CUBAN COMMUNISM

1959-2003

11th EDITION

Irving Louis Horowitz
Jaime Suchlicki
editors

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Contents

Acknowledgments

Ch. 1. Irving Louis Horowitz, "One Hundred Years of Ambiguity: U.S.-Cuba Relations in the 20th Century," originally published in *The National Interest*, Number 67 (Spring 2002), pp. 58-64.

Ch. 2. Hugh Thomas, "Cuba, The United States and Batista, 1952-1958." Lecture prepared for the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. First published in *Cuban Communism* (6th edition), 1986, pp. 3-12.

Ch. 3. Roberto Luque Escalona, "The Sierra and the Plains," *The Tiger and the Children: Fidel Castro and the Judgment of History.* New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1992, pp. 94-115.

Ch. 4. Marta San Martín and Ramón L. Bonachea, originally appeared as "The Military Dimension of the Cuban Revolution," adapted from *The Cuban Insurrection, 1952-1959.* New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1974.

Ch. 5. Max Frankel, originally published as "Learning from the Missile Crisis: What Really Happened on Those Thirteen Fateful Days in October," *Smithsonian,* October 2002, pp. 53-64

Ch. 6. Luis E. Aguilar, originally appeared as "From Immutable Proclamations to Unintended Consequences: Marxism-Leninism and the Cuban Government." Prepared and first published in *Cuban Communism* (6th edition), 1986, pp. 140-159.

Ch. 7. Tad Szulc, originally published as "Fidelismo," *The Wilson Quarterly*. Volume 12, Number 5 (1988), pp. 49-63.

Ch. 8. Carmelo Mesa-Lago, originally appeared in *Cuba in Transition—Volume 11*. Washington, DC: Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy, 2001. Revised for publication in *Cuban Communism* (11th edition), 2003.

Ch. 9. Efren Córdova and Eduardo García Moure, originally appeared as "Modern Slavery: Labor Conditions in Cuba," Institute for Cuban & Cuban American Studies Occasional Paper Series, University of Miami, April 2000. Revised for publication in *Cuban Communism* (10th edition), 2000.

Ch. 10. Mary Katherine Crabb, originally entitled "Politics and the Culture of Work in the Dual Economy" and presented as a paper at the Association for the

Study of the Cuban Economy, Coral Gables, Florida, August 6–8, 1999. Revised for publication in *Cuban Communism* (10th edition), 2000.

Ch. 11. Julie M. Bunck, "Market-Oriented Marxism: Post-Cold War Transition in Cuba and Vietnam," *Cuban Studies*, Volume 26, Number 1, (1996), pp. 35–59.

Ch. 12. Jorge F. Pérez-López, originally published as "Waiting for Godot: Cuba's Stalled Reforms and Continuing Economic Crisis," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Volume 48, Number 6 (November-December 2001), pp. 43-55.

Ch. 13. Antonio Jorge, originally entitled "Cuba's Transition from Communism to Political and Economic Freedom," presented as a paper for the Cuba Transition Project of the Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies of the University of Miami, August 2002. Revised for publication in *Cuban Communism* (11th edition), 2003.

Ch. 14. Ernesto F. Betancourt, originally entitled "International Organizations and Post-Castro's Cuba," presented as a paper for the Cuba Transition Project of the Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies of the University of Miami, August 2002. Revised for publication in *Cuban Communism* (11th edition), 2003.

Ch. 15. Damian J. Fernandez, originally published as "Society, Civil Society, and the State: An Uneasy Three-Way Affair," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Volume 48, Number 6 (November-December 2001), pp. 56-63.

Ch. 16. Benigno E. Aguirre, originally published as "The Conventionalization of Collective Behavior in Cuba," in *The American Journal of Sociology.* Volume 90, Number 3 (1985), pp. 541-566.

Ch. 17. Taylor C. Boas, originally published as "The Dictator's Dilemma?: The Internet and U.S. Policy toward -Cuba," *Washington Quarterly*, Volume 23, Number 3 (Summer 2000), pp. 57-67.

Ch. 18. Marisela Fleites-Lear, originally entitled "Women, Family, and the Cuban Revolution: A Personal and Socio-Political Analysis" and presented as a paper at the Latin American Studies Association Congress, Washington, DC, September 1995. Revised for publication in *Cuban Communism* (10th edition), 2000.

Ch. 19. Tim Golden, "Health Care in Cuba" from *The New York Times,* October 15 (1994).

Ch. 20. Silvia Pedraza, "Cuba's Refugees: Manifold Migrations," longer version originally published in *Origins and Destinies: Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in America*, Silvia Pedraza and Ruben G. Rumbaut, editors, Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth Press, reprinted with permission.

Ch. 21. Emilio Ichikawa Morin, originally published as "The Moral Basis of Cuban Society," in *Society*. Volume 40, Number 3, March/April 2003, pp. 64-71.

Ch. 22. Phyllis Greene Walker, originally appeared as "Political-Military Relations Since 1959," in *Conflict and Change in Cuba*, edited by Enrique A. Baloyra and James A. Morris. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993, pp. 110-135.

Ch. 23. Juan Carlos Espinosa, originally published as "Vanguard of the State: The Cuban Armed Forces in Transition," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Volume 48, Number 6 (November-December 2001), pp. 19-30.

Ch. 24. Irving Louis Horowitz, originally published as "Military Origins and Outcomes of the Cuban Revolution," *Armed Forces and Society*. Volume 1, Number 4 (1975), pp. 402-18; and Volume 3, Number 4 (1977), pp. 617-31.

Ch. 25. Juan M. del Aguila, "The Cuban Armed Forces: Changing Roles, Continued Loyalties," first published in *Cuban Communism* (9th edition), 1998.

Ch. 26. Jaime Suchlicki, "Cuban Military Influences on Political and Economic Decision Making." Prepared for and first published in *Cuban Communism* (10th edition), 2000.

Ch. 27. Jorge I. Domínguez, "Why The Cuban Regime Has Not Fallen," testimony before the U.S. Advisory Panel on Radio Marti and Television Marti" (1994). First published in the eighth edition of *Cuban Communism*, 1989.

Ch. 28. Jaime Suchlicki, "Cuba: Without Subsidies," *Cuba Brief* (March, 1997), pp. 3-7.

Ch. 29. Susan Kaufman Purcell, originally appeared as "Cuba" in *Economic Sanctions and America Diplomacy*, edited by Richard N. Haas. New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1998. Excerpted with permission of the publisher.

Ch. 30. Mark Falcoff, "Cuba and the United States: Back to the Beginning," *World Affairs*, Volume 156, Number 3 (Winter 1994), pp. 111-123.

Ch. 31. Eusebio Mujal-León and Joshua W. Busby, originally published as "Much Ado About Something?: Regime Change in Cuba," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Volume 48, Number 6 (November-December 2001), pp. 6-18.

Ch. 32. Carlos Alberto Montaner, "The Cuban Revolution and Its Acolytes," *Society*, Volume 31, Number 5 (1994), pp. 73-80.

Ch. 33. Josep M. Colomer, "After Fidel, What? Forecasting Institutional Change in Cuba," first published in *Cuban Communism* (9th edition), 1998.

Ch. 34. Brian Latell, "The United States and Cuba: Future Security Issues," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Volume 34, Number 4 (Winter) 2000, pp. 87–99.

Ch. 35. Sergio Díaz-Briquets, "Role of the United States and International Lending Institutions in Cuba's Transition," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Volume 34, Number 4 (Winter) 2000, pp. 73–86.

Ch. 36. Edward Gonzalez, originally entitled "After Castro: Alternative Regimes and U.S. Policy," prepared for the Cuba Transition Project of the Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies of the University of Miami. Revised for publication in *Cuban Communism* (11th edition), 2003.

Ch. 37. Michael Radu, "Festina Lente—The United States and Cuba After Castro," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Volume 34, Number 4 (Winter) 2000, pp. 7–22.

Ch. 38. Andrew S. Natsios, "Humanitarian Assistance during a Democratic Transition in Cuba," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Volume 34, Number 4 (Winter) 2000, pp. 23–33.

Ch. 39. Carmelo Mesa-Lago, originally entitled "Growing Economic and Social Disparities in Cuba: Impact and Recommendations for Change," prepared for the Cuba Transition Project of the Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies of the University of Miami. Revised for publication in *Cuban Communism* (11th edition), 2003.

Appendix I. "Chronology of the Cuban Revolution: 1959-2002," prepared for and updated in *Cuban Communism* (11th edition), 2003.

Appendix II. "Current and Past Revolutionary Leaders," prepared for and updated in *Cuban Communism* (11th edition), 2003.

Appendix III. "Chronology of Cuba and the Middle East: 2000-2002," prepared for *Cuban Communism* (11th edition), 2003.

Appendix IV. "Castro and Terrorism: Chronology and Glossary," prepared for *Cuban Communism* (11th edition), 2003.

Appendix V. "Fidel Castro on the United States: Selected Statements, 1958–2003," prepared for *Cuban Communism* (11th edition), 2003.

Introduction to the 11th edition of Cuban Communism

"Tyranny consists in the desire of universal power beyond its scope." Blaise Pascal, Thoughts *(Number 332).*

I. Long Term Perspectives

From the very outset of Cuban Communism, predictions of its demise were made–sometimes quietly, and at other times as a crescendo of self-declared expertise. But over and against what *should* have taken place, a countertendency emerged–since no such counterrevolution occurred, none *could* take place. In some measure such predictive extremes were a reflection of the passions the Castro era has generated. Hope replaced reason and passion displaced evidence. In such an environment, the eleven editions of *Cuban Communism* have served as a beacon for the accurate measurement of events. It has done so in the belief that a free society is indeed far superior to a totalitarian one, and acknowledges that statements of values, however personally satisfying, do not replace the need for careful, factual analysis.

This prolegomenon registered, it is fair to say that however important the history, politics, economics and social structure of Cuba may be to the study of the present, it is also the case that the desire to know, nay predict, the future of Castro's Cuba remains a subtext in a great deal of analysis disguised as purely objective. The steady drumbeat of essays and articles on the "transition" of Cuba attests to precisely this brew of what exists and what we want to exist. This volume, the latest and hopefully the last in the series of volumes on Cuban Communism, attempts to appreciate the admixture of sentiments without falling prey to its worst curses–dogmatic, subjective, and ideological thinking. In serving as the informal record of the progress–if that is the proper word–of the Cuban Revolution, it is our view that this compendium has performed its tasks ably, and at times, brilliantly.

One of the grand luxuries of wealthy and large nations is their ability to develop a division of policy labors. As a result, we have an entity called "foreign policy" and another called "domestic policy" or sometimes "national policy."

Small and dependent nations like Cuba really do not have such luxuries either of definitions or actions. When we look at Cuba today–at the start of the 44th year of the Castro regime–what we observe is a mélange of events superimposed on one another. To some degree these are domestic policies driven by foreign exigencies, and in other instances, one finds foreign adventures that drive domestic affairs. Whatever the causal chain may be, the fusion and the interaction of domestic and foreign, national and international, is increasingly a hall mark of small nations, none more so than Cuba since 1959.

Indeed, it is a high irony of Castro that friend and foe alike harbor a certain admiration for his unwillingness to resign himself to such a sizing down. Yet, the wear and tear of trying to achieve grandeur in a context of small nationhood has finally proven too much even for Fidel. That he felt the need in mid-2002 to respond to the Varela Project–a modest effort to petition for a new referendum–by insisting upon a massive show of inflated support, attests to the prospect that time is running out on *el comandante*. The laws of entropy are greater than even his massive ego can resist. The establishment of 120,000 petition stations across Cuba, and the mobilization of seven to eight million people, or roughly one hundred percent of people on the island over sixteen years of age, does little to reassure the rest of the world. More importantly, it does little to assuage the Cuban people themselves that this call for a constitutional amendment declaring Cuba's presumably "Marxist socialist" economic, political and social system to be inviolable and unchangeable, is worth any more than the paper on which the petitions are printed. Underlining the present moment of regime desperation are economic circumstances over which Castro has little influence.

Cuba during its 44 years of Communism has proven woefully unable to break the shackles of a single-crop economy. It has continued to rely on one crop, sugar, to supply other requirements for the society. Two main factors have limited the impact of such a policy: the continued plummeting of world sugar prices due to a glutted market caused by global overproduction, and of greater consequence, the severe deterioration of Cuban sugar mills themselves. Despite mobilization of the state apparatus, the sugar harvest is only slightly more than in previous years. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the sugar production of Cuba has plummeted from 8.1 million tons in 1989 (the last year of Soviet subsidies) to the present level of about 3.6 million tons. Cuba is now undertaking a program of closing 71 out of 156 currently operating mills. The breakdown of equipment, the inability of Cuba to maintain any sort of technological competition with other nations, has led to a situation in which falling production now reflects declining world prices. The limited ability to purchase oil with sugar has now reached crisis proportions.

To further complicate matters, the tourist industry, which was to pick up the slack in sugar production, suffered greatly after the terrorist bombings of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. For the first half

of 2002, tourism to Cuba was off 14 percent from the same period one year earlier. Again, the problem is not simply the international decline in air traffic, but the relatively unattractive situation in Cuba with respect to tourist facilities. People on holidays are not looking for political slogans so much as pleasant personal situations for a limited time. The malaise of the national economy of Cuba feeds into polarizing consequences. The service sector displaces the production sector in the search for surplus. Indeed, in an effort to attract European tourists, the Cuban economic ministry has said it would allow the Euro currency to circulate alongside the U.S. dollar. But even this has a cost to the regime. It heightens the already considerable gap between have and have not individuals, namely, those who benefit from foreign currency speculation and exchange from those confined to the domestic Cuban currency. The idea of a "Marxist" regime heightening the gaps between people in the economic and social realms is clearly an unanticipated consequence of the desperate search for new sources of state revenues.

A third element in Cuban life that both props the economy and unbalances any prospects for stability is the remission of considerable sums of money from Cuban Americans to relatives and families in Cuba proper. Such remittances, estimated by *The Economist* to total $800 million annually at the start of 2003, provide the regime with much needed hard currencies with which to make critical foreign payments and purchases. However, it also "dollarizes" the economy. As a consequence, the internal gulf between haves and have-nots is further exaggerated, making for a strain within the economic and social stratification of Cuban society that can hardly be addressed, much less resolved. Foreign currency remissions pushes further back what was once the primary goal of Castro's regime: the creation of an egalitarian society—even at low levels of earnings and opportunities.

As an indicator of how deeply global events have disrupted the national economy, one needs look at the Venezuela coup and counter-coup. Although Venezuela President Hugo Chavez managed to retain state power, the dubious price of doing so was restoring some semblance of rationality to Venezuela's oil-based economy. Before the golpe, Venezuela supplied Cuba with more than 50,000 barrels of oil a day—about a third of the island's requirements. Much of this was to be financed at a two percent rate of interest over a fifteen-year time frame. One of the first pronouncements during the brief spell that Chavez was out of office was an announcement by Petroleos de Venezuela that the Venezuelan nation would immediately cease the shipment of petroleum to Cuba. While it was assumed that ideology would trump economy once again, and Chavez would restore shipments to Castro, the strikes and turmoil that have gripped Venezuela under its military dictatorial period frustrated such resumption. The Cuban government has confirmed that it has received few recent petroleum benefits from Venezuela. Moreover, it has been forced to turn to the spot market and spend "dozens of millions" of dollars in order to obtain oil. The instability of

the Chavez regime at this point makes it difficult to predict whether any meaningful or permanent resumption of petroleum shipments from Venezuela to Cuba can take place.

While it would be illusory to presume that economic reality will displace political despotism–indeed, such "economic determinism" has continually been proven wrong in the past–Cuba's current economic distress coupled with even modest political resistance and social disorder, makes the prospects for closure of the Castro era appear considerably closer at hand than at any time in the past 44 years. Certainly, it is now reasonable to consider a variety of scenarios for a transitional government after the termination of the Castro regime. The great strength of Castro has been a network of political organizations, from the block level to the women and youth brigades that owe a special allegiance to the regime for its central position in the society. But this depends heavily on some form of reward system–less than for the upper echelons of the armed forces, but still real–from privileges in newly constructed housing units to job favoritism working in industries that have contact with foreign, such as hotel waiters and bank managers.

But even if the system cannot readily be toppled by economic rationality, the problem for Castro and his associates remains real: how to maintain ideological fervor and street-level mobilization in such a downwardly spiraling political economy. The limits of charisma should be sorely tested in the near term. Nonetheless, the failure to institutionalize the revolution, to move to a next generation of top echelon political leadership, does not necessarily spell the end of the regime as such. The emergence of dynastic communism, of a hierarchy built upon patronage and family ties, has proven resilient in places as far removed as North Korea and Syria, and is clearly what the Castro brothers envision for Cuba. It will hardly be the first time in history that personal vanity tinged by a sense of infallibility could result less in reform than in reaction. But this pattern of continuing dictatorship might itself also serve as a long-term trigger to rebellion and restitution of democratic norms. With the rest of Latin America serving as onlookers to Cuba's collapse, rather than active supporters, the time for change in Cuba may actually be closer at hand than skeptics might imagine. In any event, the play of national and global forces has now reached a stage that can hardly be met, much less resolved, by manifestations of support or cooked-up signature drives to assure the great dictator that he still sits, albeit uneasily, on his proletarian throne.

The primary evidence for a necessary, if indeed insufficient, cause for such a systemic collapse is the woeful performance of the Cuban economy. Despite the regime's total dedication to maintain the peso as the currency of the nation, it declined 22.7 percent in 2001, with the same tendencies taking place in 2002. Indeed, the situation has worsened as a result of the decline in tourism from Europe and the deterioration of sugar revenues as mentioned above. A July 2002 report filed from Havana by Marc Frank on behalf of Reuters News Agency

declares that "the dollar would be trading at 40 pesos to the dollar if not for a government imposed freeze on the exchange rate." The difficulty is that in the managed Cuban economy, the government is spending more money while declining revenues indicate lower solvency. It is evident that the return to solvency of the last decade has run out of steam in the present decade. As a result, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that Cuba is long in a protracted period best described as a crisis in the socialist state economy–that sector that employs more than 90 percent of the labor force.

The political contradictions within the Cuban system have become irrevocable. For the sham vote of 99.7 percent of Cuban people signing onto an amendment to the Constitution making the socialist system irreversible, only served to highlight the brittle character of the regime. The imaginary support for Castro exceeds even the fantasies of Stalin's popular vote during the heyday of the Soviet terror. What this points to is an insoluble contradiction between Castro's evident desire to open the economy to globalization, while maintaining a closed political system at home. Thus it would appear that in areas where the United States embargo is simply not an operative factor, the contradictions of the socialist state appear manifest. Indeed, *The Economist,* in its first issue for 2003, estimates that the United States is already the tenth largest trading partner for Cuba, despite the retention of the embargo. But even these purchases for food create secondary contradictions, since other foreign trading partners dealing in credit envy the position of the United States, dealing with Cuba only in cash.

As the recent (2002) memorandum of European investors has made clear, there are a series of obstacles to doing business that are so prejudicial and egregious, as to deter even the most dedicated entrepreneur from going into present-day Cuba. A litany of complaints are cited–from customs and import charges, residence and work permits and visas, inflation of labor charges that bear no relation to actual labor performance or level of tasks needed, to a tax system that requires payment by foreign companies in dollars, while in reverse, offering Cuban pesos in payment of its outstanding obligations, and even the methods of charging payment. The fiscal system as a whole is rigged so that Cuban banks charge exorbitant fees without corresponding guarantees of payment. So it is that European commercial "good intentions" provide a road to economic hell rather than commercial parity.

Having provided this brief recitation of the current situation, it is important to reiterate what we have maintained over the years: fiscal hardship and even crisis do not topple dictatorial regimes. The response of such regimes is to redistribute what wealth exists, so that there is essentially a parity of hardships–which itself reduces the risk to regime insolvency. And the regime of Fidel Castro has proven masterful at such management of scarce resources. The problem he and his government now face is how long such statist managerial techniques can keep the lid on the society itself. The redistribution of poverty is, after all, not quite the same as the distribution of wealth–and with the

omnipresent dollar end of the economy, now reinforced by the inclusion of the Euro currency as a free floating element, the social pressures can only be expected to increase.

II. Recent Trends

As the first decade of the twenty-first century unfolds, several important international events are having a positive impact on Cuba and the Castro regime. There is the survival capacity of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela; the landslide electoral victory of Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in Brazil; and the willingness of the Chinese to increase trade with and investments in Cuba. To this must be added the readiness of the U.S. Congress to liberalize the longstanding embargo of the island which is encouraging Cuban leaders in their attempt to muddle through the difficult period following the collapse of the Soviet Union. These events, while not likely to alleviate Cuba's continuing economic crisis, may prove helpful to the longevity of the Castro revolution.

The Chavez presidency has proven highly significant for Castro. Initially Chavez tried unsuccessfully to incorporate Cuba into the San Jose Accord. This would have provided Cuba with Venezuelan petroleum at a discounted price. Mexican and other opposition prevented Fidel's younger comrade from achieving his goal of helping Castro. But the continued existence of the Chavez regime in Venezuela does provide a genuine, if modest source of raw materials at cheap prices. Of significant importance for Castro recently was the rise to power in January 2003 of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in Brazil. A close ally of Castro in Latin America and one of the founders of the Foro de Sao Paulo, a group of leftist, Marxist and revolutionary leaders, Lula could provide Cuba with long-term, concessionary credits to purchase Brazilian food products. More importantly, perhaps, will be Lula's support for Cuba in international forums and in pressuring the United States to end its embargo of the island. The presence of Lula and Chavez in South America represent a formidable force in challenging U.S. policies with respect to the continuation of Castro's regime in Cuba.

Perhaps the most intriguing, if unanticipated, development in the past few years is the growth of Chinese investments and involvement with the Castro regime. The Chinese have built a variety of factories in the island and have invested in Cuba's biotechnology industry. But more important is the close military relationship that has developed between China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) and Castro's Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR). The PLA is providing Cuba with military spare parts, munitions, and technology. Raul Castro and Defense Minister Chi Haotian have exchanged visits and a variety of Cuban military officers have spent time observing the Chinese economic and political experiment. China's establishment of an eavesdropping station in Cuba and its provision of equipment to interfere with Radio Marti as well as to monitor U.S. military and commercial transmissions is of obvious concern. After the release

of the congressional "Cox Report" detailing Chinese espionage at a U.S. nuclear laboratory, it is hardly a secret that the Chinese are operating an extensive spy network in the Western Hemisphere. So it should be no further surprise that the Chinese might want an electronic espionage base close to American shores. China is not in the same league as the Soviets were in the 1960s or 1970s, but the People's Liberation Army hardly regards itself as a friend of the West. If it were, it would not have engaged in such potentially destabilizing practices as shipping advanced weapons to the Syrians and the Iranians. Indeed, Chinese foreign policy is patient and farsighted, In Cuba, the Chinese seem to be taking a calculated gamble: that the United States' complex relations with and economic interest in China will prevent the Bush administration from raising a big fuss over China's activities in Cuba. The shift from Russian to Chinese patronage is culturally significant, but the sense of Cuba as a client state of a communist regime appears as a constant.

Meanwhile U.S. policy toward Cuba remains under constant pressure. U.S. agricultural groups and states, interested in selling their products to any buyers, are pressuring the U.S. Congress to ease-up on trade relations with the island. During the past 2 years Congress has allowed for Cuba to purchase for cash U.S. agricultural products. Castro has responded by purchasing about $175 million worth of American products. It is the hope of the Cuban leadership that these purchases would entice American capitalists into providing Cuba with loans and credits to buy more in the U.S. market, further eroding the U.S. embargo.

Internally there have been several complicating developments in Cuba. Castro continues to cling to an outmoded economic model. Economic reforms of the mid-1990s, which indicated a mild opening toward the market, have been stopped and in several cases even reversed. Politically there continues to be Castro's opposition to even the most minimal opening. The visit of Pope John Paul II encouraged those who expected greater religious and political freedom. Neither has developed. As a matter of fact, at the beginning of a new century, the regime is increasing the persecution of dissidents and human rights activists. Cuba is undergoing a Chinese-type cultural revolution, albeit slower and less dramatic than in China, where an aging leader insists on purifying and rejuvenating "his" exhausted revolution before departing from this world.

The two operative words in this collection of first-rate essays: Cuban and Communism have both lost substantial emotional steam over the course of these eleven editions. The rise of democratic politics and free market economics from Mexico to Argentina has reduced the blandishments of Castro's Cuba to bleatings. At the same time, the collapse of communism throughout Eastern Europe inducing the end of the despotism known as the Soviet Union, has further deprived Cuba of the pretension much less the reality of servicing as a Western hemispheric vanguard of a coming socialist sweep. As is usually the case, whenever events of cataclysmic proportions take place, longstanding political conventions and ideological proclivities are also changed.

What is often overlooked by those involved in everyday analysis of Cuba is how a remarkable consensus has been forged at the level of principles, which is to say in the overall characterization of Castro's Cuba. If at the start of the Cuban revolution of 1959 Castro and his small band of guerrillas were the harbinger of greater things to come throughout the hemisphere (and they had every right to think so), by the start of 2003 there was a widespread consensus that Communist Cuba is an isolated regime, drifting somewhere between limbo and the backwater. From left to right, liberal and conservative opinion alike now accepts the premise that the regime has little if any potential for establishing open economic markets, competitive and multiple political parties, or free popular elections.

Thus, in the midst of the heated debates that deal with the strategic issues of the U.S. embargo, there has now evolved a strong consensus that Cuban Communism is an antidemocratic ripple in the deep currents of changes that now characterize the hemisphere as a whole. As *Freedom in the World* reports: "Fidel Castro has shown no signs of loosening his grip on power, as cycles of repression, following harsh economic reforms, continued unabated." The very singularity of Cuba however makes it a nation of special concern and consideration for students and policymakers alike.

This said, since the previous (tenth) edition of *Cuban Communism* was published, significant events have taken place in the Cuban infrastructure. The economic reforms initiated in 1994-95 have come to a halt; Castro has been clamping down harshly on dissident groups in the island and the revolution has lost its luster, particularly with the young on the island which seem alienated from the system and unwilling to follow the party's exhortations on Marxist rhetoric. As a result, a certain passive resistance has become the norm in Cuba. It underscores both the deterioration of Castro's infrastructure and a decline in participation in social and economic activities that could possibly carry the regime to a new plateau.

The Castro government has shown very few signs of making meaningful or durable concessions in the political and human rights arena recently or in the past four decades. There has been no indication that Castro intends to truly open up the island's political or economic system or promote a peaceful solution to Cuba's deepening crisis. History reveals various instances where strong and even autocratic political leaders have mellowed with age and softened their positions, but there is scant evidence that this is the case with Castro. On the contrary, as the Cuban leader has aged he has become more intransigent and difficult. At the Party Congress in 1997 he reaffirmed his staunch opposition to the U.S. and his unwillingness to relinquish personal power, a statements he has often repeated.

During the past few years, Castro has mobilized significant resources to force the United States to lift the embargo and the travel ban. He has invited U.S. religious, political, business, and academics leaders to the island. He has

reached out to moderate Cuban-Americans to begin a dialogue and to weaken Cuban-American opposition to a Cuba-U.S. rapprochement. He has even visited New York dressed up in a business suit, rather than his usual military uniform, enticing American entrepreneurs with a vision of a major bonanza if Cuba is opened up. Castro's calculated moves were designed to gain time and to force the U.S. into unilateral concessions regarding the embargo and the travel ban. He hoped that U.S. and world opinion would force U.S. administrations to soften its policies and that U.S. attempts at subverting his revolution could be handled by Cuba's efficient security apparatus. His short-term tactically motivated actions did not envision the dismantling of communism in Cuba or weakening of his personal power over the Cuban people. On the contrary during the past few years Castro has become concerned with the continuity of the revolution once he disappears. He has been attempting to imbue the masses with a new sense of anti-Americanism through mass mobilizations and in the educational system. He also has been emphasizing the need for a smooth succession of power.

The last Party Congress reasserted Raul Castro's position as the undisputed heir to Fidel Castro's dynasty. Both in the party's private meetings and in public, Fidel praised his brother and summoned the faithful to support him. Raul's position as vice president, head of the military, and second secretary of the party makes him the obvious replacement for Fidel. Clearly, the older brother wanted to make it clear to the party cadres and the population-at-large that the younger brother, as his anointed heir does, should be supported and obeyed and that his leadership would be best for the future of Cuba. The succession from dictatorial father to dictatorial son has been successfully concluded in Communist North Korea as well as in Syria and Jordan. It remains to be seen if the same or similar dynastic processes can be implemented in a Communist Cuba.

The Elian Gonzalez case highlighted certain large-scale problems in American foreign policy toward Cuba's communist regime. Among the most telling of these is an unease over immigration policy as a whole, providing a temporary alliance of residual left-wing support for Castro and rising nativist sentiments on the right. The case also revealed smoldering resentment toward the Cuban-American enclave in Miami, especially the sense of its economic gains and linguistic commitment to Spanish, again uniting diverse elements such as Haitians who felt slighted and those who dislike multiculturalism as a disguise for bilingualism. Finally, public opinion leaned heavily to the idea that a child should be united with a surviving parent, whatever the politics of that parent–even one loyal to the Castro regime. In microcosm, the fate of a single child indicated just how entangled policy considerations could become with respect to present-day Cuba.

However, with respect to the structure of Cuban Communism as such, while this case accentuated the suspicions and hostilities that have been built up over four decades between Miami Cuban-Americans and Havana's Communist leadership, it does not necessarily change the parameters of the system as such.

Indeed, it has been argued that the Elian Gonzalez custody battle was a diplomatic coup for Fidel Castro. At the same time, it can justifiably be claimed that this case has again focused attention on the character of the Castro regime in a none too favorable light even among those Americans who believed that a child should have been united with a surviving parent. So at year-end 2002, the most important "on the ground" factor is the continuing survival of the Castro regime, with allies throughout the Third World, but also with powerful critics in parts of the Third World, and not least in advanced democratic nations.

Policy concessions and constructive engagement did not work in the past. They are not likely to shake Castro's faith in a socialist future. Commitment to anti-Americanism, personal rule, and virulent internationalism, remain the cornerstones of Castro's policies. Faced with the approaching end of his life and his fear that once he is gone "his" revolution will change course and Cuba would end up as another friendly Caribbean island close to the United States, Castro is unlikely to open up either the economy or the political system to fresh winds of change. It might well be the case that impending better relations with the U.S. will be seen and feared by the Cuban leadership as an attempt to subvert the revolution and will lead to tightening political control.

Whatever may be the tactical considerations of the moment, on the basis of Castro's stated beliefs and recent actions, as long as Cuba remains under Castro's dominion, it will continue as a Communist project. As a project, Cuban Communism was undertaken in splendid isolation from and opposition to the course of history in the Americas-and for that matter, the rest of the contemporary world. This eleventh edition of *Cuban Communism* is thus offered at a time of economic crisis for the founding generation of the Revolution of 1959. Precisely how this new set of circumstances will play out in the short run is still difficult to say. Offsetting economic difficulties for the Cuban regime are political victories for hemispheric neighbors that feel powerful affinities for Cuban Communism. To modify the famous saying of John Maynard Keynes, in the long run we may not, after all, be dead, but the current regime of Cuba's aging dictator might be.

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January 17, 2003

Part 1

History

1

One Hundred Years of Ambiguity: U.S.-Cuba Relations in the 20th Century

Irving Louis Horowitz

> *Double standards are inspiration to men of letters, but they are apt to be fatal to politicians.... Modern politics is, at bottom, a struggle not of men but of forces. The men become every year more and more creatures of force, massed about central powerhouses. The conflict is no longer between the men, but between the motors that drive the men, and the men tend to succumb to their own motive forces.*
>
> *–Henry Adams (*The Education of Henry Adams*, 1905–06, chapter XXVIII).*

Much ink has been spilled to determine whether Fidel Castro was a Communist before his seizure of power in 1959, or whether he became one at some later date. While the results are inconclusive, what is certain is that Castro was a Cuban nationalist long before the triumph of the July 26th Movement. Understanding Castro's Cuba therefore requires examination of that nationalism–its historical roots and its political consequences–as much or more than examination of Castro's communism. This, in turn, obliges us to study the imperfect origins of independence in Cuba itself. Such study requires a century-long retrospective, not just a look at the 42 years in which the Castro regime has held political power.

Two dates stand out in the American-Cuban relationship: 1898 (the year Spain surrendered Cuba to the United States following the Spanish-American War), and 1959 (the year the Soviet shadow to the Cuban Revolution ended any chance of resolving the contentious issues dividing Havana and Washington). There are other critical dates in Cuban internal political dynamics, such as

1925–33, the period of the Gerardo Machado dictatorship, and 1934–59, the populist-militarist era of the Fulgencio Batista dictatorship. But they do not matter nearly as much as 1898 and 1959, which is a sad reflection of the fact that, unlike most other countries, Cuba's political history has been marked by popular passivity and hence a tendency toward largely undisturbed military and then totalitarian rule.

Despite the importance and drama of the Spanish-American War, 1902 is a better starting date for this narrative than 1898 because it was only after the four years of American colonial hegemony that Cuba could begin to define its status as an independent nation. The four-year interregnum between 1898 and 1902 demonstrates the simple fact that real liberation, much less democracy, cannot be given—certainly not by the armed forces of an occupying power. National independence must be earned; it must be won against opposition. What the United States was able to provide, and the wisest thing in its power to grant, was schooling in the practices of a free and autonomous society. The Cubans were allowed to act as if they had won and created some of the basic rights and duties of a democratic nation. The immediate consequence of this was to heighten a note of ambiguity in a political situation already less than clear-cut.

As it happened, Cuba has been unable, ever since 1902, to clarify its status vis-à-vis the United States. This was not entirely the fault of Cubans. The native Cuban regime in 1902 was established under the ostensible protection of the Platt Amendment, which was terminated only in 1934 as a part of the Good Neighbor Policy. Thus, in 1902 and 1934, not much less than in 1898 and 1959—and, of course, in October 1962—external forces rather than internal actors determined the course of Cuba's national existence. Around these dates one may plot, so to speak, Cuba's one hundred years of ambiguity.

Cuba has never been the master of its own fate in its independence struggles. Without minimizing the bitterness of the Cuban popular classes against Spanish colonial rule—or, for that matter, the bravery of the Cuban guerrillas who fought the best troops of the Spanish empire—the plain fact of the matter is that the United States and Spain set the terms of Cuban independence. Native forms of national struggle were not entirely absent; indeed, by 1897 it became evident that the Spaniards were unable to impose a purely political or legal solution on the island, and that raw military force was required. In such circumstances, the indigenous resistance in Cuba could not hope to achieve more than a military stalemate—at least in the short term—without external intervention, whether the resistance wanted it or not.

In such a vacuum of power, the United States was able to extend as well as to impose its Monroe Doctrine over a Spanish colony. It did so first by insisting on a pacific solution that did not require outright subjugation of the native peoples and then, when it became apparent that Spain did not have a civil administrative infrastructure that could impose such an outcome without using

military force, moved to intervene directly. Spain's frailty thus allowed President McKinley to move into the power vacuum in fairly simple fashion–something that his predecessor, Grover Cleveland, resisted doing. But nothing has been simple since. In 1902 Cuba became a relatively independent nation, modeled after the United States in its formal apparatus of government. The arguments over the one hundred years since 1902 confirm the use of the term "relative." Radicals argue that "relative" means that Cuba enjoyed little true independence. Conservatives claim that all sovereignty, especially for a small nation with a single-crop economy, is necessarily relative.

One of the few scholars writing on Cuba who deeply appreciated this ambiguous legacy is Hugh Thomas. In an essay focusing on the Batista era, he stated the historical situation frankly:

Cuba was not China or Nicaragua. It was a state whose independence from Spain in 1898 was in effect secured for it by the United States as a result of the Spanish-American war. As such, Cuba's freedom of action was limited for thirty years (1902–34) under the Platt Amendment, enabling the United States to intervene legally in the island's internal affairs under certain circumstances. Such intervention occurred several times–in 1906, 1912, 1917 and 1933. Although after 1933 the country's industries and services were increasingly "Cubanized" by local entrepreneurs, much of the aura of the old days still hung about U.S. Cuban relations in the 1950s.

Thomas goes on to note that "Cuban national history read by students at the University of Havana revived memories of the early part of the century, when U.S. business involvement promoted the rapid economic development of the island and at the same time put a damper on the rhetorical romantic Cuban nationalism articulated by José Martí during two ruthless wars against Spain (1868–78 and 1895–98)."[1] Castro was indoctrinated by this special reductionist reading of Cuban-American history–that U.S. domination repressed Cuban national aspirations.

The problem for Cuba, after securing its independence, was the ambiguity of the outcome. It achieved a result that it desired without devising a method for accomplishing it. The result was that regimes in Cuba from 1902 through 1959 wrestled with a dilemma that they could not resolve. A group of democratic reforms introduced in 1933 was identified with Machado and represented a step toward securing greater autonomy, for on their account the Platt Amendment was soon lifted. But the reforms fell prey to a series of coups and were weakened further by the illegitimacy of the Batista regime. Instead of resolving matters either with regard to Cuba's political culture or relations with the United States, the Batista dictatorship was halfhearted and inconclusive, like so many earlier regimes. Into such a situation Fidel Castro came to power–not as living vindication of Marxism-Leninism, but as part of an effort to move Cuba beyond ambiguity and to nationalist closure, and, in consequence beyond the suffocating sphere of American influence.

The absence of closure before 1959 clearly helps to explain the ferocity of Castro's resentment of the United States. This resentment is not simply a consequence of generic factors (big power versus small power, or Anglo versus Hispanic cultures). Rather it is a result of the specific history of Cuba and its intersection with the United States from 1898 to the present. In a nutshell: the United States invaded Cuban soil and, no less, liberated it from the Spanish empire. Castro's May Day speech of 2001 indicates his unbending hostility toward and suspicion of the United States. He denounces hemispheric trade agreements as "annexation." He says such a free trade "would mean more neo-liberalism, less protection for industry and national interests, and more unemployment and social problems. National currencies would disappear to be replaced by the dollar, and all monetary policy across the region would be dictated by the U.S. Federal Reserve."[2] The distant echo of the Platt Amendment can be heard in his remarks. It is not simply a policy difference, but a psychological distance that is reflected in Castro's words. How this came about is worth reviewing.

Pivotal to any analysis of this history is the fact that in the year 2002—one hundred years after Cuba's acquisition of independence and more than 42 years after the imposition of Communist dictatorship—one can still speak of Cuba in terms of a single-crop economy, although the sugar crop is sweetened by other revenue streams. However one feels, or better said, to whatever one ascribes the causes, the fact is that Cuba is an economy dominated by dollarization, and tourism is a major source of income. The classical situation of small nations of the Caribbean—still extant in Cuba—is indicative of the hard truth that the politics and ideology of Marxism-Leninism comprise a sort of fool's gold, a fantasyland of autonomy. The Castro regime is strong enough to goad the United States but weak enough to require appeals for aid to other Western powers. The writing of this scenario was already on the wall with the Cuban missile crisis, which was precipitated as well as settled by the major contestants in the Cold War. The turf may have been Cuban, but the decision-making had distinctly Russian- and English-speaking voices. Listen to the analysis of Adam B. Ulam, perhaps the sharpest Sovietologist of his time, of the events of October 1962:

Riding Russian coattails brought quiet rather than solution for the Castro dictatorship. It created a transitional equilibrium that became permanent more through inertia than design. And so it was with the Cuban Revolution of 1959. That cataclysmic event finalized the resentment and focused the animosity toward the United States for its involvement in Cuban affairs. It did not provide a solution in 1902 that satisfied either democrats or autocratic landholders within Cuba, nor did it bring to closure the sense of solitude and isolation that Marxism promises in theory, but that Leninism-Stalinism took away in practice.[3]

Left-wing scholars take the view that if there had been no U.S. invasion or occupation, Cuba would have ridden the coattails of the 1895 uprising toward full autonomy. In this view, the sinking of the U.S.S. Maine in Havana Harbor on February 15, 1898, with a heavy loss of American lives, provided President

McKinley with a pretext to intervene in the conflict. The demands were for Spain to terminate its concentration camp policy, offer an armistice to Cuban rebels, and accept the United States as a final arbiter between the parties. Cuban independence was not mentioned. Benjamin Keen and Mark Wasserman develop an interesting view—one that parallels Fidelista historiography:

The ensuing war was short and nasty. American commanders ignored their Cuban counterparts, excluding Cuban generals from decision making and relegating Cuban soldiers to sentry and clean-up duties. Incompetence was the dominant feature of both the Spanish and American war effort. American military actions were incredibly ill prepared and badly led. The only major land battle of the war, the famous charge up San Juan Hill, which helped to catapult Theodore Roosevelt to national prominence, was very nearly a catastrophic defeat for the United States. Spain, to some extent, defeated itself, for its generals believed the war lost from the beginning and sought above all to minimize their losses. Thus, in a bizarre little war, the United States Army, wretchedly led, scandalously provisioned, and ravaged by tropical disease, swiftly defeated a demoralized, dispirited Spanish army and snatched the fruits of victory from the Mambises, the Cuban guerrilla fighters who had fought gallantly in a struggle of three years duration. The exclusion of Cuban leaders from both war councils and peace negotiations foreshadowed the course of Cuban-American relations for the next sixty years.[4]

The unspoken assumption in this account of events, in which Spaniards—and especially Americans—marginalize Cubans, is that Castro put an end to such humiliation. But he did no such thing. The negotiations between the United States and the USSR over the missile installations aptly demonstrated that Castro had no more input in the solution than the Cuban guerrilla leader Antonio Maceo had in the settlement between the United States and Spain. The further presumption is that, if left to their own devices, Cubans would have put an end to Spanish rule. Such an outcome was certainly the wish of José Martí, Antonio Maceo and Máximo Gómez, but whether that wish would have become reality is problematic. Under the direction of General Valeriano Weyler, Spanish military policy shifted to anti-guerrilla tactics. The Spaniards then drove back the Cuban revolutionists to the eastern end of the island. All seemed lost until the U.S. military bailout. What we do know for certain is that the interregnum ended in May 1902 with the voluntary departure of the U.S. military and the declaration of a free and sovereign Cuba.

A quite different, conservative reading of the same events comes to us from Milton Eisenhower, the brother of Dwight D. Eisenhower and a diplomat and educator in his own right. Milton Eisenhower viewed the American intervention as an appropriate response to Spanish imposition of taxes and other restrictions on direct trade in sugar and tobacco between Cuba and the United States. He saw this as parallel to the American pre-Revolutionary War slogan of "no taxation without representation." Indeed, Eisenhower goes so far as to declare

Spanish cruelties as "forerunners of Hitler's mass executions in World War II." In this situation, Cuba "seemed a natural ally if not a dependency of ours." While there is a big gap between an ally and a dependent state, and while trade irritants hardly seem sufficient cause for an invasion, it is worthwhile listening to this voice of American rationalism:

For four years following the victory over Spain in 1898, the United States maintained military rule in Cuba. This seemed essential, for the former colonials had had no experience in self-government. Our military control was honorable. Local governments, the courts, and other public agencies were improved. Progress in agriculture, education, health (especially in the campaign to eliminate yellow fever), transportation, trade, and general living standards was noticeable but not notable. There was little if any serious thought given to changing inherited social customs. The Cuban people themselves did not then seek such change. Most of them wanted independence–only large landowners objecting–and they got it, with qualifications in 1902. The limitation on independence was the Platt Amendment to our treaty with Cuba. In the ensuing years of quasi-independence, Cuba suffered the indignity of numerous interventions by the United States, saw most of its own Presidents promise honesty and reform only to fatten their own pockets, lived in fear of slaughter by military and guerrilla leaders, and came to accept betrayal as an inevitable condition of government.[5]

The range of professional opinion across the political spectrum, then, confirms this uneasy sense of ambiguity in Cuban national life. All recognize that the United States served as both colonial master of the Western Hemisphere and also democratic liberator from colonialism. Fernand Braudel sees this duality as a function of the "degree of isolationism that has been a basic feature of the United States."[6] Carl Becker, while bemoaning the less-than-sterling conduct of American intervention, nonetheless sees such behavior in terms of a defense of "democratic institutions to which America was committed" and opposition to "the extension of the European political system [Becker's italics] to this continent."[7] Raymond Aron considers the United States guilty of "a great power policy, even an imperialist policy in the ordinary sense of the term." This classical colonial policy was followed by a more recent policy of benign, or not so benign, neglect of Latin America. Aron goes on to say that "a sense of geography and memories of the past are at the root of these [American] feelings and this behavior."[8] More recently, Henry Kissinger noted that, by the start of the 20th century, "America found itself commanding the sort of power which made it a major international factor, no matter what its preferences." In short, from the Monroe Doctrine to the Platt Amendment, the United States was pursuing a policy of "national interest" and not just "remaining unentangled" in its immediate neighborhood.[9] Each of these statements is a variation on the same contradictory theme: America simultaneously as dictator and liberator.

Clearly, in these two views the moral glass of American power is seen as half empty on the far Left and more than half full on the conservative Right.

Perhaps no one caught the spirit of ambiguity more ably than Hubert Herring, who in his great History of Latin America wrote that the Cuban Republic from 1902–34 "was now free—but not free to make her own mistakes."[10] He added philosophically that "a clear lesson on the education of nations, as of children, [is] that none learns to order its life unless granted the privilege of going wrong as well as of going right." Projections of what might have been notwithstanding, it is a fact of history that Cuban independence was granted and not earned. This may be viewed as a bitter fact of island history, or a tribute to a people on a small island navigating colonial forces far larger than itself. What is no less evident is a Cuban Revolution of 1959 that saw itself as settling accounts with the legacy of 1898–1902. Castro's strength is less a function of the authority of Marxism-Leninism as an ideology than of an unrequited nationalism as a mobilization tool.

From the outset, Castro had an image of Cuba as larger than life, certainly larger than the life of the island. From the start, Castro's self-image was that of Simón Bolívar in an era of communism. He sought to bring the future to the entire hemisphere—if not on horseback, like Bolívar, then as a foot soldier in the mountains. Castro was and remains the embodiment of nationalism tinged by a greater, if ultimately counterfeit, internationalism. The fusion of the two was solidified by the ideology of Marxism-Leninism in the form of the tradition of the Comintern—centered in Havana rather than in Moscow. In each decade, from the Tri-continental in the 1960s through a variety of conferences over the next forty years, Castro maintained that his position was properly in the vanguard, not the backwater, of revolutionary consciousness. So while foreign intervention and great-power intrigue pockmarked the history of Cuba from 1898 to 1959, the history of Cuba after 1959 was supposed to turn this around and make Cuba a world political actor—militarily, diplomatically and otherwise (such as through its international medical teams).

This effort has had modest results. On the one side, there was the removal of nuclear warheads from Cuba as a result of a Soviet-American deal, the embarrassment of Cuban troops participating in a losing effort in the Syrian Golan Heights, the humiliating defeat of Cuban troops in Grenada, the routing of the Cuban military presence in Angola and Namibia. These initiatives, aimed at reinforcing Castro's role in world affairs, failed in frustration and loss of prestige. But on the other hand, Cuba has had a tremendous impact on hemispheric affairs: for example, from the Venezuela of guerrilla Douglas Bravo to the Venezuela of President Hugo Chávez. Castro's impact on the Nicaraguan Left is widely recognized. Alliances have been forged with China for advanced military supplies, replacing those lost with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Training and arming Palestinians from the PLO forces is ongoing. There is scarcely a dictatorship in the world—from Kim Il Sung's in North Korea to Muammar Qadaffi's in Libya—that has not enjoyed the benefit of Castro's warm embrace. As the late Arthur P. Whitaker predicted as long ago as 1962, "although Cuba's ties with the

Communist bloc make it difficult to appraise the difference between the two, Fidelismo is probably a greater potential threat than communism to the interests of the United States in Latin America. This is because Fidelismo expressed so well and for so long the rising Latin American tide of both continental nationalism and populism."[11]

However, what neither Whitaker nor Thomas could have anticipated was that national interests and populism would develop in Central and South America along an autonomous axis different from anything envisioned by Fidel Castro—or, for that matter, by Simón Bolívar. What has actually occurred, to Castro's obvious and public chagrin, is the development of international alliances at the political level, and regional and global market relations that extend far beyond the borders of nations in North or South America. Everything from telephone companies to oil drilling arrangements has changed the old system. Latin America is no longer a decidedly junior partner to North America. It is simply a partner whose size and scope depends upon investment prospects and corporate profits.

What has drastically reduced the significance of Castro as a player in global affairs is not a direct assault on Cuba's shores, but the sheer capacity of nearly every other Latin American nation simply to bypass Cuba on its own road to a new century. Henry Adams' "forces" are indeed at work. While Cuba remains a force to contend with, its xenophobic nationalism has institutionalized an economic backwardness that has in turn created a diplomatic impasse. Cuba is now isolated from the trends sweeping the region. Bolstered by revitalized democracies from Mexico to Brazil, Latin America is undergoing a degree of economic integration unforeseen by the allies of the United States and unnoticed by its enemies. Economic upheaval notwithstanding, the situation in 2002 is profoundly more favorable to the forces of hemispheric democracy than it was in 1961, or for that matter throughout the 1960s and 1970s. This illustrates Fidel's myopia as the century of ambiguity nears its end. Post-Castro Cuba will become part of an extraordinary hemispheric vitalization in which the fabled ogre of U.S. domination is absent. The problem of Cuban nationalism and jealousy for its sovereignty will be bound up in choices concerning hemispheric multilateralism, not obeisance to a new Platt Amendment. The long-term positive future of Cuba is neither utopian nor ideological. Rather, it is normalization in the best sense of politics, and rationalization in the best sense of economics.

Notes

1. Thomas, "Cuba, The United States and Batista, 1952–1958", in Irving Louis Horowitz and Jaime Suchlicki, eds., Cuban Communism (10th edition) (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2001), pp. 3–12.
2. Quoted in the New York Times, May 2, 2001.
3. Ulam, The Rivals: America and Russia since World War II (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), pp. 330–40.

4. Benjamin Keen and Mark Wasserman, A Short History of Latin America (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984), pp. 408–9.
5. Eisenhower, The Wine is Bitter: The United States and Latin America (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1963), pp. 296–7.
6. Braudel, A History of Civilizations (New York: Penguin, 1995), pp. 496–7.
7. Becker, The United States: An Experiment in Democracy (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2001), pp. 134–5.
8. Aron, The Imperial Republic: The United States and the World, 1945–1973 (Cambridge, ma: Winthrop, 1974), p. 185.
9. Kissinger, Diplomacy (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), pp. 37–40.
10. Herring, A History of Latin America: From the Beginnings to the Present (2nd edition) (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), pp. 401–16.
11. Whitaker, Nationalism in Latin America: Past and Present (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1962), pp. 69–70.

2

Cuba: The United States and Batista, 1952–1958

Hugh Thomas

From some points of view, the experience of Cuba in 1958 might be regarded as one more archetypical failure of American foreign policy—of a piece with China in 1946–49 or Nicaragua in 1978–79. A commitment was made to an unpopular tyrant, Fulgencio Batista, who was becoming increasingly unpopular in his own country and, what is more, apparently losing a guerrilla war to insurgents led by Fidel Castro. Today the deplorable consequences are all to evident. What should U.S. policy have been? The question can be simply put, but it cannot be answered without a larger consideration of the background.

First, Cuba was not China or Nicaragua. It was a state whose independence from Spain in 1898 was in effect secured for it by the United States as a result of the Spanish-American war. As such, Cuba's freedom of action was limited for thirty years (1902–34) under the Platt Amendment, enabling the United States to intervene legally in the island's internal affairs under certain circumstances. Such intervention occurred several times—in 1906, 1912, 1917, and 1933. Substantial U.S. investment in Cuba in the early part of the century led the British minister (who must have known something of such matters) to describe the country in 1933 as a U.S. "protectorate." Although after 1933 the country's industries and services were increasingly "Cubanized" by local entrepreneurs. much of the aura of the old days still hung about U.S.-Cuba relations in the 1950s. This long, ambiguous association with North America led Cuban nationalism to be defined. perforce, as anti-Americanism.

Much of this was actually anachronistic. Even so. the Cuban national history read by students at the University of Havana[1] revived memories of the early part of the century when U.S. business involvement promoted the rapid economic development of the island and at the same time put a damper on the

rhetorical romantic Cuban nationalism articulated by José Martí during two ruthless wars against Spain (1868–78 and 1895–98).

The Cuban attitude toward the United States was thus complex at best. One of the most revealing remarks made by Castro was his characterization of the arrival of the new ambassador from the United States in 1959, Philip Bonsal. Castro described the event as if Ambassador Bonsal arrived like a viceroy, with endless obeisances. Actually, Ambassador Bonsal arrived in his normal, rational way, an experienced professional diplomat determined to make the very best of a potentially difficult post. Indeed, almost until the end of 1959, he went out of his way to try to persuade colleagues at home that all was not lost, that there were some aspects of Castro's character that were promising, and so on. What Castro seemed to have been describing was not the arrival of Bonsal, but Sumner Welles, Franklin Delano Roosevelt's special representative at the end of the Machado era in 1933. This form of ultra-anti-Americanism, now so prevalent even in Europe (not to speak of Africa, Asia, etc.), is one of Latin America's least creditable contributions to political dialogue.

There were, of course, ambiguities in public attitudes to Batista. That interesting personality had dominated Cuban politics since the Sergeants' revolt in 1933, in which he was principal protagonist—sergeant-in-chief, one might say. As the power behind nationalist presidents in the years 1933–39, and subsequently as first president formally elected under the new Constitution of 1940, Batista was actually—and in the minds of most observers of the Cuban scene, truly—a radical reforming soldier of what we would now call the "Nasser type." His social reforms were precisely what one would expect from a man of his extremely humble birth.

In effect, there were two Batistas. The first was a Cuban nationalist who creatively rode the demands for change following the depression of the 1930s and the revolution of 1933–34 very successfully as a populist. Cuban trade unions and the Communist Party were allowed to organize legally for the first time under his aegis, and communists actually served in his government—including, for a short time, the current (1983) Cuban vice-president, Dr. Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, an experienced economist. The first Batista was also a reliable friend of the United States during World War II, in which Cuba benefited from high nickel and sugar prices, and in which Cuba collaborated in interallied defense and anti-German security measures generally.

The second Batista was different. His coup d'état in 1952 was a rather lazy protest by a man who seemed certain to lose an election. He may have been pushed into action by that section of the army (the sergeants of 1934 turned into colonels or generals) who wanted a new share in the profits of power. The coup came at a moment when the country had been rendered quite dizzy—first, by a cycle of sporadic political gangsterism (a much more amiable game than the guerrilla wars of the 1970s and 1980s) and second, by the evident corruption under and by two popularly elected Cuban presidents, Ramón Grau San Martín

and Carlos Prío. These two clever, amusing, self-serving men did more to damage the good name of democracy (in all Latin America) than even England's Henry Fox.

The second Batista showed himself incapable of dealing with the problem of corruption. Rather, he and his colleagues sank deeply into it. He did manage to bring something like an end to political gangsterism—by harnessing some of the leaders as collaborators (Rolando Masferrer) or by driving others into more conventional armed opposition (Castro).

The Batista regime of 1952–58 was bad but not wholly evil. It continued to encourage the diversification of agriculture, which most people recognized then as a desirable venture for Cuba if the economy were to prosper in freedom. But Batista himself, though retaining much of his personal charm for occasional visitors, had become lazy and procrastinatory at a time when Cuba—much richer than it had been in the 1930s—was a country much more difficult to govern. One of his old generals told how when communiques were issued saying that Batista had spent the day conferring with his officers, he was in fact playing canasta with them. He accumulated a substantial fortune abroad making him more inclined to dream of retirement in the Canaries of perhaps in Portugal. Only when the opposition began to take shape under Castro and his young associates—some of them merely students or even schoolboys—did Batista allow his police the free run that made them infamous. His army, divided by personal disputes among officers and ill-provided with weapons and supplies, was incapable of coping with a small insurrection whose directors from the start showed themselves masters of public relations both in Cuba and in the United States. Indeed, they would have needed great skill to cope with the Robin Hood-like legend of *Fidel en las montañas*.

American assistance to Batista was never explicitly forthcoming. Training and a limited amount of weapons were available to Cuba throughout the 1950s under the appropriate U.S. hemispheric defense program. But in 1957 the skillful personal relations mentioned above created a powerful lobby against its continuance: Batista had been caught using weapons intended for hemispheric defense against Castro and other opponents, such as the Revolutionary Directorate. The subsequent U.S. arms embargo was a severe psychological blow. But at the same time, U.S. intelligence continued to assist an explicitly anti-communist bureau of the Cuban Minister of Defense, the BRAC (Bureau for the Repression of Communist Activities), founded in 1955 with help from the Central Intelligence Agency.[2] But that agency was not specifically concerned at that time, since Batista's enemies in 1956–58 did not primarily seem to be communists.

A different view was held in 1958 by the then-U.S. Ambassador Earl E.T. Smith. In his book[3] Mr. Smith, who was not a career diplomat, described how he sought to persuade the State Department, the Embassy Staff, even the local CIA station chief in Havana that Castro's movement was communist in motivation. Earl Smith turned out to be right in the end, but at the time there was no

evidence for his views. No doubt the BRAC told him of the activities of certain communists in relation to Castro—the early party youth membership of Castro's brother, Raúl, for example, or the dubious affiliations of Ernesto Guevara in Guatemala in 1954, or the actions of Dr. Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, Félix Torres, Armando Acosta, Pablo Ribalta, Osvaldo Sánchez, to name a few of the party members who, in 1958, began to prepare the ground for the later association of Castro with the communists. But there was a lot of evidence that other opponents of Batista were more dominant around Castro. It was the "liberal" socialist intelligentsia—most of whom are now in exile—that gave the movement (always small in the field) its ground swell of support in Havana and the cities.

The question of what to do about Batista did not really present itself as a serious one until the last quarter of 1958. Until then the Eisenhower administration in the United States did not treat Cuban politics seriously: Secretary of State John Foster Dulles thought Latin America uninteresting; and despite an earlier Marxist episode in Guatemala involving, among others, Ernesto Guevara, and despite the unpleasantries encountered particularly in Caracas by Vice-President Richard Nixon during his Latin America tour, this was entirely comprehensible. Castro had only a few hundred armed followers; he captured no towns at all; and the level of violence was modest; the figure of 20,000 killed in "the war against Batista" appeared in 1959, after Castro was in Havana. This was part of a deliberate policy inspired by the communists to blacken the past in the same way that, say, in France the number of communist "martyrs" in the resistance against the nazis has been grossly (and effectively) exaggerated.

During these months Batista's chief enemy appeared to be less Castro than Herbert Matthews of the *New York Times,* whose activities—privately intervening in the affairs of Cuba—were fully in the tradition of Sumner Welles. The varying interpretations of what Castro represented led to discussions in the Department of State; but Batista did not seem to be threatened by a communist revolution—rather, by a genuinely nationalist one led, no doubt, by reformers, with modest communist collaboration at the end. It was only after the open failure of the staged elections of November 5—convoked to establish credibility—that the U.S. government began to take any stance at all.

The policy pursued was two-fold; on the one hand, an attempt to persuade Batista to resign; and on the other, an attempt to put together a coalition government of "men of good will," including judges, army men who had offended Batista and were not Castroites, bankers, and ex- and progressive businessmen. Direct approaches were made by the CIA in both Cuba and in the United States to both these ends. Not all the papers are available, but it is obvious that Bill Pawley, the founder of Cubana Airways and an old associate of Batista, played an important part. The efforts to create an intermediary government were divided, and there is a clear sense that the agency's left hand did not always know what its right one was doing. The situation was clearly exacerbated by the continuing divisions between the ambassador in Havana and his

embassy staff, and between the ambassador and his department, as well as the apparent divide between the aims of the Department of State and those of the Central Intelligence Agency. In the end, certain successes of Castro with very few men in Santa Clara province as well as in Oriente, but on a small scale all the same, persuaded Batista that he should take his American friends' advice after all, and by doing so deliberately save most of his own friends as well as his life and money.

The efforts to put together an alternative government of the center failed because of the sudden swing of almost everyone to Castro, whose political manipulation of the power vacuum left on December 31, 1958, alone entitles him to be looked on as a master craftsman in politics.[4] The momentum was irresistible. Meanwhile, the collapse of the plan for the alternative government led to a consideration of further possibilities in Washington. I have not found any record of the minutes of the meeting held on December 31 in the Pentagon between Admiral Arleigh Burke, Chief of Naval Operations, Allen Dulles of the CIA, and Robert Murphey of the Department of State, but Admiral Burke once gave me an account of it, later confirmed by Allen Dulles. All agreed that "Castro was not the right man" for Cuba but at that hour nothing was decided—could be decided?—and to prevent him from seizing the power that he has since held for now nearly thirty years. Admiral Burke mentioned the possible use of the U.S. Marines, but even he apparently seems not to have pressed the issue.

The following months saw—and it is desirable to establish the order of things—the complete capture of authority in Cuba by Castro (by May 1959), his alliance with the communists (in the summer) and subsequently the economic arrangements with the Soviet Union (in the winter of 1959–60) accompanied by what became the cessation of movement and liberty of speech in Cuba. By March 1960 the famous arrangements in Washington had been approved which would lead to the Bay of Pigs in April 1961. All through 1960 the U.S. and Cuba publicly quarrelled; U.S. property was taken over; and the break of diplomatic relations came in January 1961.

Having described what happened, let us consider the possible alternatives facing the United States. At the very beginning we are faced with a difficulty. Castro may or may not have been a different man in 1958 to what he made himself out to have been. But until 1961 and even afterwards, there was widespread doubt about his communist affiliations. U.S. officials seized on little straws to suggest that his loyalty to the Soviet bloc was questionable. Even when he boasted in December 1961 that he had been a Marxist-Leninist since the University such affirmation was not believed: rightly, because he probably was not telling the truth. The consequence was the official backing of the view that patient handling of Castro might yield dividends—the obverse of the public and still widely believed argument that impatient handling actually led Castro to choose communism. This is not really a point of view, but something akin to

religious belief. Castro himself would laugh at the idea, though it is still firmly cherished by people usually impervious to unreason.

Returning to the question of what could have been done with Batista–one alternative would have been to deploy U.S. forces in Cuba, either the Marines or naval/military units. Such forces could have landed, presumably, by the middle of 1958, either to sustain Batista (as was done that very year in Lebanon to prop up another U.S. ally) or to overthrow him. Though it is hard to imagine such action now, it is well to recall U.S. action in the Dominican Republic (1965) and in Grenada (1983), and to keep in mind that there were far more people active in American public life at that time used to the frequent deployment of U.S. armed forces in Latin America. I believe that a relatively small number of soldiers–say, 3,000–could have done either of these two things relatively easily. Batista could not have held on against a public display of force of this kind, and I do not think he would have wanted to. The use of marines in support of Batista would probably have been more difficult, but the accounts of the modest scale of the war in the Sierra suggest that it would not have been difficult to bring the insurgency to an end. The problem would have been to find Castro, not to defeat and scatter his forces. Neither policy, of course, would have any direct legal sanction, though Batista could surely have been induced to make a formal request for military assistance in much the same way that the government of the Dominican Republic did in 1965 (when the forces deployed were, of course, very large indeed).

It may be doubted whether the use of these forces in the way suggested would have met with the kind of violent international protest that such action would now receive. European public opinion had at that time not yet awoke to its extraordinary love affair with anti-American causes in Latin America. The Guatemalan affair of 1954 occurred with virtually no protest, even though the CIA's role in what happened was barely hidden and generally realized by the small number of international observers who knew where Guatemala was on the map.

National opinion in the United States is much more difficult to gauge in retrospect. I believe that either way the intervention would have been initially condemned by the democratic opposition, but the overthrow of Batista and his substitution–in the manner of 1906 or 1917–with a good government would have been quickly accepted had it worked. The same would very probably have happened had Batista been assisted to crush the rebellion, provided he swiftly moved to a democratic regime guaranteed by U.S. officials and provided Castro was caught–a proviso that probably could not have been fulfilled given the skills of that political leader. If the campaign on Batista's behalf against Castro had lasted more than a few weeks, public opinion at home would have turned sour. In either case, of course, the action concerned should have been accompanied by an elaborate and well-thought-out information policy programme designed to pinpoint all the issues. Given the time, it could have worked. Eisenhower was a

popular president, in the middle of his second term, and U.S. opinion would have cheered a resounding success the year after the bad news of Sputnik (October 1957).

Of course, neither plan was put forward. The reason was, first, that no one thought the crisis in Cuba justified action of that kind of seriousness. Second, the different agencies of the government were divided and undecided as to what to make of Castro; and, nearly all intelligent men were optimistic about him.

In no time other than 1958 could military intervention have had the desired effect one way or the other. Action such as discussed—as mentioned above, in the Pentagon on December 31, 1958—would have led to many difficulties even in the relaxed atmosphere of the 1950s. Sending in forces to prevent Castro from capturing power at that stage would have been almost like sending troops into Paris in June 1944 to prevent De Gaulle taking over the government.

Similar problems, more muted perhaps, would have occurred had the two choices—to sustain Batista or to substitute him—been left to the CIA, in the style of Guatemala. No attempt of either sort was contemplated, though Ambassador Arthur Gardner (Earl Smith's predecessor in Havana) did once tell me that he offered to Batista to have Castro assassinated. What agency would have been entrusted with this task is something upon which he did not elaborate. (Batista's answer, interestingly, was '"Of course we couldn't approve that: we're Cubans." It had the ring of truth to me at the time.) Otherwise U.S. assistance to Batista seems to have been really limited to the BRAC. This still seems to me to be odd. Those were the golden days of the Central Intelligence Agency. The money, the people, and the opportunities were there—as Guevara and other survivors of the Guatemalan affair were believed to be constantly warning Castro. What was lacking was the will, basically because the issue was not properly defined, and—given real doubt about Castro's motives—could not be. If the Department of State and the Havana station chief of the CIA were in general agreement that Castro probably promised well, then the chances of a successful operation against him were nil. The CIA did, as we have seen, seek to operate against Batista in the end, but its actions were too late: too late above all for a centrist, decent, law-abiding government of North American educated democrats to have any chance of being formed.

One other possible pressure against Batista could have been considered, though it could not have way to give a disadvantage to Castro: the imposition of sanctions. I mention this not because I think there is as a rule a chance of such policies being effective against countries that need to import: but perhaps the case is less clear in respect of exports—and sugar at that. Suppose the United States had sent in Ambassador Pawley early on with the message that unless Batista hand over power to a democratic government, the U.S. sugar quota would be reconsidered. This kind of pressure might be used more effectively against a country such as Cuba than one with a diversified agriculture. Indeed,

it was represented by Castro that Eisenhower had used it spitefully, though the idea occurred to the United States only after months of abuse by Castro. The consequences if such a policy were carried out in 1958 as a means of pressure against Batista are less clear, of course, but perhaps one should bear in mind that the only possible alternative buyer of Cuban sugar on the desired and necessary scale was in 1958, 1960, and for that matter, 1985, the Soviet Union. The international sugar market is too quota-controlled for any other smaller purchaser to be able to take part. A limited sanction on U.S. sugar purchases from Cuba therefore might have been effective.

Two qualifications to this argument must be made. First, historians, including myself, have made much of the "Cubanization" of industry on the island between the revolutions of 1933 and 1958. Yet we know little about how much stock was held in Cuban enterprises by North Americans in 1959. Enough, perhaps, to have exerted quite an influence on behalf of "Cuban investors" in the event of an export blockade. Second, the consequence of the abrogation of the quota in 1960 was to make it easy for the Soviet Union to step in and establish itself quickly as Cuba's chief trading partner, with the disastrous consequences that we all know. Given Batista's earlier record, given known Soviet interest in the 1950s in breaking into Latin America somehow[5] and given the facts of sugar economics, it might have been Batista who turned first to Russia, not Castro. It sounds like fantasy now, but then it was surely not.

So much has happened in Cuba and in the United States since 1959 that it takes an effort to think back when these choices were possible. Perhaps one should also consider the chances of a more skillfully carried out intervention along the very lines that were embarked upon, too late, in December 1958. Some show of force would have been necessary, and a lot of trouble should have been taken to find the names of men in Cuba who would not only have sounded like good men of the center but who had the capacity to govern, coupled with the toughness and agility to outwit Castro. U.S. troops should have stayed until free elections could have been held on much the same basis as those elections should have been in 1953. Such action would have been denounced as "imperialism" in the end by Castro and his friends, and as thwarting then as the Cuban rebels of 1898 were in legend thwarted by the U.S. army of those years. Another legend would thus have been created.

The trouble with this picture is that the men in the center with the capacity required—always very difficult to identify beforehand by outsiders—were never easy to find in Cuba. Since 1959 the only real opponents of Castro of any quality have been men and women who were for a time with him and certainly were so in 1958. They might have been the most bitter opponents of the United States at the time. Once again we have to recognize that, between conquest or empire and independence, the intermediate stage of protectorate is a most uneasy one.

I believe that the only policy that could have worked in Cuba in 1958 would have been the deployment of a large number of troops—adequate, first, to en-

able Batista's army to defeat Castro; and then to remain to guarantee free elections after a reasonable length of time. This would have meant a willingness to be associated with a quasi-imperial role in an explicit sense. Though an old method, it seems to have been the only one that could have guaranteed continued U.S. control of the Caribbean.

Notes

1. Quite typically, the works of Herminio Portell-Vilá (*Historia de Cuba en sus relaciones con Estados Unidos y España*). Sr. Portell-Vilá, a virulent opponent of Castro, subsequently resided in exile in Washington.
2. I recall former CIA director Allen Dulles telling me "I was the father of the BRAC."
3. *The Fourth Floor* (New York: Random House. 1962).
4. I have elaborately considered this in Chapter LXXXIX of *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971) and feel no need to add to what I have said there.
5. Argentina was the most likely contender before 1958 for a possible host to major Soviet interests, as the major maverick Latin American country very critical of the United States for reasons different from Mexico and Cuba.

3

The Sierra and the Plains

Roberto Luque Escalona

By 1956, there appeared on the national scene two figures who embraced Fidel's immediate goals but might have threatened his long-range plans. One was yet unknown to the general public, working in the shadows in Santiago de Cuba. Energetic, capable and brave as few men, Frank País would become famous on November 30, 1956.

País at least was active in the July 26th movement. The other, a product of the militant student tradition of Havana University, preferred to go at it alone. He was a tall, stocky, (or better yet corpulent) young man with rosy cheeks, the unaffected charm that Cubans find irresistible, and the blind courage of a fighting cock: José Antonio Echeverría.

Both Frank and José Antonio were students; Frank studied pedagogy and José Antonio architecture; and, besides bravery and patriotism, they had something else in common: their deep religious convictions. Frank was the pastor of a Baptist church and José Antonio was a fervent Catholic. Strange martyrs for a Marxist-Leninist revolution.

While Fidel was preparing for war, the Society of Friends of the Republic offered to mediate peace talks between the government and the opposition. This attempt at national reconciliation was led by Cosme de la Torriente, an old Conservative politician and one of the last surviving officers of our War of Independence, and José Miró Cardona, president of the Cuban Bar Association. But such negotiations were doomed to fail from the start: Batista had been cured for good of all populist illusions by the elections of 1944.

The *Ortodoxo* party was split into many factions, and what had once been a formidable political machine, was slowly but surely coming apart. One of these factions decided to set up its tent elsewhere: Jorge Mañach and José Pardo Llada founded the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement. They then joined not the Revolution, but the controversial peace negotiations. The *Auténtico* party, which

ruled Cuba for eight years prior to Batista's coup, practically had ceased to exist, though its leaders continued to speak as if it still existed.

In the plaza adjoining the Muelle de Luz, there was a mass gathering of the opposition. It was attended by representatives from the entire political spectrum, ranging from Grau to the University Students Federation. Only the unpopular Popular Socialist Party was excluded, because it had labelled the Moncada assault a "putsch" and "petite bourgeoisie adventurism." Fidel's supporters in the crowd sang in unison, "Revolution! Viva Fidel!" Tempers flared to the boiling point. Suddenly, someone was thrown headfirst from the grandstand and an hell broke loose. Everywhere in the crowd rival groups were beating up on one another, folding chairs were flying through the air like birds of ill omen, and the great meeting of the opposition broke apart.

We are in 1956, the year that Fidel had selected to begin the insurrection. Yet it wasn't only Fidel and his followers, or the boys from the University, who were plotting Batista's downfall. A clique of officers headed by ex-Colonel Ramón Barquín was preparing a coup d'état. Nothing came of their plans: someone turned informant. The conspirators were apprehended, spending the remainder of the Batista dictatorship in the stockade. That would be, however, less than three years.

The aborted conspiracy cost the army its most competent high ranking officer: José Ramón Fernández (dubbed "El Gallego" because he spoke like a Galician), the able artilleryman who years later would play a pivotal role in what Fidel has called "the first defeat of imperialism in the Americas [i.e. the Bay of Pigs]."

Shortly before Fidel's 1956 deadline had expired, students under the leadership of José Antonio Echeverría founded a new insurrectional organization: the Revolutionary Directorate, which was almost from the first marked by a tragic destiny. José Antonio travelled to Mexico to sign an alliance with Fidel and Frank País.

Little time remained to make good Fidel's promise. In November 1956, the storied yacht *Granma,* with 82 men aboard, set out from Tuxpan, Mexico, bound for the southern coast of Oriente province, which is but a few miles from the Sierra Maestra. The yacht was expected to arrive on November 30. On that day, as planned, Frank País, who was always precise and reliable, led his men to action on the streets of Santiago de Cuba, in a diversionary operation that paralyzed government troops. The July 26th Movement accomplished its mission with only three casualties; and then went into hiding in the belief that the men of the *Granma* expedition were also safely ensconced in the Sierra Maestra.

But the *Granma* had not arrived; it would not arrive for two more days, and when it finally touched land, it was not on the coast of the Sierra Maestra, but on a mangrove swamp not far from Manzanillo on the Gulf of Guacanayabo. After a mile-long trek through the marshlands, the exhausted expeditionaries saw a vast plain before them, and in the distance, very far away, the outline of

the foothills of the Sierra Maestra. That's about as close as most of them would get to their destination. The army caught them by surprise, cornered them, and many lost their lives. Others were taken prisoner and spent the last 25 months of the Batista regime in prison. Among the captured rebels was Mario Chanes, that much-persecuted man who has never had the good fortune of becoming famous.

Fidel was presumed dead, but, of course, he wasn't. A few days later, somewhere in the hills, a small band of survivors would re-group round their leader; they were twelve.

Much has been said about them, for they have not lacked historians; some enjoy international fame, and almost all have occupied or still occupy high government office—those, of course, who are still alive and have been able to retain Fidel's favor. There is no reason, then, to enumerate them.

I do want, however, to mention another small group of revolutionaries, not twelve, but fourteen men. When the July 26th Movement was disbanded in the wake of the news of the disastrous landing of the *Granma* and the supposed death of the movement's leader, there were only 14 urban fighters left alive in Havana. Since no one has ever mentioned their names, I shall.

Of the top men in the Movement, there were only two survivors in the capital: Gerardo Abreu ("Fortín") and Carlos Franqui. The others who were ready to resume the struggle, were Julio Alon, Julio Bauta, Federico Bell-Yoch, Sergio González ("El Curita"), Enrique Hart, Alonso Hidalgo, Ricardo Martínez, Francisco Miralles, José Pellón, José Prieto, Héctor Ravelo and Aldo Vera. When Faustino Pérez, one of Fidel's Twelve, was sent to Havana in late December 1956 to revive the July 26th Movement, he found that it was still alive.

Dr. Faustino Pérez, a physician and veteran of García Bárcenas' conspiracy, proved an underground leader difficult to surpass or even equal. Under his direction, the Movement carried out a long series of successful actions, overcoming the tyranny's repressive net.

Shortly after Faustino's arrival, Haydée Santamaría, who had been in Santiago during the tragic events of November 30, and René Rodriguéz, another of "The Twelve" but a very different sort of man than Faustino, were sent by Fidel to Havana on a mission which I am unable to clarify.

I know nothing about the objectives of the mission, but I do know the results: René Rodriguéz, whom Haydée called "a little gangster," devoted himself to creating a group independent of the leadership of Faustino Pérez, with the connivance of the attorney Humberto Sorí Marín. Expelled from the July 26th Movement, Rodriguéz and Sorí Marín marched off to the Sierra Maestra, where, despite the expulsion dictated against them, they were received well enough for both to attain the rank of *comandante.*

Sometime later, in 1961, Sorí Marín was executed by firing squad. René Rodriguéz had much better luck. He still occupies high office and has even achieved a kind of international celebrity: in 1982 he was indicted by a Miami grand jury for drug trafficking.

But let's return to the Fifties. The Revolutionary Directorate committed itself in the Mexico pact to supporting the *Granma* expedition with diversionary tactics similar to those carried out on November 30 by the July 26th Movement, but didn't do it. The Directorate decided instead to liquidate the tyranny with one blow, a great blow meant to decapitate it. While it prepared for that mission, the Directorate kept up a seeming passivity. The calm was broken by the assassination of the head of Military Intelligence, Colonel Blanco Rico, which was carried out with great skill. Next the Directorate would attempt to get the Colonel's boss.

Meanwhile, in the Sierra Maestra, the fledgling *fidelista* guerrillas, supplemented now by some peasant recruits but still small, gave some signs of life by attacking a small army barracks.

Nevertheless, the government continued to insist that Fidel had been killed in the *Granma* landing, as if it believed that its unshakable faith in a lie could somehow modify reality.

One of the first feats of Faustino Pérez and his men was to demolish this stupid legend. They arranged to bring Herbert Matthews of *The New York Times* from Havana to the Sierra Maestra. Matthews interviewed and photographed the "dead man," and so Fidel became an international celebrity overnight, and, in time, the most famous of Cubans.

But wars are not won with propaganda alone; men and arms are also necessary. Frank País came to the rescue of the decimated expeditionary group in the Sierra Maestra. He reinforced it with a detachment of well-armed and -equipped fighters that tripled the guerrilla force in one day. The July 26th Movement created the rebel army; in time, the army would devour it.

By the way, the reinforcements sent by the Movement were transported on trucks provided by "an *arrocero* from Manzanillo," as Ernesto Guevara was later to describe Huber Matos. When Dr. Guevara wrote those words he had already been in our country long enough to know what we Cubans mean by *arrocero*: a landowner who cultivates rice on vast tracts of land using the latest agricultural technology and with a great concentration of capital, as economists say. In short an *arrocero* is, as Guevara well knew, an agrarian capitalist. Except that Huber was, as Guevara also knew, a schoolteacher with an enterprising spirit who had rented some trucks to transport the rice that others grew.

"I am extremely rigid in my actions," Dr. Guevara wrote on another occasion. I also can be quite rigid at times. Under certain circumstances, however, I wish I could be less rigid because I realize that being rigid doesn't do me any good. But respect for the truth won't let me. My veracity compels me to accuse Dr. Guevara of lying. He may be one of the major deities in the revolutionary pantheon, but he lied through his teeth when he portrayed Matos as bourgeois.

My love of the truth also obliges me to say, as I have already, that the Directorate did not live up to the commitment it made in Mexico. But in this case it was not due to bad faith; it had, quite simply, decided to stake all on one card.

On March 13, 1956, the Directorate stormed the presidential palace with all the force at its disposal.

In an interview with a CBS reporter, Fidel labelled the attempted assassination of Batista "useless bloodshed," adding that "the dictator's life is of no importance." With a heavy heart, I must disagree. Batista's dictatorship, like Fidel's, centered around one man. There was no substitute for that man among his followers. With the death of the dictator, his regime would have been condemned to disappear immediately or in short order. To eliminate Batista was tantamount to destroying the dictatorship, which was all for the good. What Fidel found objectionable was that the Directorate should bring about the fall of the dictator; such a contingency would have affected seriously his future plans.

As for the bloodshed, it was "useless" only because it did not directly benefit him. Moncada also ended in failure, but the blood expended there was not "useless" because it served to make him a national figure and put him on the road to power.

What is certain and undeniable, however, is that to assassinate Batista made much more sense than attacking an army barracks. The assault on the presidential palace itself was better planned and executed than Moncada. However, certain imponderables predominated that day, and to the great misfortune of many and the great luck of few, the Directorate suffered a terrible defeat that included the death of its leader.

While the assault was underway, José Antonio Echeverría burst into a radio station and read a somewhat impassioned and puerile communiqué announcing the death of the tyrant. It was a mistake. In politics, one shouldn't announce possibilities as facts, however feasible these may seem. The brave José Antonio didn't have the time to learn that axiom: he died a few minutes later in an encounter with the police on the street.

Hardly a few weeks had passed when we again had proof of the tragic fate that dogged the Directorate: four participants in the events of March 13—Fructuoso Rodriguéz (José Antonio's successor and as intrepid as the fallen leader), José Westbrook (one of the most promising young men of his generation), Juan Pedro Carbó Servía (a medical student whose name now adorns a wing of the Havana Psychiatric Hospital—an institution that will surely be investigated by the Secretary General of the United Nations whenever he decides to comply with his duty), and José Machado—were ambushed and murdered in an apartment on Humboldt Street where they had taken refuge. It was not known then, but they had been betrayed to the authorities by a Communist informant about whom I shall have more to say in due course.

Meanwhile, in far off Santiago de Cuba, death continued to reap its harvest. Frank País was murdered; gunned down in the street, like José Antonio.

I have already compared these two young men who could have contributed so much to the restoration of democracy in our country. Today, far removed in time (and despite the sympathy that the recollection of a youth so filled with

kindness and joy inspires in me), I believe that José Antonio never got to be more than he was: a youth. Not so Frank; this serious-minded native of Santiago was already a mature man, although no older than the brave student from Cardenas. "They don't know what a man they have killed," wrote Fidel on learning of Frank's death. On that day, he was truthful. José Antonio was the promise. Frank was the realization of that promise.

Two leaders died that would forever remain in our memory, but the struggle continued. In Matanzas, an armed group attempted to seize the Goicuría barracks. They got as far as the gates: the army was waiting for them, and the slaughter that ensued was the work of the curiously named Colonel Pilar García. Another group (which like the last was financed by ex-president Prío) disembarked on the Northern coast of Oriente, where they were ambushed and wiped out (only two escaped) by Colonel Fermín Cowley, commander of the Holguín regiment and a criminal psychopath who celebrated Christmas 1956 by distributing 25 corpses throughout the streets of the city.

In September, navy contingents supported by the July 26th Movement mutinied in Cienfuegos and took the city. They couldn't defend it against the army's Third Tactical Squadron and another massacre ensued. Batista had returned to his old ways: not since the days of his colonelcy had he shed so much blood. Attempts at mediation continued, but there seemed to be no peaceful way out of this situation. Batista would not compromise. He felt strong. He was sure that he could finish off all the revolutionaries.

Of course, the government also sustained losses–important losses. On a day that would prove fatal for him and others, the ferocious General Salas Cañizares burst into the Haitian embassy in Havana with the objective of murdering a group of asylum seekers. One of these men was armed and wounded Salas Cañizares in the lower abdomen before the general's henchmen killed him and all the other rebels under Haiti's protection. Salas Cañizares died amidst atrocious and prolonged suffering. It served that criminal right.

Cowley was luckier; they blew his head off with a sawed-off shotgun in an operation executed with much ability and luck. Later, the new chief of Military Intelligence, Irenaldo García Báez, son of Pilar García (the colonel with the woman's name), practically exterminated the forces of the July 26th Movement in Holguín. Among the dead was Manuel Angulo, my old high school gym teacher. I had always considered him an idiot because he let his students get away with so much, but he faced torture and death with admirable firmness. I pay tribute to his memory and offer these words as belated amends.

Batista cried publicly at Cowley's funeral. It was out of pure sentiment because in truth, he had henchmen to spare. Good henchmen who were merciless, amoral and sometimes even brave: Ventura, Carratalá, Martín Pérez and José Salas Cañizares, the spitting image of his late brother. And let's not forget Rolando Masferrer, another townsman of mine, who fought on the side of the Republic in the Spanish Civil War but later turned gangster in the Forties.

Masferrer was ready to fight the putschists on March 10, 1952, but the next day embraced Batista's cause with all the enthusiasm of a new convert. The tyrant allowed Masferrer to dedicate himself to what had always been his vocation: killing. Masferrer was not a soldier or a policeman. He was a senator and editor of his own newspaper, but the vocation of which I spoke held a very strong sway over him.

No doubt about it, the henchmen were plentiful. They had all kinds of advantages to fight the July 26th Movement and what was left of the Directorate. What Batista didn't have, however, were officers, soldiers capable of leading men into combat. He had only one: Colonel Sánchez Mosquera, who attacked Fidel's guerrillas with the obstinate ferocity of a pit bull. But a *fidelista* bullet penetrated his cranium and damaged vital brain matter. The pit bull lived but lost his ferocity and obstinacy. Batista, who had a surplus of murderers, from then on had not a single warrior in his army.

The lengthy task of destroying the effectiveness of the army, initiated by Machado and continued in all aspects by Batista, was by now complete. The army no longer existed. Batista, despite his long military career, was unaware of it; after all, he was only a sergeant stenographer. Fidel did understand the situation. He always understood it. Before him opened the road to power. He still had a long way to go, but the road was free of obstacles.

Meanwhile, under the fierce and relentless pursuit of the not inefficient Batista police, the July 26th Movement continued to hit and hit hard in Havana. Havana was the principal theater of urban combat, not Santiago de Cuba, as official history claims. The men of the July 26th Movement, under the direction of Faustino Pérez, carried out a series of well-conceived and -executed operations, some even spectacular. On the way, they became the main source of financing for the rebel army.

It's not for me to write the history of their daring deeds. That responsibility and honor rests with those who lived for years under constant pressure from repressive forces and at the mercy of chance, and who confronted day after day the possibility and the reality of torture and death. I will cite only three of their successes: the so-called "Night of a Hundred Bombs," which drove the tyranny mad; the abduction of the Argentine Juan Manuel Fangio, the world champion professional race car driver—a masterful tactical operation that in addition to generating loads of publicity, served to demoralize the enemy; and the blackout of sections of Havana, an operation that involved the excavation of a tunnel from a rented safe house on Suárez Street to the main electrical cables servicing the city just across that street.

Of all the men who have fought dictatorships in the cities of Latin America, I believe that only the Uruguayan Raúl Séndic equalled Faustino Pérez as a clandestine leader. And since I have already alluded to chance—that terrible and unforeseeable enemy of clandestine fighters—I want to point out that both Faustino and Séndic were captured by chance. A police officer who knew Faustino

happened to run into him on a street; and a detachment of police carrying out a routine house to house search knocked on the door of a residence where the leader of the *Tupamaros* happened to be visiting. I also want to point out how Faustino was freed from prison after undergoing the usual beatings. Judge Enrique Hart, father of two brothers of that name who were active in the Movement, got in touch with the examining magistrate in charge of the case and arranged bail for the revolutionary. The bond was posted immediately, Faustino was released and vanished. Human solidarity with a man in danger, risking livelihood and social position to aid a deserving man, is one of the traditions that has been erased by *fidelismo.* Such traditions saved the lives of many men and women who fought so that Fidel could reach power.

The urban fighters, the "plainsmen" as they were beginning to be called, withstood the hardest and most dangerous part of the fight against the tyranny, confronting the most efficient forces that the tyranny had at its disposal and living in a climate of permanent tension that the guerrillas in the mountains in no way knew. Although subject to material hardships, Fidel's men were spared the constant worry that is an inevitable part of the life of one who may lose his life at any moment, sometimes just by chance.

The harshness of war, or of any confrontation that involves the use of violence is in direct proportion to the degree of danger that the enemy poses, whether he is capable of doing us little or great harm. From this axiom of war, it naturally follows that it is impossible to compare the struggle waged by the rebel army and that waged by the clandestine resistance. To put up with hardships requires only a strong will, but to withstand torture requires strength of character.

How many men died in the mountains as compared to the cities? How many died in Havana alone? I have no answers to those questions. Those who do have the figures, answer if you are able. I can, however, point out some interesting facts. Of "The Twelve" who made it to the Sierra Maestra, only one died in combat: Ciro Redondo, who by the way was active in the Catholic Workers Youth. None was captured. None suffered torture, except Faustino Pérez, and this happened in Havana when he was fighting with the underground. By contrast, of the fourteen members of the July 26th Movement in Havana, four died: Gerardo Abreu ("Fortán), Sergio González ("El Curita"), Enrique Hart, and José Prieto. Another eight were detained and tortured. Aldo Vera miraculously escaped torture, but was imprisoned. Only one escaped unharmed. One in fourteen.

The publicity surrounding the insurrection centered on the guerrillas. Besides Fidel, other names were becoming famous: Raúl Castro, Cienfuegos, Guevara and Juan Almeida. The men of the urban resistance were photographed only when their corpses turned up or they were put on trial.

This was unavoidable: those who fought in the shadows had to shun the limelight. But what was historically unjust (and in the long run politically tragic),

was that the struggle waged by the Sierra Maestra guerrillas was promoted as the sole image of the Revolution. That's where the theory of the *guerrilla foco* originated, meaning, of course, the *guerrilla foco* as the heart, brains and very center of the revolutionary struggle. Ernesto Guevara was the principal exponent of this theory.

The growing confrontation between "The Mountains" and "The Plains" is reflected, on a small scale, in an epistolary skirmish between Guevara and René Ramos Latour, who had succeeded Frank País as head of the July 26th Movement in Santiago de Cuba. Ramos Latour sent a shipment of arms to the Sierra Maestra that Guevara pronounced defective. In a letter to the urban leader, Guevara, an Argentine physician but now a *comandante,* complained of the poor quality of the arms with that asperity that Guevara considered one of the most beautiful adornments of his character. In a devastating reply, Ramos Latour told Guevara that in order to send him that defective shipment he first had to disarm men who were in constant danger of death.

These differences, which would become more pronounced with time, were not founded on mere jealousy. They were, to use the political jargon that has been imposed on Cuba in the last three decades, "a manifestation of the ideological struggle." The rebel army was under the complete control of Fidel, who by then had discovered (although he was careful not to say so) that the dictatorship of the proletariat afforded the greatest felicity to those who rule. Guevara shared Fidel's point of view, as did (naturally) Raúl Castro, Ramiro Valdés and Juan Almeida (all of whom, as far as I can tell, have never had an idea of their own in their lives).

In the urban resistance movement, on the contrary, those who favored the restoration of democracy were in the majority. Facing an army that was every day more inept, corrupt and demoralized, the guerrillas began to spread out over the mountainous zones of Oriente. To the northeast of Santiago de Cuba, a second guerrilla front was established under the command of Raúl Castro. A third front commanded by Almeida cropped up in the very Sierra Maestra, just west of the capital of Oriente.

But it wasn't just the rebel army that was creating new guerrilla fronts. At the center of the island, a group of men rose under the command of Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo, becoming the autonomous Second Escambray National Front. The decimated Directorate, now led by Faure Chaumont, took refuge in the Escambray mountains and was able at least to survive.

In April 1958, the ideological struggle between "The Mountains" and "The Plains" finally came to a head. After a long string of successes, Faustino Pérez and his men met at last with disaster: the general strike that the July 26th Movement had convened in Havana for April 9 was a complete failure.

"April is the cruelest month." I remember that April 1958 because it did indeed prove cruel for our country. Fidel, Guevara and the rebel army used to great advantage the Movement's reverse of fortune. Faustino Pérez couldn't

rise to the occasion; his strength lay as a clandestine fighter, not as a politician. He also lacked ambition and independent judgement, qualities that every leader should have. As a result, the Movement of "The Plains" came completely under the control of the men of "The Mountains."

Emblematic of that control was the appointment of Enzo Infante to replace Faustino Pérez. I have a friend who is also friends with Infante and holds him in the highest esteem. I have myself met the gentleman on several occasions and he seemed a decent sort to me. But the fact remains that Enzo Infante was an absolute nobody then, surely no substitute for Faustino Pérez. Why wasn't someone chosen who was at least known in revolutionary circles? Why not, for example, the energetic and capable Manolo Ray, who led the Movement of Civic Resistance (a collateral arm of the July 26th Movement)? Or the respected Haydée Santamaría? Nothing stimulates men's courage more than the presence among them of a courageous woman. Her appointment would have constituted a promising token of that much vaunted but as yet unrealized "equal opportunity" that the Revolution would later promise women. Or if not Ray or Haydée, then why not at least name one of the survivors of the original fourteen, none of whom lacked courage?

Sometime in 1975, a conference was held in the economics department of Havana University to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Cuban Communist Party. One of the superabundant cretins in attendance asked a panel member, Professor Sergio Aguirre, why Martí had named Tomás Estrada Palma as his replacement in the United States rather than Carlos Baliño, a Key West tobacco cutter who much later would become one of the founders of the party. Aguirre was an old member of the Popular Socialist Party but nonetheless an honest man. After explaining the role that each played in the independence struggle and their respective merits—Estrada Palma's vast and Baliño's very modest contribution—he concluded that the appointment of Estrada Palma was both natural and logical in view of his record. "Whereas if Martí had named Baliño, all would have asked themselves. 'why Baliño?', or what's worse, 'who's Baliño?'"

And so I ask myself, why Infante? Or worse, who was Infante? He was named Faustino Pérez's replacement precisely because he was an irrelevant figure, the ideal candidate if you wanted to minimize the July 26th Movement's role in the revolutionary process. And minimized it was. In the days to come the Revolution would mean only the rebel army. And Fidel was the rebel army.

But that was not the only cruelty that April 1958 showered upon us. In Mexico, certain events transpired that have not been given much importance. Since they happened to be important in my life—and this is my book—I shall treat them, for I consider those events if not significant then surely symptomatic. When the yacht *Granma* departed from Tuxpan in November 1956, various members of that expedition were obliged to remain in Mexico for various reasons (imprisonment, illness). Among those left behind were Pedro Miret and

Gustavo Arcos, two leaders and founders of the July 26th Movement who were entrusted with the mission of organizing and training a new group of recruits and sending them to Cuba in a reinforcement expedition.

Miret and Arcos set out to work. By April 1958 almost everything was ready. A few recently arrived recruits were still scheduled to receive basic training, but the arms and the ship had already been acquired. These were kept somewhere on the Yucatán peninsula under the custody of a small group of men.

In April, while Arcos was in Caracas, Miret learned that various members of the Movement were planning to fly a small plane from Costa Rica to the Sierra Maestra. Such an action could not be taken without Miret's approval, for he was chief of foreign operations for the Movement, with Arcos as second in command.

Miret decided to go to Costa Rica to impose his authority. Up to that point everything was done correctly. But then Miret assumed direct control of the Costa Rican group—which included, by the way, Huber Matos—and flew with them to Cuba, landing at Cienaguilla, a small plain on the foothills of the Sierra Maestra. The plane landed but could not take off again. While this did not affect those who intended to stay, Miret was supposed to return to Mexico.

With Miret in Cuba and Arcos in Caracas, the expeditionary group in Mexico was temporarily without a leader. Jesus Suárez Gayol, Heliodoro Martínez Junco, an American named Jay Silvester who was our military instructor, and the other custodians of the arms and the ship, decided, without consulting God or the devil, to set out for Cuba on their own, leaving behind the rest of their companions.

That is exactly what they did, sailing as far as the coast of Pinar del Río, which is at the opposite end of the island from the Sierra Maestra. Upon landing, they were detected by the army and lost everything except their lives, with which they were able to escape. The long and patient work of more than a year came to naught.

This seemed to me then, seems to me still and will always seem to me even if hailstones should rain on me for saying so, a signal instance of irresponsibility on Miret's part, and of irresponsibility, insubordination and lack of esprit de corps on the part of Suárez Gayol, Martínez Junco and the other adventuresome voyagers. Nonetheless they were not penalized. Fidel, who is always so unforgiving of errors (I mean, of course, errors committed by others), took no disciplinary measures against the architects of this disaster. Miret was named a *comandante* before finally returning to Mexico. Suárez Gayol remained in Cuba, fighting bravely in Las Villas and achieving the rank of captain. Martínez del Junco returned to Mexico a few days after the failed expedition. Some day he would become Minister of Public Health.

Of course, not everything was going wrong for the rebels. With his characteristic sagacity, which was then functioning at full capacity, Fidel understood just how near he was to the end of the struggle. So perhaps Fidel was inclined

to forgive the perpetrators of the Mexican fiasco. One who was not forgiven, however, was Gustavo Arcos, who in no way was implicated in that disaster. *El Comandante* has shown an inexplicable hatred toward him. Perhaps I should say it was a hatred that has yet to be explained.

Another who did not rub Fidel the right way was Huber Matos. However, Matos must have been a very good guerrilla. How else do you explain the fact that he became not only one in a heap of *comandantes,* but the chief of a column? There were barely a dozen chiefs of column in the rebel army, including Guevara, Cienfuegos, Almeida and Raúl Castro. In time, Matos would pay dearly for being "the stranger in their midst."

In Mexico, at the other end of that stage on which this April drama was played, were a group of disillusioned men who had been abandoned by their leaders; some of these individuals would later gain notoriety. José Abrahantes, for example, who, like me, saw the end of the struggle without shooting one bullet or placing one bomb, was named a captain on arriving in Cuba in January 1959. He then embarked on a brilliant career in repression, which ended just recently in complete ignominy.

We arrive now at the final stage of the Batista dictatorship, which signals the end of the presence in the public life of our country of that wretch without whose actions our present misfortunes would not have been possible. It was he who led the way to that "blind alley without a glimmer of hope," of which Lezama spoke.

The guerrillas came down from the Sierra Maestra and began to move west; at the end of the road in that direction, lay Havana and power. Some but not all of the rebel army came down from the hills; in fact, very few abandoned their mountain stronghold. Fidel was not among them. Two columns commanded by Ernesto Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos crossed on foot the plains of Cauto and the flatlands of Camagüey, a total of more than 300 miles, until arriving at Las Villas.

This march has been compared to the Westward Invasion led by Generals Gómez and Maceo during our War of Independence, an absurd and disrespectful analogy that is in keeping with the Communist practice of using our national heroes for propaganda purposes. Gómez and Maceo were facing more than 100,000 enemy troops and had to fight every inch of the way. Yet our *mambises* broke through the box formations of the Spanish—a feat rarely accomplished in any war.

The enemy that Guevara and Cienfuegos confronted was very different. Batista's army was no army. Perhaps Dr. Guevara recalled his uninterrupted hike through the plains of Cuba as he saw his guerrilla forces in Bolivia battered, encircled and finally annihilated by a battalion of army rangers. There was nothing special about those little Bolivian soldiers; they had been well-trained and -armed, and when their officers led them into battle, they fought. But Batista didn't have at his disposal a single battalion like that.

The trek of the two guerrilla columns was undoubtedly a great feat, but it wasn't a military feat, because that would have required an enemy willing to fight. The 300-mile hike instead was an impressive demonstration of physical resistance and forbearance in the face of material hardships.

Guevara arrived in the Escambray mountains and was received with cordiality by the Directorate and with cold hostility by Gutiérrez Menoyo's men. This was the beginning of the bleak future that awaited Gutiérrez Menoyo. Cienfuegos, for his part, proceeded to northern Las Villas, where a small guerrilla band hastily organized by the Communists operated. At the last moment, the Communists had decided to abandon their opposition to the armed struggle. "It's never too late to enjoy good fortune," says a somewhat incongruous Spanish proverb, which was fulfilled on that occasion. The veteran Stalinists were the last to climb on the bandwagon, but they're still aboard today.

Camilo Cienfuegos should have kept going west, where a guerrilla front organized by *Comandante* Escalona was waiting for him. Escalona commanded a "stationary front," to borrow a meteorological term. No fighting ever happened on that front. Its mission was to prepare a base of operations for when *Comandante* Cienfuegos arrived. But Cienfuegos never came: it wasn't necessary.

In the western mountains, Batista's army continued to demonstrate its absolute incapacity to fight. It was undermined by cowardice and corruption. The rapacious and shameless General Tabernilla, head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and his equally rapacious and shameless subordinates, turned the war into a business venture by selling material.

One example: Colonel Sosa Blanco, a fearless man when it came to murdering defenseless peasants and burning their thatched huts, but incapable of facing armed and dangerous people. One day the Colonel and his troops arrived at the outbuildings of a sugar refinery, situated some twenty miles from Holguin. The soldiers hurriedly dismounted their trucks, falling over themselves in a mad scramble to get to a nearby park where there was a grove of coconut trees. The desperate soldiers climbed those trees like monkeys and knocked down every coconut, which they opened with their bayonets and devoured as if someone were going to take them away. Meanwhile, the townspeople and other witnesses looked on in astonishment. The frenzied enthusiasm that Colonel Sosa Blanco's troops demonstrated for coconuts had a very simple explanation: they were starving. Their scoundrelly colonel had sold their rations.

Batista's army continued to prepare and launch attacks on rebel positions, but they always had the same result: defeat and desertion. Although these were small fights, sometimes only skirmishes, Radio Rebelde, the guerrilla's clandestine station, referred to every encounter as a "battle." One of these so-called battles (not that it matters, but I don't remember what it was named) was described as "one of the greatest defeats ever sustained by a modern army."

How was it possible that such a propaganda fraud could have gone undetected? We didn't suspect. No one suspected—even though the magnitude of those

lies was self-evident—because we were all overpowered by hope, which makes men blind. When Pandora opened her blessed box and let loose all those evils, the last to escape was hope. I sometimes think it would have been better if hope had stayed in the box.

The end came. Villages were captured, then towns. Finally, troops led by *Comandante* Guevara with the assistance of Directorate forces under the command of Rolando Cubelas attacked the city of Santa Clara. Batista sent an armor-plated train to reinforce the city. However, the train and its contents served only to rearm the rebels, who had captured it but rather had bought it from the colonel Batista had entrusted with this last-ditch mission. Santa Clara fell to the rebels in late December 1958.

On the morning of January 1, 1959, having fulfilled his historic mission, Batista fled the country. We thought then that all vistas were opening to us. And so it was, but only for the chosen few who have lived like princes since that day.

The fugitive tyrant headed for Santo Domingo. The Americans didn't want him in their country, even though they granted asylum to some of his worst henchmen. Batista made a bad choice: Rafael Léonidas Trujillo, the fiery Dominican despot, had many scores to settle with Batista and availed himself of this opportunity to get even. Trujillo moved him violently from one place to another, terrorized him (which wasn't hard to do); corralled him (which is the best word to use in his case); forced him to clean the toilet of his cell, and, lastly, stripped him of several million of his heart's dollars.

I know that this is of absolutely no historical importance, but I am a vengeful man and I take great satisfaction in narrating the misfortunes of scoundrels. Alas, Batista's travails were not many. Another dictator, Oliveira Salazar of Portugal, granted Batista asylum on the condition that he remain on the Isle of Madeira. There (and later in Estoril and Costa del Sol), Batista spent his final years, enjoying the golden exile of thieving rulers.

But I waited. I expected he would be punished as he deserved, either by Fidel or Providence. Years later, the Sandinistas signed a family pact with the Montoneros that entrusted the Argentine terrorists with the assassination of the deposed dictator Somoza, then living in Uruguay. Fidel attempted no such undertaking against Batista, even though he has managed (or rather others working under his orders have managed) to pull off much more difficult and risky things.

Providence failed me too. I had expected something like the cancer that killed Machado, but it was not to be. Many years after the fall of the tyrant, I was waiting at a stop on Santa María del Mar beach for a bus to take me back to Havana. Meanwhile, I was keeping one eye on a certain diminutive young man whose wild perambulations threatened the public safety. At a certain moment when he tried to cross the street, I took the necessary measures against the subject in question. It was then that I heard, from passers-by on the street, that

Fulgencio Batista had died of a stroke, sweetly and quietly, in his luxurious residence in Spain.

"Daddy, I'm a big boy," said my five-year old son Ernesto, enraged at what he considered excessive control over his person. I lowered my gaze and looked sadly at that tiny and mischievous being who meant the world to me. I recalled at that instant that Batista, while in the last years of his millionaire exile, had lost one of his numerous male offspring to leukemia, and I conceived the hope that the wretch loved his children as I love mine. A malignant idea, perhaps, but comforting.

The designs of Providence are inscrutable, as my mother used to say. But not so men's designs. As I scrutinize Fidel's designs, I can't help thinking that the indifference he demonstrated to Batista's fate, the *dolce vita* that he allowed the tyrant to enjoy in his exile, was in large measure due to a conscious or unconscious sense of gratitude.

Fidel has been able to do everything that he has done thanks to the Revolution. This is not my idea; it belongs, as far as I know, to Carlos Alberto Montaner. Without Batista there would have been no Revolution; without the aborting of Cuban democracy on March 10, 1952, there would have been no Fidel Castro. And even with Batista's disruption of the democratic process in Cuba, if only he had not destroyed the professional army and replaced it with a parody of an army after his own image and likeness, cowardly and corrupt like him. Then Fidel's fate would have been very different, as would have that of our country and all its people.

Fidel would then have had to face troops led by career officers of the caliber of a General Martí Zayas Bazán; Colonel Lezama ("according to his instructors at West Point, my father was capable of commanding an 100,000-man army," José Lezama Lima said proudly one day); men like Colonel Martín Helena, Colonel Barquín, or even the same Captain José "Gallego" Fernández who is today Fidel's unconditional follower. Had Fidel had such men as adversaries, he and his guerrillas would have met with the same fate as the Salvadoran rebels, or, worse yet, Ernesto Guevara in Bolivia. I don't think that Gary Prado, the Bolivian captain who commanded the troops that annihilated Guevara's guerrillas, was a military genius; he was only a competent and gutsy officer.

4

Guerrillas at War

Marta San Martín and Ramón L. Bonachea

The militarism of Cuban society is now undeniable. Various students of the revolution have observed the increasing dominance of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), which has dampened early hopes that the Cuban Revolution would not fall prey to a professional military machine. On the surface, the militarization of Cuba seems to be the result of a policy geared toward establishing a strong defense on the home front as well as in respect to the United States. Yet the larger question is whether any underdeveloped nation can acquire the appropriate tools with which to allocate and distribute its economic, social and political resources without resorting to militarization.

Has the Cuban leadership concluded that only men from the armed forces can move the revolution into a new economic and political takeoff phase? Has the Cuban Revolution become institutionalized in the structure of the FAR while it still retains an uncompromising communist party? What new ideological dimensions have resulted from the militarization of the revolution? These are some of the important questions that must be raised about the Cuban military if one is to grasp recent changes in Cuba.

From Rebels to Soldiers

General Batyn Dorzh, minister of defense of the People's Republic of Mongolia, pointed out, after touring Cuba's military establishment, that one of the most important achievements of the Cuban Revolution was the development and consolidation of the Revolutionary Armed Forces."[1] This accomplishment, he said, had been made possible by the Soviet Union. Similarly, when Army General Heinz Hoffman, minister of national defense of the GDR, visited the San Antonio Air Force Base last spring, he reminded the Cubans that every socialist nation was in debt to the Red Army of the Soviet Union for the achievements of

their armies.[2] Brigadier General Carlos Araya Castro, heading the delegation of Chilean Armed Forces that visited Cuba in January 1971, praised the "seriousness" of the Cuban Armed Forces' training Programs.[3] All of these observations lend weight to Major Fidel Castro's assertion that Cuba's FAR is today the strongest, most modern, most professional military organization in Latin America. Certainly as early as 1964 the U.S. State Department had agreed that Cuba's FAR constituted the most powerful military establishment in the area.[4]

Though economic and domestic policies such as the unfulfilled ten-million-ton sugar quota or the March 1968 revolutionary offensive have captured the attention of Cuba's observers, the role of the military is the single most important development of recent years, and one that is rapidly changing the profile of the revolution. Their professionalism, and to a great extent, technocraticism, impresses one most about the men wearing the olive green uniform.

The FAR began with the civilian, middle-class-origin guerrillas who participated in the armed struggle against General Fulgencio Batista. Known as the Rebel Army of the Revolution, they included the insurrectionist groups of the Sierra Maestra and Escambray mountains as well as urban underground fighters from the 26th of July and the Revolutionary Directorate movements. From the Granma landing on December 2, 1956, to the final collapse of the regular army and the government, the rebel forces grew steadily, and included over 1,500 men when they finally reached Havana in January 1959.

The extermination of the regular army—by execution, exile and discharge—posed the need for a new one to take on the responsibilities of national defense. Such a task was by no means easy; both Fidel and his brother Raúl have conceded that the rebel army's lower ranks were mostly illiterate and unfamiliar with military science.

Priorities for the defense of the revolution were set early in 1959. First, the revolutionary leaders understood that they must defend the revolution from Batista's forces within and abroad. Second, the possibility of a U.S.-sponsored intervention, such as in Guatemala in 1954, could not be dismissed, especially after American properties were confiscated. The available manpower in the rebel guerrilla army could not possibly meet such challenges.

As a result of these political realities, the National Revolutionary Militias were officially created in October 1959. Majors Raúl Castro and Sergio del Valle and Captain Rogelio Acevedo met with 50 militants to discuss the need for a militia based on voluntary enrollment by workers. It was discussed as a pilot project for the city of Havana, but by 1960 the regulations of the revolutionary militias stated that they would be organized "through units in every cooperative, farm, factory, working and student centers, neighborhoods and/or any state or state related organizations."[5]

Militia instructors were drawn from the 26th of July, the Organización Auténtica (OA) and the Revolutionary Directorate underground movements. Rebel army

officers also volunteered to teach workers the elementary notions of military defense in case of attack. Classes were held after work and on weekends so as not to affect production, and in areas belonging to working centers, military posts or syndicates. The National Revolutionary Militias were to be a supporting and dependent corps of the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces.

The Escuelas de Instrucción Revolucionaria

On December 2, 1960, a meeting of decisive importance for the future of the rebel army was held. Headed by Fidel Castro, the meeting was to unite the main revolutionary movements within the military. Cadres were to be formed from among the veterans of the insurrection. Others present at the meeting were Emilio Aragonés, National Coordinator of the 26th of July movement, Faure Chomón, Secretary General of the Revolutionary Directorate, and Blas Roca, Secretary General of the Partido Socialista Popular (PSP).

This meeting disclosed the urgent need to build a strong armed forces.[6] As a result, the Escuelas de Instrucción Revolucionaria were set up. These cut vertically and horizontally across geographical and occupational lines. There were national EIR for teachers, fishermen, farmers and members of syndicates and provincial EIR encompassing regional and municipal cadres from all professions. Of particular interest were the Escuelas Básicas de Instrucción Revolucionaria (EBIR) especially designed for core revolutionary militants. Classes lasted from three to six months, depending on production schedules, contingency planning, mobilization against counterrevolutionists (the so-called Escambray "bandits"), literacy campaigns, etc. The programs of these schools included the study and discussion of Fidel Castro's "History Will Absolve Me," Blas Roca's "Los fundamentos del socialismo en Cuba" and the controversial manuals of the USSR Academy of Science such as *Manual of Political Economy*, *The Basis of Marxist Philosophy*, O. Kuusinen's *Manual of Marxism-Leninism* and even Mao Tse-tung's *On Contradictions*.[7]

By the autumn of 1961, the EIR Osvaldo Sánchez School of the Revolutionary Armed Forces had graduated 750 battalion and company instructors. In less than eight months 1,175 students had completed studies at the provincial EIR and 4,000 had been trained at the EBIR. These men and women assumed revolutionary leadership in the areas of production, defense and culture.[8]

As for the FAR, the injection of fresh cadres could not be more desirable. The EIR and EBIR eliminated the intergroup friction that had characterized the various insurrectionary organizations, particularly the 26th of July and the Revolutionary Directorate movements. The cadres' politicization through these schools, and their virtual integration within the armed forces, paved the way for the emergence of a united FAR. At last the rebel forces were beginning to look like a modern-day military institution.

Mass Organizations and the Test of Strength

As the revolution moved toward the Soviet Union and showed evidence of a deepening Marxist-Leninist character, the leadership began to adopt a socialist program for each of the existing revolutionary organizations. The EIR and the EBIR were essential tools in providing trained personnel to organize, educate and eventually consolidate the masses.

The Asociación de Jóvenes Rebeldes (AJR) became the Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas (UJC); the loose vigilance committees started at random in 1959 were turned into sophisticated committees for the defense of the revolution in September 1960. The Revolutionary Directorate, 26th of July, OA and the PSP became the Organizaciones Revolucionarias Integradas (ORI), while the Federación de Mujeres Cubanas retained its name but added new cadres and leaders.

The first phase of the revolution reached its climax with the April 17, 1961, Bay of Pigs invasion. This began a series of tests of the strength of the revolutionary forces. Despite the confusion and severe measures imposed on the population during this crisis, the revolution successfully met the challenge. The National Revolutionary Militias suffered many casualties but by and large FAR's ground troops and air force easily decided the outcome.

Meanwhile, the revolutionary leadership was waging a fierce fight against the Escambray guerrillas in Las Villas province. The Escambray had been the scene of Ché Guevara's and Rolando Cubelas' most resounding victories, such as the attacks on Guinea de Miranda and the Battle of Santa Clara; now it was the setting of new guerrilla warfare–this time against the revolution.

Disenchantment with the radical measures of the revolution was not an exclusive prerogative of economically affected classes. The movement in the Escambray region was mostly led by former Castro supporters, ex-guerrillas who had a thorough knowledge of the terrain and respectable expertise in irregular warfare. Of them, the most popular was Porfirio Ramírez, a student leader from Las Villas University and former guerrilla. Equally popular was Major Evelio Duque, who commanded wide support from the Escambray *guajiros.*

At the height of their campaign, official sources estimated that these leaders commanded approximately 3,591 men,[9] who comprised 179 guerrilla groups. Open counterrevolutionary activities began throughout the six provinces of Cuba. Groups operated in the Sierra Maestra mountains of Oriente province and the Sierra de los Organos in Pinar del Río province. Others were actively engaged in operations to the south of the city of Havana and around the coastal areas of Matanzas and Las Villas, both to the north and south.

The counterrevolutionary guerrilla movement was nurtured by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency's shipment of arms, food supplies and explosives. In addition, the CIA oversaw the recruitment of an urban underground. A few guerrilla groups attempted to remain independent though the effort was useless

since they depended on the CIA for military supplies. It is no secret that without the CIA the guerrillas would never have been able to establish their fronts across the island. Regular aid parachuted at night, infiltration of saboteurs from various points in the Caribbean and a continuous flow of intelligence data from the CIA staff at the U.S. embassy in Havana gave the insurgents momentum.

Against the persistence of the counterrevolution, the Ministry of the Armed Forces prepared a number of retaliatory measures. The struggle against the Escambray "bandits"—as it is called in Cuban military parlance—became known as the Lucha Contra Bandidos (LCB). Amidst the revamping of the old rebel army, the Ministries of Defense and the Interior rapidly mobilized the CDR and the National Revolutionary Militias. The former participated in Operación Anillo (Ring Operation) while the latter were charged with Operación Cerco (Encirclement Operation). Altogether, 50,000 workers were mobilized from all the surrounding cities and provinces, and 50,000 peasants from various regions of the country.[10]

Legendary figures from the revolutionary war such as Ché Guevara, Raúl Castro, Faustino Pérez and Raúl Menéndez Tomasevich all took part in the struggle. At Escambray, a column led by Guevara suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Porfirio Ramírez's guerrillas. After regrouping and charging again, Guevara's column was ambushed in a place called Potrillo, and as a result his force was cut to pieces. Afterwards, he was rescued by helicopter and transported to the nearby city of Cienfuegos. Raúl Castro encountered a similar fate; he was outmaneuvered by Major Evelio Duque's outfit, which inflicted heavy casualties on the militias before the terrified eyes of many an Escambray family. At the Sierra Maestra, small guerrilla bands attacked isolated posts of the rebel army. Castro's response to these defeats was to arm the peasants for self-defense, and after a few sound skirmishes the guerrillas took refuge in the heights of the Sierras.

The final drive on the Escambray guerrillas came with the removal of the rural population from the zone of operations. Selective terrorism was applied to any peasants suspected of aiding or abetting the counterrevolutionaries. Executions and imprisonment were frequent. Both the Anillo and Cerco operations succeeded in exterminating the hard core of the insurgents. In November of 1960, before the Bay of Pigs invasion, the CIA suspended most of its aid to these groups. After President Kennedy's decision to back an invasion of Cuba, and the creation of the CIA-supported Cuban Revolutionary Council, the Escambray guerrillas were on their own. If a U.S.-supported invasion had succeeded the guerrillas would have had a direct claim to power, and the CIA feared that these men were too far to the left in comparison with their counterparts in the Cuban Revolutionary Council. Thus, the CIA discouraged the urban underground movement from joining the guerrillas in the mountains.

As the CIA phased out its support for the guerrillas it became a matter of days until they would be exterminated. Guerrillas went to the *llanos* searching

for food and supplies and were caught by the revolutionary forces. Without an external base of logistical support they were condemned–as Ché was to be in Bolivia–to total oblivion.

The first front to be eliminated was that of Pinar del Río, followed by groups in Camagüey, Havana and Matanzas provinces. The last haven of the guerrilla movement became the Escambray. Some favored trying to get out of the country to join the training camps already underway for the coming invasion. Others decided to stay and continue the fight. Meanwhile, FAR's offensive escalated in a final effort to clear the country's rear guard as reports told Castro of the impending invasion. Although Ministries of the Interior and Defense effectively eradicated most of the guerrillas, scattered groups remained hidden in the mountains until well into 1965, when the government finally claimed to have successfully mastered the Lucha Contra Bandidos.

Fidel and Raúl Castro make no bones about their deep bitterness about the Escambray episode, in which the revolutionary government lost 500 men and spent between 500 and 800 million pesos.[11] For Fidel, Raúl, Ramiro Valdés, Sergio del Valle and others–especially after the nuclear confrontation of October 1962, when the Soviet Union and the United States decided everyone's status–"arming to the teeth" became necessary if the revolution and its leaders were to survive at all.

The tests of Cuba's strength during the first five years of the revolution tended to consolidate the revolutionary consciousness of the leaders and the people–except those who remained but were philosophically at odds with the socialist regime.

The various political and educational campaigns waged during these years increased the feeling of solidarity among the FAR, and their pride in having defended the revolution. The literary output through the Escambray period, the Girón invasion and the Caribbean crisis reflects these sentiments. Poems praised the sacrifice of the literacy *brigadistas,* and novels depicted the epic of the Escambray,[12] while Girón (or Bay of Pigs) was celebrated.

The changes in FAR's profile were noticeable. Many revolutionaries from these campaigns went on to occupy important positions throughout Cuba's defense system and structure. The youngest fighters went into advanced military schools to become FAR officers, and others joined the intelligence units of the Ministry of the Interior (MININT) and the Ministry of Defense (MINFAR).

Compulsory Military Service

On July 26, 1963, Fidel Castro told the people of Cuba that the defense of the fatherland was a duty of everyone, not just of a few. Accordingly, on November 26, 1963, the revolutionary government approved Law 1129, by which it directed every male between the ages of 16 and 44 to register for military service.[13]

In April 1964 the first draftees went into the various military schools throughout the island. Many a traditional Cuban family disapproved this measure, for it took their children away from home–an unprecedented event in Cuban history. Certainly Cuba had not been as militaristic as her Latin neighbors. However the Cuban tradition of civilian rule, which had been upset at times by the dictatorships of General Gerardo Machado and Fulgencio Batista and the military skirmishes of the first years of the revolution, now came abruptly to an end.

Instrumental in the draft movement were the CDR. Through them youngsters qualifying for service were issued their Servicio Militar Obligatorio (SMO) cards. The SMO reached many youngsters who in the view of the revolutionary government did not study, work and were not engaged in any significant task.

The conscription of cadres through the SMO increased the politicization of a substantial sector of the population, particularly the young. To resolve the contradiction between education and national defense, the government gave technical training to the draftees while they were serving in the FAR. Credits were given cadres for the time worked in agriculture or industry.[14]

Those who remained in the FAR to become future officers attended technological institutes or precollege institutes.[15] Altogether a conscripted cadre had to serve three years. Then he had to decide whether to continue with the military or to enroll in one of the three universities or simply to put his knowledge and services to the use of the revolution.

Universal conscription insured that there were no criteria for membership in the cadres. To qualify for an officer's school, however, the cadre member had to be a good communist (belong to one of the mass organizations such as the UJC, have a record of good moral conduct (homosexuals, drunkards, thieves and the like were excluded from membership in mass organizations), demonstrate absolute self-discipline and respect for military discipline, be of a responsible nature (judged by his record of militancy in the mass organization) and above all obey the orders of the chief.

The SMO no doubt helped supply the FAR with manpower, not just numerically but qualitatively. Yet it was also instrumental in extending the authority of the military establishment over adolescents and youth. The revolutionary leaders felt no qualms about this trend; it is their philosophy that every Cuban citizen must be a soldier, a student and a worker, or, put into a slogan, "*Trabajo, Estudio y Fusil.*"

The Military and the Party

In 1965 the United Party of the Socialist Revolution (PURS) was created. Then the Cuban leadership complied to Soviet pressures to patch up their Marxist-Leninist revolution with an earthly touch of reality: the PURS became the Cuban Communist Party (PCC).

The PCC structure places Major Fidel Castro as its first secretary general, prime minister, director of the Institute of Agrarian Reform and commander-in-chief of the revolutionary armed forces. Major Raúl Castro is second in command for each of the above positions. The Politburo is made up of Majors Juan Almeida, Ramiro Valdés, Guillermo García and Sergio del Valle, along with two civilians, President Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado and Armando Hart as the secretary of organization. The party's secretariat is headed by Fidel Castro as chairman, Raúl Castro as vice-chairman, in addition to Major Faure Chomón, Carlos Rafael Rodríguez and Blas Roca.

The party structure bears a striking resemblance to the internal organization of the clandestine 26th of July Movement. In addition, 63 of the Central Committee's 100 members were military men, and only three women were members[16]—Vilma Espín (Raúl's wife), Haydée Santamaría (Hart's wife) and Celia Sánchez. Responsibility for the decision-making process falls on the first and second secretaries of the party as well as on the members of the Politburo. The Central Committee seems to wield little power except as a supporting body for any and all decisions taken by either Secretariat or Politburo.

In 1963, Raúl Castro issued orders to the effect that the creation of the party within the FAR should have priority over the coming years. To create the appropriate objective and subjective conditions a number of steps were taken. First, the FAR conducted a mass media campaign to introduce FAR members to some elementary notions about the forces leading to the creation of Marxist-Leninist parties. Study material for this task involved the *Communist Manifesto* by K. Marx and F. Engels, the "Historic Mission of the Working Class" and chapters related to the organization and functions of the party in Kuusinen's *Manual of Marxism-Leninism*.[17] Second, commissions for the creation of the party were developed by selecting the best political instructors from the FAR, including some troop officers. These men were to instruct their comrades about the materials they themselves had previously studied. Last, encounter sessions were held with political commissars from other socialist countries experienced in the building of other communist parties.

Shortly thereafter, FAR's political instructors were sent to Oriente province to begin the pilot construction of the Cuban Communist Party. December 2, 1963, or the seventh anniversary of the Granma expedition, was chosen as the beginning date for this task.

One of the main concerns in forming a communist party within the armed forces was to ensure a careful selection of future party members.[18] The MINFAR may have chosen Oriente because its army division there was farthest away from key influential members of the old communist guard residing in Havana which had intimate contacts with the USSR embassy. But officially Oriente was chosen for traditional reasons: the building of the party would simulate an invasion recalling both the War of Independence from Spain and the revolutionary war against Batista forces, that is from Oriente to Pinar del Río.[19]

The available literature of this period shows a tactful but firm emphasis on the precept that the party in the armed forces had to differ "totally from the experience of the party's construction in working centers."[20] This zealous preoccupation lends substance to the belief that FAR's structure was not to be controlled by the remnants of the old Cuban Socialist Party (PSP), which commanded strong support among the working class, or by revolutionary civilians of any of the major movements in the struggle against Batista.

Instead the MINFAR, through the Joint Chiefs of Staff, diligently and carefully supervised the arrangements leading to FAR's screening of future party cadres, leaving no doubt that FAR would control them rather than the other way around. Many of the drilling mottos of the FAR were geared to instill obedience and loyalty not to the party but to the chief, i.e., "to educate the officers and the troops in the principle that the order of the chief is the law incarnating the will of the land," or "for anything, in any way, and wherever at your orders Commander in Chief."[21] It was this clear-cut distinction that led René Dumont to remark sarcastically that "the Party is still impregnated with a Spanish-American mentality gladly delegating all powers on the Chief, the Caudillo."[22]

The construction of the party clearly involved an attempt to avoid disrupting the monolithic nature of FAR's structure. But during the ensuing two years other events produced deep-seated unrest. First, the dismissal of Major Efigenio Almeijeiras, Vice-Minister of the Armed Forces, began a drive against "inmoral conduct." This move was followed by an intensive campaign against homosexuals, paving the way for the much-resented UMAP (Military Units to Aid Production). The impact was felt at every echelon of Cuban society and created bitter resentment.

Second, a plot to assassinate Fidel Castro was unveiled, and Major Rolando Cubelas, a former leader of the Revolutionary Directorate and president of the University Student Federation, was tried and sentenced to 30 years of hard labor. Other military officers were to participate, along with Manuel Artime, a former civilian leader of the Bay of Pigs invasion. This and the disappearance of Ché Guevara increased the intrigue and uneasiness within the FAR.

Third, the People's Republic of China was suspected of promoting widespread dissaffection against Fidel Castro by means of propaganda within Cuba and abroad. *Pekín Informa* (the Spanish version of *Peking Review*) was sent freely in large quantities to army personnel, and in September of 1965 the MINFAR reported that massive distribution was carried out systematically among officers of the FAR by delegates of the Chinese government. Individual contacts were made with officers of the General Joint Chiefs of Staff, of armies, army corps, divisions and chiefs of political sections of the army.[23]

In February of 1966 Castro charged the Chinese with economic aggression and disclosed China's attempt to subvert Cuba's military institutions. Declaring that the government could not tolerate China's maneuvers to "influence the

military and administrative cadres through acts amounting to betrayal,"[24] Castro came close to a complete break with the People's Republic of China. In the process it was revealed that pro-Guevarist officers were less willing than their pro-Castroite comrades to compromise with the Soviet Union on Cuban policy toward guerrilla wars in Latin America.[25] In spite of Castro's much-talked-about promises to support such plans there is evidence that he never seriously intended to risk too much on behalf of the idea of "many Vietnams" in Latin America.[26]

Meanwhile the construction of the party proceeded while the approach changed. It became necessary to instill discipline by preparing cadres loyal to Castro and to his pro-Soviet line.

New methods were employed to assess the political and military performance of FAR's officers. Previously, self-criticism offered many low-ranking officers an opportunity to openly criticize their superiors. A new approach established eight categories according to rank wherein group discussions would take place: privates, corporals, sergeants and officers were grouped under four categories, and officers from the Chief of Sections of the General Staff of Armies, Chiefs of the General Staffs of Divisions, Brigades and Units—including battalions, artillery and company chiefs—would form the remaining four.[27]

Other structural arrangements concerned the centers of political command: the National Commission of the FAR, the Political Direction of the FAR, Political Sections, the Party's Bureau, the Bureau of Nuclei, and the *núcleos* at the base of the military pyramid. The National Commission, headed by Raúl Castro as chairman, was followed by the Political Section, which would select members and from which the Political Direction would be fed the correct orientation. In turn, Political Sections would supervise the party's work in brigades and armies. The party's Bureau was to control the activities at the level of battalions, followed by the Bureau of Nuclei, and last the *núcleos* at the platoon level, the base organization of the party.[28]

The above scheme parallels that of other mass organizations, especially the CDR, which as a paramilitary organization is closely related to FAR. It contains a national directorate, provincial, regional, municipal, sectional and lastly the local CDR or base organization, which in the FAR is the nucleus.

Closely intertwined with the party's structure in the FAR is the UJC, with cadres up and down the party structure. Together they form the FAR-UJC nucleus, balancing FAR and injecting "militant enthusiasm" in addition to checking the activities of platoon leaders whose behavior is the subject of monthly reports to the Bureau of Nuclei. UJC members can be ready for combat duties with 24 hours' notice.[29]

The construction of the party within FAR has not only contributed to the emergence of various military figures but also to their promotion to key positions within the power structure usually filled by civilians. Some of the key men surrounding Fidel Castro are Major Senén Casas Regueiro, first deputy minister

of the FAR and chief of the General Staff, his brother Major Julio Casas Regueiro, deputy minister of services of the FAR. Major Oscar Fernández Mell, deputy chief of the General Staff, Major José R. Machado, first secretary of the party, Havana province, and Major Julio Camacho, first secretary of the party, Pinar del Rio province, in addition to Majors Julio García Olivera and Roberto Viera Estrada, members of the Central Committee of the CCP and Major José N. Causse, chief of the Political Section, Captain Manuel Peñado, deputy chief of the Political Department of the MINFAR and Major Lino Carreras of the Armored Division.

The Ministry of the Interior (MININT)

The right arm of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba is the MININT, one of the country's most complex and awesome revolutionary institutions. The MININT performs as important a role in the national defense system as the FAR. Its immediate domestic branches are the National Revolutionary Police, the Department of Technical Investigations and well-known Department of State Security. There also is the International Section, dealing mostly with espionage and counterespionage as well as the Liberation Directorate, concerned with guerrilla activities.

But the MININT also includes a Joint Chief of Staff supervising the tasks of the MININT's army divisions. Very little is heard or known about this "secret army," which commands at least two very important outfits: the Batallones Fronterizos (Bons) and the Milicias Serranas (the LCBs–Lucha Contra Bandidos). The MININT's army divisions are autonomous bodies reporting directly to Fidel Castro and to Minister of Defense Raúl Castro. The Bons keep a 24-hour constant surveillance along the first lines of defense, the coasts. In case of invasion or small landings the Bons are responsible for prompt execution of orders and strategies. The LCBs are equally important because they patrol the plains and mountains of Cuba. Staffed by and constantly in contact with the peasantry, these military detachments constitute the guardians of the revolution against the "bandits."

In terms of manpower the Bons are an elite corps, since they include able political cadres whose status symbolizes the "exemplary socialist soldiers" who are experts on Marxist-Leninist theory. Their training is carried out jointly by MININT's and FAR's political instructors from various military schools, so they are also known as the MININT-FAR forces. Approximately half of the troops are regular FAR soldiers and the other half MININT's cadres. In the event of an exile raid, or any other irregularity, the units of the MININT-FAR are to report to the MININT Havana headquarters, which in turn notifies the FAR. As for the LCBs these largely stem from the paramilitary CDR organization, the National Militias and regular soldiers from the FAR.

Together, these organizations comprise an army within an army, a system that permits a constant flow of intelligence badly needed in a militarized revo-

lutionary process. Should the army plot against Fidel Castro, either by allowing exile raids or among themselves, the MININT cadres—also known in Cuban parlance as Contra-Seguridad del Estado—are there to see that the attempts are thwarted and punished. The same holds true for the communist party if it should move against the revolutionary leadership. For MININT cadres are present throughout the FAR as well as throughout the party's top positions, especially at the provincial levels where most positions such as provincial secretaries are held by majors.

Major Sergio del Valle,[30] Minister of the MININT since October 1968 (replacing Major Ramiro Valdés) has described his ministry's performance as one of the most important in the field of national defense.[31] Major Fidel Castro himself has argued the merits of the MININT when criticisms against it have come from certain sectors such as Havana University students in the School of Humanities and Cuban intellectuals.[32] Overall, the MININT is essential to the survival of the revolution as well as to Fidel himself.

The Making of a Professional Officer

Future professional officers are recruited from the UJC-led Union of Cuban pioneers (UPC), a new concept enveloping the embryo of Fidel Castro's new "army of cadres." The UPC embraces children between the ages of seven and 14 years with a membership of one million in 1970.[33] Their motto "Pioneers for Communism: We Shall Be Like Ché," represents the government's effort to create the "new man" evoked by "Ché" Guevara.

One of the objectives in this recruitment is to gradually eliminate universal conscription. However, instead of doing away with the SMO, the revolutionary government has internalized it into the educational system.

Prior to September 1970 grade school children were trained in drilling, marching and political instruction until reaching the Escuelas Básicas. From ages 15 to 77 they would serve three years in some branch of the FAR. Until 1966, secondary and pre-university schools were not so militarized. In that year Raúl Castro issued orders for the first Camilo Cienfuegos military school with an enrollment of 300 students.[34] This pilot project generated five similar schools throughout the remaining provinces.

The Camilo Cienfuegos enroll children between ages 11 to 17 and are coeducational institutions which provide secondary and pre-universitary education under regimentation paralleling FAR's cadet military schools. In 1972 it included 12,000 students through the six provinces; these youngsters were called "the principal source feeding the schools of technical cadres as well as cadres for the FAR's command posts."[35]

While the secondary and pre-university schools are in operation alongside the Camilo Cienfuegos, the latter will gradually replace the last vestiges of civilian-oriented public instruction. In the view of the government, if the revolution is to survive its economic crises, more disciplined cadres must be formed.

After the "Camilitos"—as these students are known—have completed their basic pre-college education they are absorbed into the CEM, or Centros de Estudios Militares. The CEM is a conglomerate of military schools, the foremost of which is the Instituto Técnico Militar founded on September 16,1966, in the former building of Belén School where Fidel Castro graduated from high school.

The ITM became a reality thanks to Soviet advisors and the students themselves. Previously, technicians were trained in other socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union. In this sense, the ITM was a step in the direction of training Cubans in Cuba with the help of Soviet instructors and Cubans already trained in the Soviet Union.

Until 1971 students enrolling in the ITM came from the Secundarias Basicas and the Pre-universitarias. This pattern changed with the increasing output of "Camilitos"; by the end of 1971, 74 percent of the incoming recruits came from the Camilo Cienfuegos schools.[36] Once in the ITM students are given a 45-day training course known as the Soldier's School where they are further acquainted with the life, rule and regulations of the armed forces. They are also given short courses on physical fitness, tactics, engineering training, preventive measures against mass extermination weapons, political instruction and topography. They are compelled to engage in agricultural production in areas programmed for these camps. Before actually enrolling in the ITM's schools their work and study is evaluated by faculty members who decide if they meet the standards and/ or if vacancies are available.[37]

Overall the ITM is a fine technological training institution preparing officer-technicians to assume professional positions in the modernized FAR. There are four major schools at the ITM: the School of Geodesy and Construction, specializing in phototopography, construction of anti-aircraft shelters, cartography and land surface; the School of Mechanics, emphasizing physics, chemistry and machinery, especially tanks, heavy equipment and armaments, mechanical aviation and engineering; and the Schools of Electrical Mechanics and Radiotechnical Mechanics, specializing in rocketry armaments, radar, wireless communications, radio-navigation, radio-communication and automatic computer systems.[38] These studies last from three to five years depending on whether the student wants to become a technician or an engineer.

Not all students pursue technical training though FAR emphasizes qualified technical manpower. Those who choose to become strictly military officers, and who have completed their secondary and pre-college schooling, will, depending on their aptitudes and socialist consciousness, enroll in any of the special military schools under the CEM. If the student prefers the navy he will enroll at Mariel Naval School in Pinar del Río province. If he wants to become an air force cadet he will go to San Antonio, one of the main military installations of the celebrated DAAFAR (Defensa Anti-Aérea de las Fuerzas Aéreas Revolucionarias) where most of the sophisticated rockets and air force planes are found.

But with most armies the trend is to enroll in any of three main military schools of the FAR: the "General Maceo Inter-Armas School," which includes the Schools of Communications and Infantry, the Máximo Gómez Military School specializing in artillery and armored equipment, or the Advanced School of War reserved for the best military officers trained at any one of the CEM's special military schools or in the Soviet Union.

Ever since the Cuban Revolution proclaimed its allegiance to socialism there has been a marked emphasis on preparing responsible personnel to occupy decision-making positions in agriculture, industry, the military or education. This qualified manpower has been termed cadres or, more specifically yet, "command cadres," a managerial development within the revolution that led René Dumont to suspect the existence of a vastly militarized bureaucracy.

After training in Soviet military academies, the revolutionary Cuban leaders have been able to initiate their own training schools such as the ITM, and to replace civilians in key managerial posts by military personnel technically qualified to carry out the programs, exerting stern discipline in the economic area, which has become Cuba's vital artery.

Officers attending the Soviet M.V. Frunze Military Academy, founded in 1918 by Lenin, have ranged from first and second lieutenants to majors who now hold important positions in the military establishment.[39] Criteria for selection of faculty members in the Soviet Academy include combat experience, breadth of knowledge in the field of education, direct experience with the country from which the recruits have come, and thorough familiarity with the theater of operations as well as knowledge of the "peculiar local conditions" of each nation sending officers to study at the academy.[40]

Raúl Castro has asserted that the military establishment represents the most important institution of the Cuban Revolution, and that the nation's resources are to be placed solidly behind the FAR even if Cuba is forced "to sacrifice some aspects of social development." The military must be allocated "a greater amount of resource."[41]

Some of the results of this intensive training of professional officers deserve mention. In 1960–1961, 750 political instructors—the antecedents of the command cadres—graduated from the Osvaldo Sánchez school. By comparison, in 1970 1,579 professional officers graduated, of whom 90 percent were either members of the UJC or the PCC.[42] Similarly, 1,304 cadets graduated from the ITM, the naval academy, and other military schools already mentioned. At least 275 successfully completed training in Soviet military academies and returned to Cuba to assume jobs in any of the CEM's schools or further studies at the Advanced School of War in Cuba.[43]

The Military Structure

Despite the lack of substantial data concerning the structure of FAR it is safe to say that it appears to function along the model of the USSR Red Army. But

noticeable variations–the National Militias or the LCBs–answer to Cuba's specific needs.

In terms of weaponry, training and political orientation, FAR may be categorized as a modern professional military institution. To what extent this professionalism is *sine qua non* of power capability or commendable performance is a question that remains largely unanswered for lack of empirical evidence. In turn, the division of services remains orthodox, with an air force, navy and an army, each with its own general staff under the supervision of the Joint General Staff of the Armed Forces.

The structure of Cuba's FAR ties into the country's defense strategy. As early as September 20,1961, Fidel Castro projected three types of offensive overtures that remain equally feasible today: a formal or informal U.S.-sponsored Cuban exile invasion, guerrilla warfare or a spontaneous uprising generated by the elimination of the main revolutionary leaders.[44]

These alternatives are largely cancelled out by the effectiveness of the FAR-MININT forces controlling mass organizations such as the CDR, UJC and the National Militias. Being dependent paramilitary organizations they can be instrumental in breaking up any urban underground, and since an internal uprising must be planned from inside, an urban underground movement must be developed first. A massive invasion, or an invasion like the Bay of Pigs is not at all impossible and FAR prefers to concentrate on this possibility. As for irregular war or guerrilla warfare, the existence of an underground is concomitant to any successful armed struggle. Because of organizational difficulties the likelihood of this alternative is remote.

As for the specific characteristics of Cuba's topography and geography, FAR has seemingly opted for three main blocks of military concentrations: the Western Army covering the provinces of Pinar del Rio, Havana and the eastern half of Matanzas: the Central Army including the western half of Matanzas; all of Las Villas province and half of Camagüey; and the Oriente Army extending from Camagüey city to all of Oriente province. This geo-strategic breakdown is followed by a geo-political one, that is, the existence of six independent armies or divisions such as the Independent Army Corps of Pinar del Río, Havana, Matanzas, Las Villas, Camagüey and Oriente.

If the island were invaded at several points, resistance could be maintained even if it were cut off in half–witness the opposite effect during 1958 when Batista concentrated his army in Las Villas and Oriente. If the Joint General Chiefs of Staffs were unable to direct operations, the General Chiefs of Staff of the independent armies would continue to pursue pertinent strategies and tactics. Initiative, flexibility and unity of command parallel Fidel Castro's military and political tactics during the Sierra Maestra days.

Military exercises are conducted every month in various parts of the island. The strategy is to crush the invaders before they approach the coast, or to annihilate them entirely if they land. Large quantities of human and material

resources are mobilized to this end since any hesitation would be costly in terms of lives and time.

FAR is a large military machine with unprecedented manpower of approximately 300,000 men; yet it can revert to guerrilla warfare. Theoretically, FAR has the capability to atomize into hundreds or thousands of guerrilla columns to oppose an enemy like the United States.

Cuban leaders may not be entirely confident that they can reject a U.S. invasion of Cuba. If such an invasion takes place, FAR would suffer heavy casualties though it ultimately would control the situation, assuming use of conventional weapons only. But the ensuing phases of resistance would be more difficult. Thus, the FAR are trained in guerrilla warfare, and selected units receive careful attention. These vanguard units are usually located in the mountains and have their own independent arms depots camouflaged in the hills and caves. More specifically the Batallones Serranos constitute these guerrilla outfits.

The evidence available shows that because of the Serranos' knowledge of the terrain, their high degree of fighting morale and constant mobility, their counterinsurgency actions have proven lethal against small bands of Cuban exiles who attempt to promote guerrilla warfare. The latest recorded attempt took place on April 17, 1971, when a group commanded by Vicente Méndez unsuccessfully tried to establish a guerrilla center in the region of Baracoa, Oriente province.

FAR's high degree of combat readiness is a response to the "socialist emulation" technique whereby every military unit competes for first place in socialist production, socialist military behavior or socialist performance in the field of battle. One of the most important competitions consists of reaching the highest possible level of politicization for the members of each unit. Such an objective is attained through the study of Marxism-Leninism, the advancement of the party within the FAR and the maintenance of vigilance within the military organization.

A Large Military Establishment

The need to maintain a large military establishment is emphasized by the leaders of the revolution. Fidel Castro has referred on various occasions to the disproportionate numerical force of the FAR in relation to the total population of Cuba (eight million). In Chile Fidel Castro disclosed that that FAR's manpower can increase its numbers from 300,000 to 600,000 in 24 hours by adding its paramilitary organizations.[45] The leaders of the revolution constantly remind the people that the survival of their revolution depends on the combat preparedness of the mass organizations. If FAR must incorporate more men for defense it can count on the cooperation of roughly a million persons militarily trained from the CDR. The same holds true for the Federation of Cuban Women

(1.5 million), and the Central Confederation of Cuban Workers (1.5 million) though the CDR (3.5 million) are the most numerous of all. It is doubtful that any other Latin American army could mobilize such an impressive manpower, or that it could match FAR's technological prowess.

Unlike Argentina or Chile, Cuba never had a professional navy despite its geographic situation. With the revolution, Cuba's heavy, often obsolete vessels have been exchanged for a large fleet of Soviet-built speed boats such as the Krondstads, Komar I and II. Numerous naval posts have been erected along the coasts, particularly in the inlets and small bays. The navy's own approach to defense has also undergone palpable transformations. Until 1971, the navy maintained a surveillance system to intercept exile commando raids, and to capture Cubans trying to leave the country clandestinely. The persistent attempts of several exile organizations to infiltrate the island has prompted Fidel Castro to order the navy to intercept vessels navigating too close to the coast, and to capture known counterrevolutionary ships cruising the Caribbean. This policy and the navy's efficiency in accomplishing such objectives have greatly discouraged exile raids, and have alerted potential counterrevolutionaries of the dangers involved in attacking Cuba's coastal villages. The traditional immunity of vessels in international waters is disregarded by the Cuban government.

Recently there were rumors that the USSR was building a submarine base at the port of Cienfuegos in Las Villas province. The U.S. State Department immediately complained to the Soviet Union, and an *Izvestia* analyst reported such assertions were groundless.[46] However, the southern part of Cienfuegos has been made available to Russian ships, possibly for refueling or repair work, and plausibly for propaganda effects. No concrete evidence exists to assume that facilities have been established there "to service missiles or Y-class nuclear missile submarines."[47]

Militarization of Society

The final militarization of Cuban society may be traced to Castro's speech on the 11th anniversary of the Palace Attack, March 13, 1968. The striking note in that address was the take-over of whatever remnants of the private sector had been able to survive earlier revolutionary measures.[48] The new policy of the revolution, known as the "revolutionary offensive," signaled a turning point which would require the utmost utilization of human resources for a huge economic mobilization in anticipation of the much-heralded ten-million-ton sugar harvest.

One of the aspirations of the leadership in setting forth the offensive was to achieve a technological revolution in the field of agriculture. Fidel himself claimed that Cuba's agriculture "in the shortest period of time will become the most developed, mechanized, technical and productive of the world."[49] To that effect the revolutionary leaders initiated the famous "Jornada de Girón" whereby

production in every working center would–as a matter of moral and revolutionary commitment–surpass all goals.

Aside from using the Jornada to mobilize the masses for economic production–as the Cuban leadership had been doing every year–the Jornada would function along the guidelines of Cuba's civil defense to "make sure by means of practice all the plans elaborated at war time."[50] To this end, people were mobilized into squadrons, platoons, companies and battalions at the level of provinces, regions and municipalities under the supervision of the party from civil defense command posts.

Mass organizations like the UJC numbered 40,000 and the FAR contributed with 60,000 regular soldiers. Of these, 20,000 came from the technological institutes headed by a contingent of high-ranking officers from the General Joint Chiefs of Staff and eight members of the Central Committee led by Juan Almeida of the Politburo.[51] This large force concentrated its efforts in the provinces of Camagüey and Oriente where absenteeism was sharpest. In the cities, workers moved from their homes to the respective working centers for several weeks and sometimes months. These centers were christened "Centros Guerrilleros" because of the exemplary labor productivity achieved by means of voluntary working hours. In addition, the party called for the formation of the Youth Centennial Column which would be established by 40,000 UJC volunteers ranging from ages 17 to 27 years. This force would be deployed throughout Camagüey province for three consecutive years, or until 1971. To prepare this column for economic tasks the FAR arranged short courses lasting 20 days and involving military topics. According to Raúl Castro each provincial UJC would recruit volunteers in the following numbers: Oriente, 15,000; Camagüey, 5,000; Las Villas, 10,000; Matanzas, 3,000; Havana, 15,000; and Pinar del Río, 2,000. Altogether they would add up to 50,000 young people working in Camagüey.[52] By August of 1968, five months after launching the revolutionary offensive on the economy, 350,000 workers, students, soldiers and peasants were mobilized in the agricultural field.

One of the immediate effects of the revolutionary offensive was the ebullient, almost frenzied mood that overcame the masses. Such disposition underlined a sense of urgency and feverish desire to tackle the aggressive challenge of the coming ten-million-ton sugar harvest. The revolutionary leadership was confident that the new approach to economic production would substantially solve, perhaps alleviate, the problems of discipline, absenteeism, waste and almost chaotic disorganization among workers, administrators, auditors and political cadres. Raúl Castro, for one, at Camagüey felt that a "revolutionary offensive" organized along military lines would offer sound proof that such techniques must be utilized in every sugar harvest from then on. He made it clear that the "revolutionary offensive is not a simple political password but a plan of action geared to further production . . . to raise the consciousness, cultural and political level of the people, to deepen the ideological struggle against the remnants of the past."[53]