we have our way of interpreting Marxism-Leninism, our way of interpreting Communism." The newspaper *Granma* served as the official organ of the PCC.

Cuban-Chinese relations had been in good standing for several years. Initially, China provided Cuba with generous credits and economic aids. Relations seriously deteriorated, however, when the Chinese announced that they could not honor their trade agreement for the year 1966. The two countries had agreed to exchange 250,000 tons of rice for 850,000 tons of sugar, but the Chinese could send only 135,000 tons of rice to Cuba, prompting a further rationing of rice in Cuba.

Sino-Guevarism, 1966–70

During the 1963–66 radicalism phase, Castro distanced himself from the ideological controversy that characterized the early 1960s, controlling both groups by occasionally dismissing or sending their members abroad. In mid-1966 he endorsed Sino-Guevarism (Guevara's interpretation of the Chinese model of socialism) and adopting the ideas of the "new man," he embarked the country on a cultural and economic revolution. Those who advocated economic policies above the development of pure socialism were subjected to criticism. However, Castro's policies already represented a new brand of Sino-Guevarism. Policies were generated by Castro and his inner circle, who emphasized capital accumulation, mass mobilization, egalitarianism, and abolition of the need for money. The existence of informal personal mechanisms of control diminished the party's effectiveness as the Cuban army grew in number and influence (see Role of the Government, ch. 3).

After his adoption of the new model, Castro set out to mobilize great numbers of people to reach the goal of 10 million tons in the sugar harvest of 1970. The previous attempt to industrialize the country had been a failure, and Cuba desperately needed to reverse its negative trade balance, which was heavily oriented toward imports of food, manufactured goods, and machinery. The "10 million tons" battle depended on an efficient strategy capable of maximizing output while minimizing costs. Guevara's idea was to promote a budgetary financing system based on moral, instead of material, incentives. To carry out this ambitious plan, it was

necessary to induce the creation of a different kind of society in which men and women would put their own aspirations aside for the common good. A complex network of social institutions, including schools, neighborhood associations, and the CDRs, would provide the necessary mechanisms for the creation of the "new man". Dissidents would risk losing their memberships in those groups.

Another key factor of this effort was the centralization of unions, peasant organizations, and individual enterprises. Central planning provided for the decline of popular participation in the decisionmaking process, which came under the leadership of a small revolutionary elite led by Castro. To assist the leadership, Castro requested the aid of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias—FAR) in the recruitment, organization, and command of the labor force during the harvest effort. Even though the military had little or no experience in the diverse aspects of the sugar industry, its contribution to the harvest was considered very important. In a country where the economy was in a state of chaos as a result of ill planning, managerial incompetence, and improvisation (especially by Castro) in setting production targets, such an undertaking was doomed to failure. One problem facing Cuba at that time was the overglorification of labor participation in any given task. Although the leadership expected positive responses to moral incentives and hoped to inspire dedication from the labor force, absenteeism was rampant by the end of the 1960s.

Guevara's followers defended the idea that to promote socialism at home, it was necessary to create favorable conditions for the spread of socialism abroad. Thus, Cuba embarked on the dissemination of guerrilla rural *focos* (cells), a strategy that had been effective in the Sierra Maestra, by effectively aiding revolutionary groups throughout Latin America. After accepting the defeat of his economic plan for industrialization, Guevara left for Africa and from there went to the highlands of Bolivia, where he was killed in 1967.

In 1964 Escalante returned to Cuba after two years in exile. Upon arrival he began organizing the old PSP veterans, whose ideological preferences rested on a more purely Soviet-oriented model. Escalante's "microfaction," as it became known, started a campaign to discredit Castro's government among communist leaders abroad. The operations of the "microfaction" were not secret, and the government started to prepare a dossier about its activities. In January 1968 Raúl Castro presented the PCC's Central Committee with enough information so that measures could be taken to curtail any threats to the regime. The committee recommended that the

participants in the "microfaction" be expelled from the party and that legal measures also be taken against them. The resulting neutralization of the Escalante faction was an important step in putting an end to dissident groups within the party apparatus.

On March 13, 1968, Castro launched the "revolutionary offensive," a campaign against bourgeois institutions, ideas, relationships, and privileges, that led to the nationalization of all 55,600 small, privately owned and operated urban enterprises, i.e., barbershops, restaurants, artisan manufacturers, etc. Under the "revolutionary offensive," the remainder of the private sector was nationalized, mobilization was accentuated, and capital accumulation reached record levels at the cost of consumption. As stated by Raúl Castro in his 1968 May Day speech, "we don't want a small-merchant mentality for our people." In a country that was experiencing great economic difficulties and shortages of everything, there was more than a little irony in a revolutionary elite's being proud that it had wiped out a small, productive sector of society. However, this attitude was perfectly in accordance with the politico-economic model of sacrificing economic gains for revolutionary advancement.

In August 1968 the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia. Under Soviet economic pressure, Castro supported the invasion and thus began a new phase in Soviet-Cuban relations. Because revolutionary goals were fading both at home (as a consequence of the chaotic economy) and abroad (as a consequence of Guevara's death in Bolivia), Castro was prescient enough to take advantage of this opportunity to reemphasize Cuba's alliance with the Soviet Union. It was a compromise solution based upon a reconsideration of previous policies and the realization that the exportation of revolution was a hopelessly idealistic approach to Latin America.

In early 1970 it was clear that the great mobilization effort of more than 300,000 volunteers and over 70,000 FAR members would not fulfill the goal of the "revolutionary offensive" for the "harvest of the century." The campaign had political, moral, and economic dimensions and was also a testing ground for the Cuban "new man", but the odds were against the unrealistic goal of producing a 10 million-ton harvest. In 1952 Cuba had produced a record 7.2 million tons of sugar. However, by the mid–1960s production averaged between 4 and 5 million tons, and the revolutionary goal of producing twice that amount in 1970 was close to impossible (see Batista's Dictatorship, this ch.).

In the end Cuba broke its own 1952 record by reaching a total of 8.5 million tons of sugar in 1970. The country paid a heavy price for the all-out sugar drive in depleted resources from

other sectors of the economy. Agriculture suffered increasing declines in the production of basic crops, not only prior to 1970, when lands were transferred from subsistence farming to sugar production, but also in the following years. Sugarcane cultivation depleted the soil quickly, and it took time for the land to recover. The sugar industry itself felt the results of excessive use of old machinery and the lack of spare parts because of the United States trade embargo. In 1959 there were 161 sugar mills, a number that declined to 152 by 1969. Four sugar mills went out of operation in 1970, and more breakdowns occurred the following year. By 1972 only 115 mills were in operation.

The transportation sector also suffered the consequences of the sugar drive, because all available vehicles were mobilized for the transport of labor and sugarcane. Labor was shifted from the manufacture of spare parts to the sugar industry, provoking the collapse of the former. Overuse and misuse of vehicles made them more prone to breakdown without the possibility of being repaired. Meanwhile, the military involvement in agriculture proved to be plagued by the very factors they were supposed to circumvent, such as lack of organizational skills and discipline.

In his speech of July 26, 1970, Castro acknowledged the defeat of the revolutionary drive, stating, "Our enemies say we have problems, and in this our enemies are right . . . They say there is discontent, and in reality our enemies are right. They say there is irritation, and in reality our enemies are right." He praised the dedication of so many Cubans to the revolutionary goal, even though he realized that dedication could not take the place of competence and skillfulness. Castro's charisma suffered a tremendous blow because he was not capable of delivering another miracle to the Cubans. In the past he had defeated Batista, he had defeated the United States at the Bay of Pigs, and he had confronted the Soviet Union in his attempt to construct a different kind of socialism in Cuba. In 1970 Castro had to bow to the Soviet Union and accept its policy toward the Cuban Revolution.

Institutionalization and Return to the Soviet Model, 1970–76

Although the excessively authoritarian and arbitrary leadership of Castro during the previous decade provoked a gradual alienation of the masses in Cuba, the "revolutionary offensive" and its failure led to questions about the viability of the regime. After 1970 the revolutionary process took a different course. From a pattern of radical, though unsuccessful, ideological and practical ex-

perimentation, the Revolution moved into a phase of restructuring both the economy and the decisionmaking process. The idealistic approach of Sino-Guevarism was replaced by an increasing pragmatism and a rapprochement with the Soviet Union.

The new policies of the 1970s were the result of pressures placed upon the regime by the economic debacle, the need to increase popular participation within the politico-economic system, the need to institutionalize the leadership, and additional Soviet demands for more orthodox politics. The new rationale demanded a planned economy led by skillful technocrats who were capable of implementing the Soviet development model and who could secure much needed Soviet aid in the future. In 1972 Cuba joined the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA—also known as Comecon). The enormous foreign debt with the Soviet Union was postponed, and the interest was canceled until 1986. Other actions reinforced Cuba's dependency on the socialist economic system and provided a financial respite from burdensome debt repayments. The new policies de-emphasized moral incentives, encouraged central planning, and was oriented toward efficient kinds of production and an objective assessment of Cuba's economic future (see Foreign Economic Relations. ch. 3).

Cuba's highly mobilized population was channeled through memberships in the CDRs, the Union of Young Communists, the Federation of Cuban Women, ANAP, and the labor unions under the control of the CTC. The CTC objectives, as defined in the 1970s, were to support the government, participate in the defense of the country, promote improved managerial efficiency, stress labor discipline, and create labor consciousness. These mass organizations were highly controlled by the state. Unions had no right to strike and were also prevented from actively participating in decisions that affected their membership (see The Role of Mass Organizations in the Process of Socialization, ch. 2, Mass Organizations, ch. 4).

In terms of institutionalization, in 1972 the regime's top leadership, i.e., Fidel Castro, Raúl Castro, and President Dorticós, delegated command to trusted associates, who undertook greater responsibilities as vice premiers, ministers, and heads of state agencies. The judicial system underwent a major reorganization the following year, when the People's Supreme Court, people's provincial courts, and people's basic courts were created. The court system became part of the administration under the Council of Ministers headed by Castro. In 1975 and early 1976 two important events took place in Cuba: a new Cuban Constitution was drafted and ap-

proved, and the First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba was held.

To further the regime's legal institutionalization, a new constitution was drafted in 1975 that was based on the Soviet Constitution of 1936. The new Constitution was widely discussed at CDR meetings, at labor and local assemblies, and in the media. The final draft of the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba was approved in February 1976. It describes Cuba as a socialist state, legitimizes the PCC as the official party, and creates several institutional bodies, such as the National Assembly of People's Power and the Council of State (see The State Structure, ch. 4). The assembly is empowered with constituent and legislative responsibilities. It is a popular "representative" assembly whose main function is that of ratifying the leadership's policies and appointments. The Council of State is a permanent body that comprises the Executive Committee of the National Assembly and functions as the dominant governmental institution in Cuba. It has discretionary powers, and in 1985 it was headed by Castro. In reality, institutionalization legitimized Castro's regime without curtailing his personal powers (see Role in Government, ch. 4).

According to the Constitution, the PCC represents the Marxist-Leninist political vanguard in the country. The First Congress of the PCC was held in December 1975. It concluded that Cuba was living in the first of four stages that would eventually lead to communism, a stance that represented a major ideological departure from previous years. Party membership had increased from about 55,000 in 1969 to 170,000 in 1973 to 212,000 in 1975. However, the party continued to be a selective group that retained full control of admission to its ranks (see The Communist Party of Cuba, ch. 4).

Another important body in the state machinery has been the military, whose functions are described in the 1976 Constitution. It is primarily responsible for defense against attacks by foreign powers. The FAR had been the most institutionalized branch of the Cuban government for some time and became even more so after reorganizations were carried out in 1973 and 1976. Estimates placed the size of the military in 1976 at approximately 280,000 men. The second most important function of the military apparatus is a diplomatic one, contributing to Cuba's internationalist commitment to assist movements of national liberation abroad under the aegis of socialist solidarity. Non-FAR personnel also have contributed to Cuba's internationalist efforts. Medical brigades have already served in over 20 countries, and state enterprises have en-

gaged in engineering contracts in Africa, the Caribbean area, and the Middle East.

Castro's "Report of the Central Committee of the PCC to the First Congress" emphasized the commitment of all Cubans to implementing the Party's program. Efficiency was a major target to be carried out through the Economic Direction System, which was based on the training of economic cadres to serve as technical advisers at all levels of the decisionmaking process. The report predicted an annual economic growth of at least 6 percent over the period 1975–80 as part of the overall five-year plan. The push was toward industrialization, at the same time promoting agricultural development. The plan called for more rational use of land and labor in the cultivation of sugarcane, rice, tobacco, and basic foodstuffs, as well as in the production of milk, beef, poultry, and eggs. The report underlined the need to improve the technical aspects of agriculture, such as seed quality, veterinary efficiency, plant protection, soil studies, and agrochemical laboratories. Among the industries to receive special attention were sugar and molasses production, electricity, oil refining, fertilizers, glass containers, paper, tires, nickel and nonferrous metals, iron and steel, farm machinery, buses, televisions and radios, cement, textiles, and furniture (see Growth and Structure of the Economy, ch. 3).

The First Congress of the PCC and the ratification of the 1976 Constitution marked the beginning of a period of institutionalization of the regime under the political and economic aegis of the Soviet Union. Cuban policies became more pragmatic. New management and planning systems generated more decentralization, which fostered an output mentality as the basis for decisionmaking. The private sector was given more opportunities for participation in agriculture and in service industries, and material rewards were distributed in response to greater outputs and the acquisition of needed skills.

Developments in the first half of the 1970s created the grounds for better understanding between the United States and Cuba. Both sides established preconditions for resuming diplomatic and trade relations. On the one hand, the United States required that Cuba curtail its military ties to the Soviet Union and ends its support for Latin American revolutionaries. On the other hand, Cuba requested an end to the Vietnam Conflict and to the United States intervention in Latin America, the lifting of its trade embargo against Cuba, and the withdrawal of all United States military installations from the United States Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay. By the mid–1970s the United States had established relations with China, agreements had been signed between the United States

and the Soviet Union, and the war in Vietnam had ended. Cuba had withdrawn from exporting revolution to other Latin American countries and had developed a better understanding toward other systems of government in the area. Even though many conditions of rapprochement had been met, a normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States continued to be hampered by Cuba's close ties to the Soviet Union and the growth of its military presence in Angola and Ethiopia.

Cuba in the Late 1970s

Political stability characterized Cuba's regime after the mid–1970s. Economic difficulties, Soviet pressures, and the need to crystallize the Revolution around the PCC led the revolutionary elite hierarchy to choose a more stable path through institutionalization, ideological uniformity, and efficient leadership. Revolutionary fervor was sacrificed for political maturity, and the creation of government institutions provided for a certain degree of political mobility outside the *fidelista* inner circle. The leadership in the late 1970s wanted to reconcile communist loyalty with economic efficiency. The Second Congress of the PCC was held in December 1980. The most important features of Castro's report this time dealt with the increase in party membership from a previous total of 212,000 in 1975 to 434,000 in 1980. The national government institutions had expanded the number of its members, but leadership of the country remained a *fidelista* patrimony.

Relations with the United States were marked by mutual restraint during the early 1970s. The relaxation of the United States trade embargo, sanctioned by the OAS in the summer of 1975, created new avenues for exchange between the two countries. Subsidiaries of United States enterprises were allowed to trade with Cuba, and visits by members of the United States Congress as well as by business people, scholars, and journalists seemed to point to future normalization of relations. In 1975 Cuba sponsored a Latin American conference on Puerto Rican independence. Cuba's long-standing position in favor of Puerto Rican independence antagonized the administration of President Gerald R. Ford, who by early 1976 declared that he "would have nothing to do with the Cuba of Fidel Castro." Two other incidents furthered hostilities. In 1976 a Cuban fishing vessel was attacked by Cuban exiles, and several fishermen were killed. In October of that year a Cubana de Aviación airplane exploded in midair after a bomb was planted by Cuban exiles. Accusations on both sides were interrupted by the election of Jimmy

Carter in November. In the meantime, Cuba became deeply involved in Africa, providing military and technical assistance to revolutionaries in Algeria, Angola, Zaïre, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Libya, Madagascar, and Mozambique. Cuba also extended its assistance in Asia to Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen) and in Latin America to Nicaragua, El Salvador, Grenada, and Suriname. By the mid–1980s Cuban internationalists were forced out of Grenada and Suriname, but an estimated 25,000 to 30,000 troops and military advisers remained in Angola. The Cuban commitment on behalf of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola was further enhanced by the assistance provided to the Angolans by other Soviet allies (see Relations with the United States, ch. 4, Proletarian Internationalism, ch. 4; The Cuban Military Abroad, ch. 5).

The inauguration of President Jimmy Carter brought great expectations for normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States. Carter believed that United States foreign policy could not be dominated by unjustified fears of communism and that its approach to Cuba had to be updated. During Carter's administration visas were granted to a few Cuban citizens to visit the United States, and United States citizens were allowed to travel to Cuba. Charter flights were permitted to operate between the two countries, United States reconnaissance flights over Cuba were cut back, and an agreement was reached on the subject of sea boundaries and fishing rights. In response to these United States overtures, Cuba freed several United States political prisoners and allowed United States citizens still on the island to return home with their families. In 1977 small diplomatic posts, known as interest sections, began to operate in Washington and Havana, the United States interest section was attached to the Swiss embassy, and that of Cuba was within the Czechoslovakian embassy. An influential part of the Cuban exile community, centered in Miami, opposed any normalization of relations with Castro's regime, however, and it applied political pressure on Carter through a variety of channels.

In 1979 the public disclosure of a brigade of Soviet troops in Cuba led Carter publicly to condemn Cuba for breaking the United States-Soviet agreement that followed the 1962 missile crisis. As a result, increased defense arrangements were announced that would lead to the establishment of a permanent Caribbean Task Force at Key West, Florida, and military maneuvers in the area and economic assistance to friendly Caribbean nations were increased. The crisis built up to great proportions and only ended with assurances

from the Soviet Union that the forces in Cuba had no intention or capability of attacking the United States.

In mid-1980 the massive exodus of some 125,000 Cubans constituted another crisis in United States-Cuban relations and for the Cuban regime itself. After more than 10,000 disaffected Cubans stormed into the Peruvian embassy in Havana in search of political asylum and safe conduct out of Cuba, Castro announced that all who wished to leave were free to assemble at the port of Mariel. He did not anticipate, however, the large number of "Marielitos" that were to leave on the "freedom flotilla" organized by Miami-based Cuban exiles. This new wave of exiles followed the several hundred thousand Cubans who had fled the island in previous years, including the approximately 260,000 refugees who were officially airlifted from Cuba during the United States-Cuban Freedom Flights program of 1965–71 (see History and General Principles, ch. 4).

Castro circumvented the political embarrassment of such a large number of dissidents by using the opportunity to purge Cuba of a variety of individuals, such as criminals, the mentally ill, and other so-called antisocial elements, who were sent along with the initial group of "Marielitos." Analysts estimated that if Mariel had remained open longer, as many as 1 million Cubans would have exited to Florida. The incident provoked further resentment in the United States, and by the end of the Carter administration, there was little room for improvement in relations between the two countries.

The administration of President Ronald Reagan, which took office in January 1981, perceived the Castro regime as a proxy of the Soviet Union and the source of much of the unrest that had plagued Central America in recent years. Determined to exact a price from Cuba for its international behavior, Reagan reversed a number of the policies that had brought a temporary relaxation of tension during the early Carter years. The Mariel incident, together with the hostile rhetoric of the Reagan administration, provided Castro with the incentive to increase the already high level of popular mobilization on the island.

* * *

The study of Cuban history from colonial times to the present has produced a wealth of scholarly works both in Cuba and abroad. The developments following the Revolution of 1959 led to an increased interest in reassessing Cuba's past to further the understanding of contemporary developments since 1959. Useful

Havana skyline across Havana harbor
Photo by Donna Rich

Morro Castle and lighthouse, Havana harbor
Photo by Phillips Bourns

sources include Willis Fletcher Johnson's *The History of Cuba* (five volumes), Herminio Portell Vila's *Historia de Cuba en sus relaciones con los Estados Unidos y España* (four volumes); and Philip Sheldon Foner's *A History of Cuba and Its Relations with the United States* (two volumes) and *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism, 1895–1902* (two volumes).

Cuban colonial history prior to 1800 is included in many histories of Latin America. Works such as Clarence Henry Haring's *The Spanish Empire in America,* Hubert Herring's *A History of Latin America,* and James Lockhart and Stuart Schwartz' *Early Latin America: A History of Colonial Spanish American and Brazil* were valuable in the elaboration of this chapter. For the study of the sugar industry in colonial Cuba, Manuel Moreno Fraginals' *The Sugarmill: The Socioeconomic Complex of Sugar in Cuba, 1760–1860* is very useful, as is Fernando Fernandez Ortiz *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar.* On the subject of slavery, there are Franklin W. Knight's *Slave Society in Cuba During the Nineteenth Century* and Herbert S. Klein's *Slavery in the Americas: A Comparative Study of Virginia and Cuba.* For analysis of the early twentieth century, some important works are Louis A. Pérez, Jr.'s *Cuba Between Empires, 1878–1902,* Alonso Aguilar's *Pan-Americanism from Monroe to the Present: A View from the Other Side;* Robert F. Smith's *The United States and Cuba: Business and Diplomacy, 1917–1960;* and William P. Glade's *The Latin American Economies: A Study of Their Institutional Evolution.*

There is an enormous amount of literature on the period from the 1933 revolution to the present. Among the most useful in the preparation of this chapter were Luis E. Aguilar's *Cuba 1933: Prologue to Revolution; Les Années Trente á Cuba;* Edward Gonzalez *Cuba under Castro: The Limits of Charisma;* Ramon Eduardo Ruiz' *Cuba: The Making of a Revolution;* Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy's *Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution;* Hugh S. Thomas' *The Cuban Revolution;* Thomas E. Skidmore and Peter H. Smith's *Modern Latin America;* Carmelo Mesa-Lago's *Cuba in the 1970s: Pragmatism and Institutionalization* and *Revolutionary Change in Cuba;* Juan del Aguila's *Cuba: Dilemmas of a Revolution;* the numerous articles, including those of Julio Le Riverend and Sergio Aguirre et al., in the October–December 1968 issue of *Universidad de La Habana; François Chevalier's L'Amérique Latine de l'indépendance á nos jours;* and Herbert L. Matthews' *Revolution in Cuba: An Essay in Understanding* and *Fidel Castro.* A number of journal articles were also used, most of them appearing in the *Hispanic American Historical Review* and in *Current History.* (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

Chapter 2. The Society and Its Environment

Sugarcane cutter

CUBAN SOCIETY IN EARLY 1985 reflected the years of efforts by the leadership of the Communist Party of Cuba to build a classless society based on state ownership of most means and instruments of production. The government was the nation's major employer and controlled all social services and facilities, including the educational and health systems. Work identification cards containing labor and political data were required to be carried at all times. Food was rationed, housing was scarce, and geographical mobility was restricted.

Cuba continued to uphold a long-standing tradition of high standards in the fields of education and health. By the 1980s illiteracy had almost disappeared, and most of the adult population had reached an educational level equivalent to the sixth grade. The school system was highly politicized, and only supporters of the regime were able to obtain higher education. Health standards were high, and Cuba's infant mortality rate was among the lowest in the Western Hemisphere. A network of government-sponsored urban and rural medical services and facilities was developed, and most of the nation's municipalities in all 14 provinces were adequately served.

Although considerable advances in health, education, and narrowing of income differences had taken place, Cuba was not the truly classless, egalitarian society the regime claimed it to be. A new power elite consisting of the Party faithful had come into being, replacing the prerevolutionary oligarchy. Far from being the grassroots-based "people's" society painted in Fidel Castro Ruz' speeches, Cuban society operated from the top down through a system of comprehensive mechanisms of social control. People were, in effect, classified as either supporters or enemies of the Revolution and were rewarded or punished through a wide variety of means at the government's disposal, ranging from access to jobs, education, and housing to the right to obtain scarce consumer goods. Although most Cubans enjoyed better standards of health and education than many people elsewhere in the hemisphere, the price was high both in terms of the drain on Cuba's economy and the national treasury and in terms of a wide range of effective restrictions on personal freedom.

Physical Setting

The Republic of Cuba comprises the Cuban archipelago, a formation of some 3,715 islands, islets, and keys with a combined area of 110,860 square kilometers. The archipelago is situated in

the Atlantic Ocean, just south of the Tropic of Cancer, at the entrance of both the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico and forms an important element of the Greater Antilles islands chain. Cuba, the largest island, lies very close to various strategic sealanes, and is situated some 150 kilometers south of the Florida keys and 210 kilometers to the east of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. The island of Cuba is also flanked by the island of Jamaica, some 140 kilometers to the south; by the island of Hispaniola, across the Windward Passage, some 77 kilometers to the southeast; and by the Bahamas in the northeast (see fig. 2).

Composed of a total area of 104,945 square kilometers, the island of Cuba is the largest in the archipelago. It runs from northwest to southeast and is 1,250 kilometers long and only 191 kilometers across at its widest point and 31 kilometers at its narrowest point. Its shape resembles an irregular crescent convex to the north.

The Isla de la Juventud (Isle of Youth; formerly known as the Isle of Pines, or Isla de Pinos), covering a total area of 2,200 square kilometers in the Golfo de Batabanó, is the second largest island in the archipelago, rising to the southwest of Cuba itself. Other islands and shoal groups include the Archipiélago de los Colorados to the northwest; the Archipiélago de Sabana and the Archipiélago de Camagüey, both off the north-central coast; the Jardines de la Reina off the south-central coast; and the Archipiélago de los Canarreos (technically including the Isla de la Juventude) off the southwest coast. The total area of these islands is 3,715 square kilometers.

Cuba's coastline measures 6,073 kilometers, of which 5,746 kilometers corresponds to the coastline of the island of Cuba and 327 kilometers to the coast of the Isla de la Juventud. The islands' irregular coastlines are characterized by the many bays, rugged cliffs, coral reefs, swamps, and mangroves.

Many of Cuba's bays, which have narrow entrances but ample inner areas, make some of the world's best harbors. Among the most important on the northern coast—from west to east—are Bahía Honda in the province of Pinar del Rio; Bahía Cabañas and Bahía del Mariel in the province of La Habana; Bahía de La Habana in the province of Ciudad de La Habana; Bahía de Matanzas in the province of Matanzas; Bahía de Nuevitas in the province of Camagüey; Bahía de Puerto Padre in the province of Las Tunas; and Puerto Gibara and Bahía de Nipe in the province of Holguín. Major harbors on the southern coast are located at Guantanamo Bay, Santiago de Cuba, and Cienfuegos.

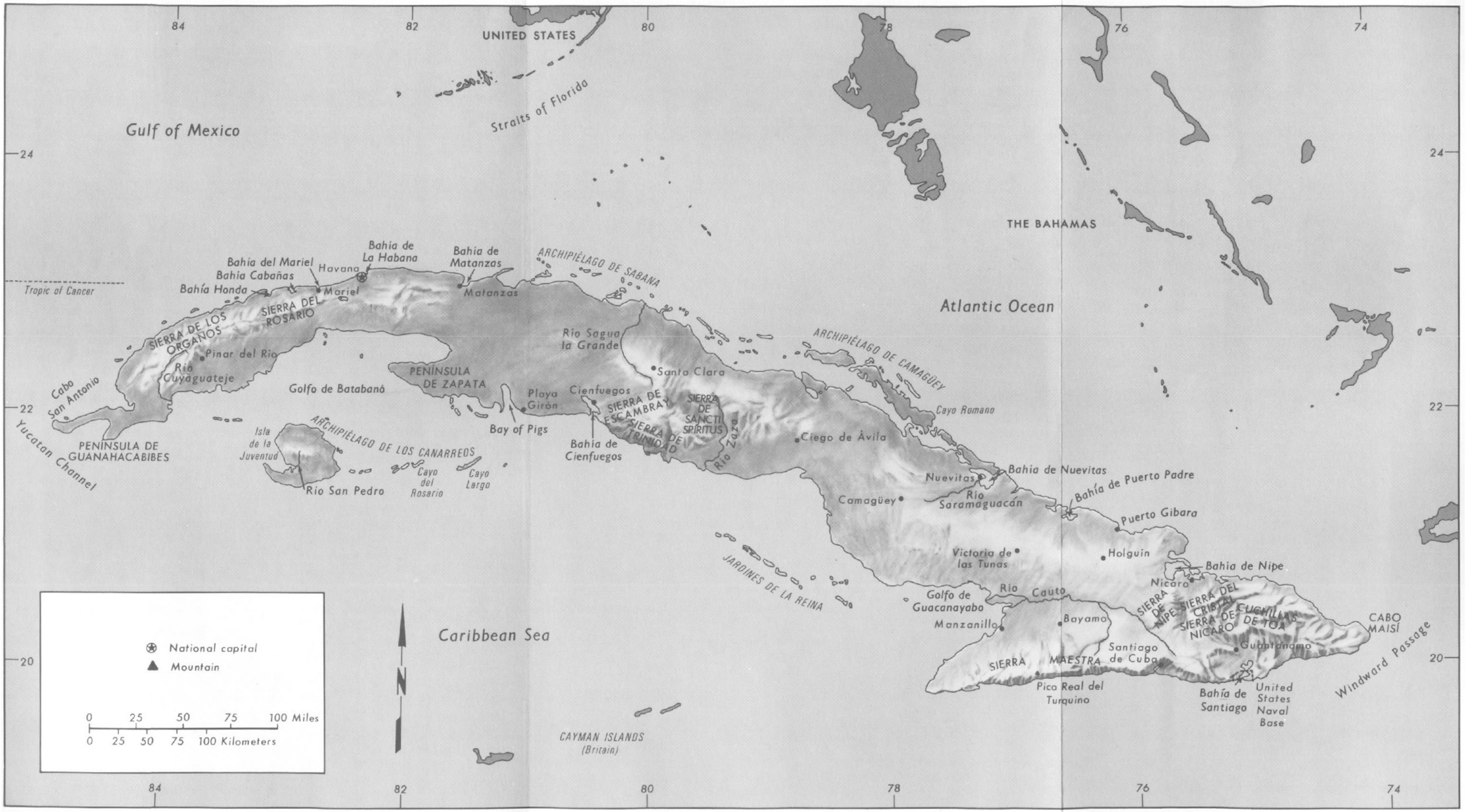


Figure 2. Terrain and Drainage

Topography and Drainage

The least mountainous of the Greater Antilles, the island of Cuba has an estimated median elevation of less than 100 meters above sea level. Its three principal mountainous zones—locally known as the *alturas* (literally, altitudes)—are isolated and separated by extensive plains and flatlands that cover almost two-thirds of the island's surface.

The *alturas* are zones of moderate elevation. The first, the Cordillera de Guaniguanico, is in the western province of Pinar del Río and comprises the Sierra de los Órganos and the Sierra del Rosario. El Pan de Guajaibón mountain, which has an altitude of 692 meters, is its highest point. The second, known as the Sierra de Escambray, is found in the southern areas of the provinces of Cienfuegos and Sancti Spíritus. This mountainous region includes the Sierra de Trinidad, peaking with the 1,156-meter Pico San Juan (also known as La Cuca) and the Sierra de Sancti Spíritus to the east. A third mountainous zone, and the highest, is found in the eastern provinces of Guantánamo, Santiago de Cuba, and Granma. It includes the Sierra Maestra, Sierra de Nipe, Sierra de Nicaro, Sierra del Cristal, and Cuchillas de Toa among its ranges.

The Sierra Maestra, the steepest of the Cuban ranges, is historically significant because from December 1956 until January 1959 it sheltered the revolutionary forces of Castro (see Fidel Castro and the Overthrow of Bastista, ch. 1). The Sierra Maestra rises abruptly from the southeast coast west of Guantanamo Bay, except where it is broken into a small lowland depression where Santiago de Cuba, the nation's second largest city, is located. It contains the island's highest mountains; Pico Real del Turquino, with an altitude of 1,872 meters, is the nation's highest.

Cuba has over 500 watercourses classified as rivers, most of which are short and have meager volume. The island's heaviest rainfall, as well as its largest rivers, is in the southeast, where the Río Cauto (370 kilometers long) and its tributaries, notably the Río Salado, drain the Sierra Maestra and the uplands to the north into the Golfo de Guacanayabo. River levels rise significantly during the rainy season, when 80 percent of the flow occurs, and seasonal flooding is common.

The coastal basins of Guantánamo and Santiago de Cuba that lie in the eastern part of the island continue westward, becoming a great central valley with rich limestone soils, usually with high clay content. The rich flatlands and rolling plains that make up almost two-thirds of the land have facilitated the cultivation of a wide variety of crops, especially sugarcane, tobacco, rice, and coffee, as

well as livestock raising. The fairly large areas of sandy soils found in southern Pinar del Río, southerwestern Matanzas, and Camagüey provinces, however, are covered with poor grass and scrub. In some inundated areas of the southern coast, mangrove swamps are found.

Climate

Cuba lies in the torrid zone; the Tropic of Cancer, which demarcates the northern edge of the tropics, lies a few kilometers north of the archipelago. Cuba is also located on the southwestern periphery of the North Atlantic high atmospheric pressure zone and thus is influenced by the northeast trade winds in winter and east-northeast winds in summer. The warm ocean currents of the Gulf Stream are a year-round ameliorating influence along the coasts.

The annual mean temperature is 25.5°C, with little variation between January, the coldest month, having an average temperature of 22.5°C, and August, the warmest month, having an average temperature of 27.8°C. During 1982 the maximum and minimum temperatures registered throughout the archipelago were 31.9°C and 16.3°C, respectively; both temperatures were recorded in the southeastern province of Santiago de Cuba.

Most of the country experiences a rainy season from May through October. In 1982 the average total rainfall for the archipelago was 1,142 millimeters; the western province of Pinar del Río received the most rainfall (1,796 millimeters) and the eastern province of Guantánamo the least (664 millimeters). The month of June was the rainiest, having an average rainfall of 200 millimeters, and the month of December the driest, with an average of 16 millimeters.

Because of its tropical location, Cuba has been hit periodically by different kinds of storms, especially hurricanes, some with winds over 200 kilometers an hour and heavy rains of up to 300 millimeters in a 24–hour period. Hurricane season is from June to November; September and October are the months of the most frequent storms.

Population

The United States Bureau of the Census projected the mid-1985 population of Cuba at 10.1 million. This constituted a growth

of 110,000 from its mid–1984 projection, representing an average annual growth rate of 1.1 percent. Seventy-one percent of the population was urban; however, the bureau cautioned that a very lax definition of urban settlement was used by official Cuban sources. (Urban areas were defined as having 2,000 or more inhabitants or those having fewer inhabitants but providing electricity, paved streets, and other services.)

The official Cuban government population estimate was almost the same; it gave a growth rate of 0.98 percent in mid–1984 and a national density of 88.4 people per square kilometer. Major differences in population distribution existed. Population was most heavily concentrated in Ciudad de La Habana province, where it reached a high density of 2,672 people per square kilometer, and least in the Isla de la Juventud, where the density was 27 people per square kilometer. Nine provinces had density rates lower than the national average, and six were most densely populated (see table 2, Appendix).

In 1985 only 2 percent of the population was under age one, while 27 percent was under age 15. These low figures were the result of a dramatic decline in fertility resulting in fertility rates (the average number of children born to each woman in her reproductive years, ages 14 to 49) lower than the number necessary to replace the population. Sixty-five percent of the population was considered to be of working age, that is, from 15 to 64 years; 8 percent was over 65 years. In 1976 the baby boom generation of the early 1960s began to enter the labor force, seeking jobs for the first time (see Labor, ch. 3).

International migration has played an important role in Cuba's history. The wave of immigration in the nineteenth century was directly related to the expansion of the sugar industry. Hundreds of thousands of African slaves, Chinese indentured servants, Spaniards, and other Europeans came to Cuba. In the early twentieth century almost 700,000 foreigners came to the island, mostly from Spain and neighboring countries, including the United States. Immigration continued until the Great Depression hit Cuba in the early 1930s, a period when some foreigners chose to return to their countries of origin (see The Republic, ch. 1).

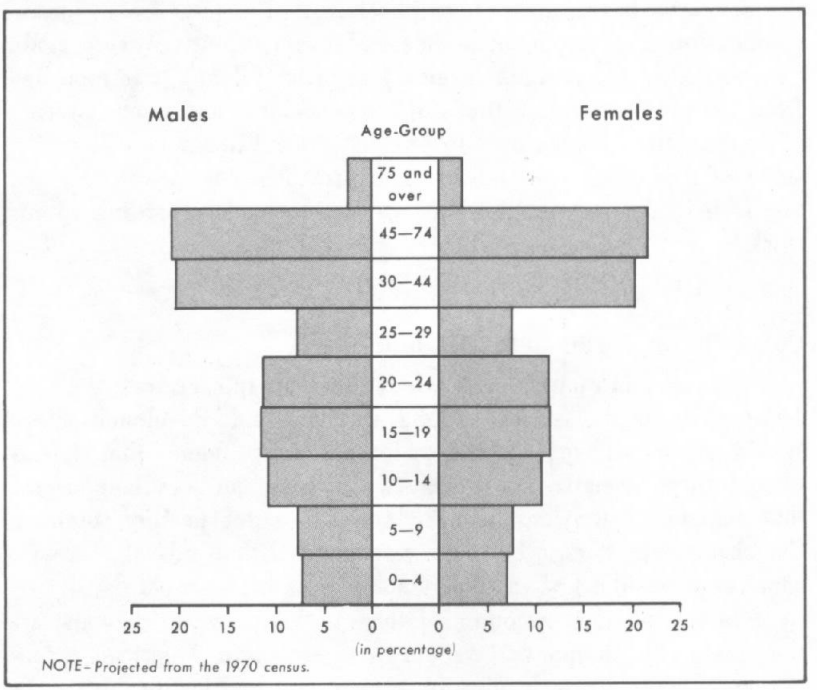
Although data vary, it is clear that international emigration increased significantly following the implementation of the revolutionary policies adopted by Castro's government. A United States National Research Council report edited by Paula E. Hollerbach and Sergio Díaz-Briquets indicated that between January 1, 1959, and September 30, 1980, an estimated 1 million people left Cuba.

Almost 800,000 of these settled in the United States, while most of the remainder emigrated to Mexico, Spain, or Venezuela.

The course of the demographic transition of twentieth-century Cuba contrasts sharply with the rapid population growth experienced by other developing countries. Cuba, along with Uruguay and Argentina, was among the first Latin American nations to experience a decline in mortality and fertility. By 1958, the last year of the government of Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar, the birth rate (yearly registered births per 1,000 inhabitants) had declined to 26.6 and the total fertility rate (the average number of children born to each woman) to 3.8. By 1984 the Washington-based Population Reference Bureau reported that Cuba had a crude birth rate (yearly registered births per 1,000 inhabitants) of 16; a crude death rate (yearly registered deaths per 1,000 inhabitants) of six; an annual population increase of almost 1 percent; an infant mortality rate (deaths of infants of one year of age or less per 1,000 live births) of 17.3; a life expectancy of 74 years; and a fertility rate of 1.8. As a whole, those demographic data were similar to data released by the government of Cuba, various United States government agencies, and other international organizations. For example, in 1984 the government of Cuba reported that its birth rate had declined to 14, its fertility rate to 1.8, its infant mortality rate to 16, and its annual growth rate to 1.1 percent—figures that were all among the lowest in the Western Hemisphere.

Infant mortality also began to decrease in the early twentieth century. During the 1970s and early 1980s the average annual rate began to decline rapidly, reaching 16.8 deaths per 1,000 children in 1983 and 16 by the end of 1984—one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the Western Hemisphere (the United States rate was around 12) (see Health and Welfare, this ch.).

Population growth has also been diminishing throughout the twentieth century, from estimated growth rates of 3.3 percent in 1907 to 1.1 percent in 1985. A simultaneous rise in the average life expectancy reflected the eradication of a number of diseases and the contribution of the national health system to the well-being of the population. Life expectancy was 33.2 years in 1900. By 1960 it had increased to 64, and by late 1984 to 73.5 years, similar to that of the United States. Cuba's irregular age distribution in 1985 was the result of a combination of demographic factors, such as the baby boom in the early 1960s, striking reductions in both fertility and infant mortality, and sizable waves of emigration (see fig. 3).



Source: Based on information from Kenneth Hill. "Population Projections." Washington, 1983.

Figure 3. Distribution of Age-Groups by Sex, 1985.

The New Revolutionary Man

In January 1959, after Batista fled Cuba, Castro assumed control of the leadership and began to implement a social revolution that he claimed would greatly transform Cuban society on behalf of the poor. Throughout his initial months in power he adopted a series of radical reforms and nationalization of property while gradually moving in the direction of Marxist socialism. In December 1961, when Castro publicly proclaimed himself a Marxist-Leninist, he declared that his objective was to transform Cuba into an egalitarian society in which the relationship between work and reward would be "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." At the top of his agenda by the mid-1960s were his efforts to create a selfless, revolutionary "new man"

(hombre nuevo) through the implementation of ambitious, expensive, and elaborate programs for improving health care and expanding educational facilities. In the mid–1970s, however, the concept of the new man began to be de-emphasized as a result of a major reformulation of government policies. Material incentives were again emphasized in the nation's economy as official dogma was modified from the previous notion that Cuba was socialist and in the process of constructing communism to one in which Cuba was still in the stage of constructing socialism. The previous slogan was changed to "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work."

Cuban Society Prior to the Revolution

A great controversy as to what Cuba was like prior to the year 1959 still raged in 1985. Cuba was an underdeveloped Third World nation with most of the socioeconomic problems that characterized those societies. However, while some authors emphasized that Batista's Cuba had been in a much better position than its Caribbean neighbors, other sources suggested that only after Castro came to power did Cuban society achieve its high standards.

Some statistical accounts of the 1950s appear to demonstrate that Cuba was in many ways ahead of its Latin American neighbors as a result of modernization efforts that had begun during the latter part of the nineteenth century and continued into the twentieth century. Cuba's educational and health standards rose substantially throughout this period. It was a Cuban epidemiologist, Dr. Carlos Juan Finlay, who was the first to theorize in 1881 that yellow fever was transmitted by the stegomyia mosquito; his theory helped physicians throughout the world to conquer this tropical disease. In the field of education the high academic standards of the University of Havana, founded in 1728, were unquestioned. However, major differences existed not only in the availability of health and educational services throughout Cuba but also in the quality of the services rendered. Havana, where in 1953 almost 20 percent of the national population lived, had the nation's best jobs, schools, and health facilities. During the 1950s Cuba's capital city was prosperous, expanding, sophisticated, and cultured, a city where per capita income was lower than only one nation—Venezuela—in Latin America and where its citizens enjoyed most of the services and facilities that existed in the United States. Havana also had a number of slums, however, where poor rural dwellers moved to escape grinding poverty. Other important cities, such as

Santiago de Cuba, with 3 percent of the national population, and Camagüey, with 2 percent, lacked the grandeur of the nation's capital.

The standard of living of rural dwellers in prerevolutionary Cuba was very low. In 1953 nearly 43 percent of the national population lived in rural areas. A very high percentage of the rural population was dependent upon the sugarcane industry, where work was available to them only four months per year; during the other eight months they were unemployed. Unemployment, especially during this *tiempo muerto* (dead season), was almost universal in rural areas, affecting 36 percent of the national population. Some sources reported that illiteracy in the hinterlands was as high as 40 percent and that rural medical care was nonexistent.

Except for the very high medical standards of a privileged minority, national health standards were relatively low. For example, Howard Handelman, a political scientist at the University of Wisconsin, quoting specialists, wrote that during the 1950s an average of 30 to 40 percent of Cuba's urban population and over 60 percent of its rural population was malnourished. According to the 1953 census, nearly 24 percent of the population of Cuba could neither read nor write, and in 1959 only 35 percent of the total school-age population received instruction.

Hombre Nuevo

One of the goals of the Cuban Revolution was the building of a communist society that would enable Cuba to abandon the capitalist system in favor of socialism. The Argentine-born physician and revolutionary theorist Ernesto (Che) Guevara said in 1965 that "to build communism, a new man must be created simultaneously with [the development of] a material base." This new man was to be devoted to the revolutionary cause and was to have a deeply rooted socialist consciousness.

Following the principle that human nature is not fixed but is a product of social relations, the "new man" idea rapidly became a doctrine of Cuba in the mid-1960s, and educators were encouraged to train and mold students toward self-sacrifice, to struggle against injustice and exploitation, to raise productivity, and to defend the Revolution and the Castro regime. After Guevara's death in 1967, he became the nation's official role model for the new man. He came to symbolize the doctrine of courage and self-sacrifice, and the motto *Seremos como Che* (We will be like Che) became the official slogan of the government-sponsored Organization of José Martí

Pioneers (Organización de Pioneros José Martí—OPJM), the nation's largest mass youth organization (see The Role of Mass Organizations in the Process of Socialization, this ch.). *Seremos como Che* meant that the youth committed themselves to imitating Guevara's principal virtues and sharing his conviction that the Revolution was an enduring global conflict between the world's downtrodden masses and United States imperialism.

During the mid–1980s the ideals of building a society based on the new man continued in force; the goal, according to Castro, was to achieve "a socialist Revolution where the masses would identify with their country and its interests and confirm them, react and respond," and where society would cultivate "the highest of human values, with feelings of solidarity, internationalism, socialism, and Marxism-Leninism." The expression "new man," however, was no longer used as official parlance in reference to these ideals.

Education

Official sources reported that during the 1983–84 academic year, Cuba had 3.1 million registered students (48 percent female) enrolled at 15,075 academic institutions at all levels under the guidance of 258,000 teachers and professors. An estimated 583,639 students received some kind of financial assistance, and 423,873 studied at various kinds of boarding schools. Ninety-eight percent of the population of 10- to 49-year-olds was literate by Cuban government standards (the population age 50 and over was excluded from these statistics, which were based on a survey concentrating on the population of childbearing age rather than a full census); however, the functional literacy rate was unknown. Following Cuba's internationalist policy, in 1984 an estimated 3,600 teachers and professors were working overseas in more than 20 countries. That same year 8,000 Cuban students were reported to be studying abroad, mostly in Eastern European countries. Over 20,000 Latin American and African students had studied in various Cuban provinces as guests of the Cuban government during the previous decade.

The Cuban educational system was profoundly changed as a result of the revolutionary measures adopted by the Castro government. Since 1959, and especially during 1961, which was officially proclaimed the "Year of Education," the government set goals to develop programs aimed at eliminating past class and regional differences in access to basic social services. The eradication of illiter-

acy, widespread in rural areas, received high priority. Rural education programs that were geared to the education of the formerly isolated peasant population were established with the additional objective of incorporating the rural poor into the political and economic mainstream.

On January 1, 1961, the government began the National Campaign Against Illiteracy. By December 22 it claimed that throughout that year more than 300,000 Cubans had taught more than 707,000 men and women how to read and write, reducing the illiteracy rate from an estimated 21 percent to 3.9 percent. However, Carmelo Mesa-Lago, a Cuban scholar at the University of Pittsburgh, questioned this claim, suggesting that the illiteracy rate was reduced to 13 percent by 1970 and possibly to 7 or 8 percent in 1979.

On July 6, 1961, the government promulgated the Law on the Nationalization of Education, by which all private education was nationalized (ostensibly as a result of the conflict with the Roman Catholic Church), and all schools were placed under the control of the Ministry of Education. During the first five years of the revolutionary government, an estimated 200,000 Cubans, many of them members of the intellectual and technical elites, emigrated and thus deprived Cuba of many of its most highly educated citizens. At the same time, this emigration allowed Castro to place his supporters, the majority of whom had ranked lower in the social, economic, and political hierarchy, into vacated positions at the top of government.

The 1976 Constitution proclaims that all citizens, regardless of age, have the right to attend school. According to Article 8, no child should be left without schooling nor any young person be left without the opportunity to study. Nor should any citizen be left without access to studies, culture, and sports. Students are to be educated in the spirit of socialism, and study and productive work should be combined throughout the educational system.

In the mid-1980s education was free at all levels and was equally accessible to males and females. Ideological criteria were reported as playing an important role, however, in determining admission to technical and higher educational institutions. Education was the exclusive prerogative of the state, and the school system followed the guidelines set forth by Marxism-Leninism, as interpreted by the government. All educational programs were supplemented by scholarships that covered living expenses and medical assistance. Rural villages and urban centers had their own schools with teachers in residence, and the proportion of students graduating from urban and rural schools was almost identical. The govern-

Courtesy Prensa Latina

Schoolchildren
Photo by John Finan

ment's priorities were to support a new model of rural education based on the study and work principle, which emphasized the teachings of practical and work-oriented skills required for national development. Another national educational goal was to provide all Cubans with an educational level equivalent to the ninth grade. By 1984 the national budget for the educational sector was over 1,500 million pesos (for value of the peso—see Glossary), representing an estimated 15 percent of the gross national product.

Structure of the School System

The Cuban school system was composed of six distinct subsystems: general education, consisting of preschool followed by 12 or 13 grades (six grades of primary education, three grades of basic high school, and an additional three or four grades of intermediate education in the form of preuniversity, vocational, or upper secondary education); technical education, parallel to high school; adult education, including language instruction, to facilitate the continuing education of working people; youth education, specially designed for problem students; special education for handicapped students; and higher, or university, education. The whole system was under the direct authority of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, and other national institutes (see table 3, Appendix).

General education was provided at a preschool level at day nurseries for children beginning at the age of 45 days and for children ages four to six at preschool centers under the direction of the Federation of Cuban Women (Federación Mujeres Cubanas—FMC) (see The Role of Mass Organizations in the Process of Socialization, this ch.). In 1984 it was reported that 835 preschool day-care centers existed and served an estimated 100,000 children. Primary education was compulsory from age six and was provided in both regular and boarding schools. In the spring of 1984 some 231,000 students graduated from sixth grade.

Upon graduation, students were encouraged to continue through high school, which was divided into two steps, each of which offered three- to four-year courses of study. At the first of these steps, students had three options: to attend a basic high school, to go to a technical school, or to attend a teachers college specializing in elementary education. In the spring of 1984 some 170,000 students completed this first stage. Upon completion of basic high school, a student could enroll at the intermediate level at either a university preparatory school for an additional three

years of courses that would lead to higher education; an intermediate-level training center such as a technical and language institute; one of a variety of teachers colleges; an arts school; or a school for athletes. Those who chose a technical high school could continue their education at the nation's various institutes of technology. In the spring of 1984 the Cuban government reported that it had more than 400,000 intermediate-level students.

Adult education (also known as the "parallel political system") offered language courses and remedial education to a broad range of people from all educational levels, including peasants and blue-collar workers. The government divided this category into three sublevels: the peasant's and worker' training program, which included literacy classes up to the sixth grade; the secondary peasants' and workers' training program, which was similar to junior high school; and the peasants' and workers' college, which enabled them to continue through high school and eventually enter a university.

Youth education offered special remedial programs to students ages 13 to 16 with severe learning problems while also giving them an opportunity to learn a trade. Special education was geared toward the training of mentally or physically handicapped children as well as those ill-adjusted to a school or society.

Higher education included specialized programs for the training of professionals in all fields as well as postgraduate education. Since mid-1976 a majority of colleges and universities have been under the authority of the Ministry of Higher Education; however, a few others have been administered by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Public Health, or the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces. In the mid-1980s higher education was provided at 43 facilities, including five universities, six university centers, military schools, and other institutes of higher education that trained students in 98 different specialties. These facilities were located in all 14 provinces, each of which had a school of medicine. In the 1983–84 academic year enrollment reached 200,000 students, 38 percent of whom were enrolled in regular (full-time) day courses closely monitored by the government because of their relevance to the nation's economy or service. The remaining 62 percent were enrolled in so-called directed study courses, defined as those in which the students' desire to further their knowledge was not directly related to the nation's economy or services. These received lower priority in the allocation of resources. Of the 200,000 enrolled students, 35 percent were studying in teaching-related areas; 14 percent, technical programs; 9 percent, medical schools; 8 percent, economics; 8 percent, agricultural sciences; 4 percent, natural

sciences and mathematics; and 22 percent in other programs. In the spring of 1984 Castro reported that a total of 2,080 students graduated from the University of Havana, including 1,400 regular day students.

Any student who had completed the 12 years of primary school and high school with a good academic record, had passed an entrance examination, and had undergone a personal interview to ascertain whether certain political and ideological requirements had been met (which included being a Marxist-Leninist) was eligible for higher education. Upon admission to a university or college, a student was expected to take courses for a period that varied from four to six years, at the end of which a professional title would be received. All students, regardless of their field, had to study Marxist-Leninist philosophy and economics; there was an explicit attempt to politicize all students in their fields of study in support of the Revolution. Those eligible for further studies could enroll for an additional two to six years of advanced graduate studies and original research, depending upon the specific career as well as the time required; upon completion of this work the student would receive the degree of candidate for the doctor of sciences. Upon filing a dissertation, the student was awarded a doctor of science degree.

Study and Productive Work

Among the general premises that guided the Cuban educational system at all levels was the principle that study and manual productive work should be combined. The application of this principle in the mid-1960s led the government to send the entire faculty, students, and staff of urban high schools at all levels to live and do "voluntary" work in rural areas for six weeks as part of the School Goes to the Countryside Program. This program was later supplemented by the Schools in the Countryside Program under which state-operated, coeducational, boarding, basic high schools (grades seven to 10) began to operate in rural areas and combined classes with agricultural, industrial, or manufacturing work. Every day half the student body was expected to attend classes in the morning while the other half worked at nearby agricultural areas or at assembly plants or manufacturing plants situated in the vicinity. The program was intended not only to integrate young students into productive work but also to break down traditional barriers between rural and urban society and to emphasize the principle that while students studied they should contribute to the national econo-

my by helping to cover their educational expenses. Students were therefore removed from family life and placed in new living and learning environments where they received "correct" ideological training and where their behavior could be closely observed and strongly influenced.

In the mid-1980s rural education appeared to be an important means of achieving socialist revolutionary objectives in economic production, ideological training, and educational preparation. In 1984 the government reported that the principle of combining work and study was being implemented at all levels of the educational system. At the primary educational level, for example, many rural school students worked two hours a day in agricultural production. At the basic high school level an estimated 800 schools in the countryside were reported to accommodate a total of 400,000 students in grades seven to 10 throughout the academic year in specially constructed facilities that included classrooms, dormitories, laboratories, and workshops.

The work study principle also was applied at higher educational levels. For example, law students were required to work during the mornings at the Ministry of Justice and, during their fourth year, to serve as technical advisers in the people's courts. Many university programs required their graduates in most professional fields to work two years in rural service. All university students were also required to be members of the Territorial Troops Militia, to spend at least half of their two-month vacation doing agricultural work, and to perform unpaid volunteer work on weekends (see The Mobilized Population, ch. 5).

The Role of Mass Organizations in the Process of Socialization

Mass organizations played a very important role throughout the process of education and socialization in Cuba. They were designed by the government in the early 1960s as mutual-aid, self-help, and representative organizations of different age and interest groups. The government claimed that the main purpose of these organizations was to facilitate the participation of all Cubans in the most important social, political, economic and defense decisions. Theoretically, these mass organizations were the result of a historical process during which a segment of the national population had "voluntarily" organized itself outside the state apparatus to fulfill its members' collective aspirations. Any social group was, in theory, entitled to organize as a new mass organization.

Village scene near Santiago de Cuba
Photo by Philip Brenner

Article 7 of the 1976 Constitution recognizes, protects, and promotes the establishment of these mass organizations. In practice, however, Article 61 of Cuba's Constitution severely curtails the actions of the various mass organizations by explicitly stating that "none of the freedoms which are recognized for citizens may be exercised contrary to what is established in the Constitution and the law, or contrary to the existence and objectives of the socialist state, or contrary to the decision of the Cuban people to build socialism and communism. Violation of this principle is punishable by law." In the mid-1980s the largest and most important of these organizations were the Confederation of Cuban Workers (Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba—CTC), the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (Comités de Defensa de la Revolución—CDRs), the FMC, the National Association of Small Farmers (Asociació Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños—ANAP), the Federation of University Students (Federación Estudiantil Universitaria—

FEU), the Federation of Intermediate Level Students (Federación de Estudiantes de Enseñanza Media—FEEM), and the OPJM.

During the mid-1980s participation in all the mass organizations was very high; usually over 80 percent of all those eligible were members. However, as *The Situation of Human Rights in Cuba,* published in October 1983 by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States (OAS) indicated, membership in the various mass organizations was practically a prerequisite for many routine activities. Membership affected such rights as admission to universities, promotions, access to certain kinds of vacation or recreational activities, and access to nonperishable products, which required CTC local chapter certification that the buyer was selected as an "advanced worker" by his workers' assembly. Those who did not participate in a mass organization became, for all practical purposes, social outcasts. Therefore, in assessing the size of these organizations it was difficult to determine when the decision to join was an indication of support and agreement with the policies of the government and of the PCC and when it was a pragmatic compromise that gave access to the system's material benefits. Surveys found that most emigrants of the 1980 Mariel boatlift were not members of any mass organization.

In practice, mass organizations played an important role in the Organs of People's Power and coordinated their major activities with the PCC (see The State Structure, ch. 4). All mass organizations were state controlled. The heads of the CTC, CDRs, ANAP, and FMC, in addition to their responsibilities in their mass organizations, each held four posts in the PCC and the state bureaucracy: alternate member of the PCC Political Bureau, member of the Central Committee of the PCC, deputy to the National Assembly of People's Power, and member of the Council of State. They were therefore among the most powerful people in Cuba. The heads of the OPJM and FEU, that is, the children's and university students' organizations, also held important posts in the Union of Young Communists (Unión de Jóvenes Communistas—UJC), a PCC affiliate organization, in addition to their responsibilities to the mass organizations (see Mass Organizations, ch. 4).

Only a single mass organization existed to represent the interests of a specific group of people, and the organizational structure of each was rigid and highly centralized, consisting of a large national headquarters, large provincial offices, and over 164 municipal and local branch offices. The most important programs and activities of mass organizations included the indoctrination of members to the principles of socialism, the relaying of government and PCC messages from national headquarters to local branches and