

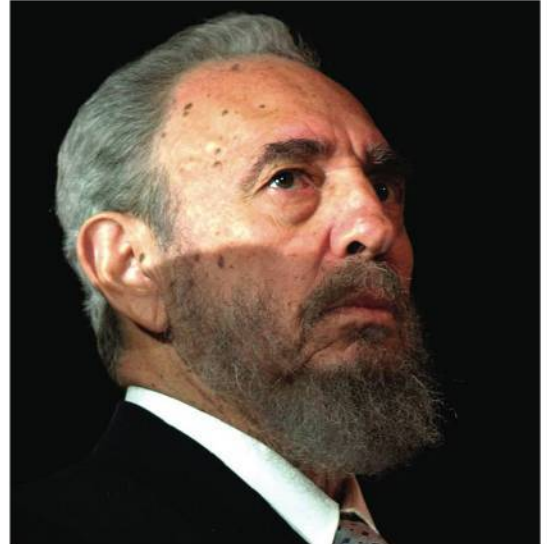
## 3

## FIDEL CASTRO AND CUBA

Cuba is one of the few countries in the world that remains communist in its ideology. Ever since 1959, historians have tried to explain the reasons why Fidel Castro was able to rise and maintain himself in power for so long, in spite of often adverse domestic and international circumstances.

A Spanish colony until 1898, and a republic strongly linked to the USA after its independence in 1902, Cuba did not seem to offer the conditions for a successful communist revolution. Other countries in the region suffered deeper political, social and economic problems. Yet events between 1953 and 1959 contributed to the rise of Fidel Castro and his 26th of July Movement.

This chapter deals with the rise to power and the rule of Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz (b. 1926) in Cuba. It focuses on the conditions against which he came to power, addresses the methods used in his rise and analyzes domestic policies up to 2000.



Fidel Castro

#### Timeline – 1926–2008

- 1926** Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz is born in Biran, south-eastern Cuba.
- 1933** President Gerardo Machado is overthrown by the head of the army, Fulgencio Batista.
- 1934–44** Fulgencio Batista controls the country through puppet governments.
- 1934** The Platt Amendment is abolished. USA retains a naval base in Guantánamo Bay and trade agreements between the nations remain in place.
- 1940** Batista becomes President. A new constitution is adopted.
- 1944–48** Partido Auténtico (Authentic Party) leader, Ramón Grau San Martín, becomes President.
- 1948–52** Authentic Party leader Carlos Prío Socarrás rules Cuba.
- 1952** Batista seizes power in a coup against Prío Socarrás.
- 1953** Castro leads the Moncada assault against a military garrison. He is sentenced to 15 years in prison.
- 1955** Castro is granted amnesty and leaves Cuba.
- 1956** Castro returns from Mexico, leading the *Granma* expedition. He launches a military campaign against Batista in the **Sierra Maestra** mountains.
- 1958** USA withdraws assistance to President Batista. Batista's final offensive against the rebels ends in failure.
- 1959** Batista flees the country. Castro's troops enter Havana and a provisional government is set up. Fidel Castro becomes Prime Minister in February. Expropriation and nationalization of businesses begins.
- 1960** Castro nationalizes foreign companies. USA abolishes Cuban sugar quota and begins an economic blockade. Castro establishes diplomatic and commercial relations with the Soviet Union.
- 1961** The Bay of Pigs invasion is repelled. USA breaks diplomatic ties with Cuba, and Castro announces the socialist character of the revolution.
- 1962** Cuban Missile Crisis. USA imposes a trade embargo on Cuba.
- 1963** Castro makes his first visit to the Soviet Union.



#### ToK Time

At the time of writing this book, Fidel Castro had transferred power to his brother Raúl, but has continued to be a leading voice in Cuban affairs. What, if anything, do you know about Fidel Castro? Can you find any recent information in the newspapers about Cuba? To what extent do you think your previous knowledge and opinions of Castro and Cuba can influence your study of this chapter?



#### Sierra Maestra

Mountain range in the south-east of Cuba, in the Oriente province.

### ● Examiner's hint

Exam questions on Paper 2 will either ask about the rise or consolidation of power of single-party or authoritarian leaders. Some questions may mention Castro specifically, while others may ask you to answer with reference to one or more leaders of your choice (these are referred to as open questions). If you are planning to answer an open question, don't only choose Castro on the grounds of how much you know about him; make sure Castro is an appropriate example for the specific question asked.

- 1967** Ernesto 'Che' Guevara is killed in Bolivia.
- 1968** Castro announces the Revolutionary Offensive.
- 1970** The 'Ten Million Zafra' programme fails to achieve its target.
- 1976** Under a new constitution, Castro assumes the title of President of the State Council, and becomes head of state, head of government, and commander-in-chief of the armed forces.
- 1980** Massive Cuban emigration of approximately 125,000 people to the USA from the Mariel port.
- 1991** Cuba begins 'Special Period in Times of Peace' programme following the end of Soviet aid to Cuba.
- 1995** Castro visits China for the first time.
- 1998** Castro welcomes Pope John Paul II in the pontiff's historic visit to Cuba.
- 2006** Castro announces a temporary transfer of power to his brother, Raúl Castro.
- 2008** Castro resigns as President.

**Figure 3.1**

Map of Cuba.



## Section I:

### Origins and nature of authoritarian and single-party states – Cuba

No doubt Fidel Castro played a large part in the success of the Cuban revolution in 1959, and in retaining power for almost 50 years. It is also true, however, that particular historical conditions created the background against which Castro became an appealing option to many and an indisputable force to others.

This section aims at analyzing the contributions of Fidel Castro to the success of the Cuban revolution in January 1959, as well as the part played by the historical, political and economic circumstances against which he rose to power.

# Background

## Cuban independence

After many years of struggle, and with the aid of the USA, Cuba shook off Spanish rule in what became known as the Spanish–American War (1898). The Treaty of Paris (1898) between Spain and the USA granted the territories of Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines to the USA in exchange for money. Spain also lost sovereignty over Cuba, which was placed under military occupation by the USA for five years. In 1902, the Republic of Cuba was declared. Yet Cuba was not fully sovereign. By the Platt Amendment annexed to the Cuban constitution, the USA kept the right to intervene in Cuba’s finances and foreign relations. The Platt Amendment not only aimed at preventing the influence of third-party countries in Cuba, but also at guaranteeing US control of Cuban affairs. In the following years, until its abolition in 1934, the Platt Amendment was used on several occasions by the USA to intervene in Cuban internal affairs and protect US economic interests on the island.

## Economic and social aspects

The USA’s interests in Cuba were protected by policies that benefited American investments in the island. US capital played an important part in the exploitation of Cuban national resources. Known as ‘the sugar bowl of the world’, Cuba was a **monoculture economy**. Although it also produced tobacco, coffee and rice, it was the production of sugar that provided the most important income for the republic. Washington bought a significant percentage of Cuban sugar production at prices higher than those set by the international market. In exchange, Cuba was to give preferential access to American products. Cuba was not an industrialized nation and depended on the revenues from exported sugar to buy the necessary manufactured goods and oil. The development of Cuban service and utility industries, such as gas, electricity, communications, railways and the banking system, relied upon large amounts of US investment. Although there were economic advantages for Cuba in these agreements, they also meant that the Cuban economy was tied to the USA. If Washington decided to reduce the quantity of sugar bought from Cuba, the economy of the island would be seriously affected.

Cubans enjoyed a better standard of living than workers in other regions of the continent, but there were many social and economic problems that affected them. The living conditions for workers were precarious. Wages were low, housing was limited and access to health and education not available to all. Few rural areas possessed running water or electricity. Illiteracy was widespread, reaching 50 per cent in certain parts of the countryside. Sugar workers were seasonal; this meant there were months when they did not have steady employment. The ownership of land and of the sugar mills was largely concentrated in the hands of the upper class and foreign companies.



### Monoculture economy

The agricultural practice of producing or growing one single crop over a wide area.

## STUDENT STUDY SECTION

### RESEARCH ACTIVITY

To understand the social and economic situations against which Castro rose to power, it is important that you are familiar with the role played by foreign companies as well as with the importance of sugar to the Cuban economy.

In groups, find information about some of the different foreign companies operating in Cuba before the revolution. Assess their impact on the Cuban economy and society. Research the importance of sugar before the revolution and the reasons why it began to lose economic value throughout the 20th century.



Fulgencio Batista

## Political aspects

Between independence and revolution, Cuba was led by a series of governments that showed high levels of corruption and limited success in solving economic problems and social inequality. By 1934, the armed forces under the command of General Fulgencio Batista controlled the nation by the appointment of puppet Presidents. In 1940, Batista himself became President of Cuba and ruled until 1944.

Between 1944 and 1952 there was a return to democracy, but corruption continued to dominate every branch of the government, while Cuba faced inflation and unemployment. On 10 March 1952, Batista returned to the political stage and overthrew President Carlos Prío Socarrás. He suspended the constitution to rule as a dictator.

## The rule of Fulgencio Batista (1952–59)

During Batista's period as President, political corruption continued to reign, and at shocking levels. As economic problems worsened, social and political unrest developed. Batista moved from making concessions to using repression to maintain control of the country.

One of the reasons why the Cuban economy worsened was the decline in sugar prices on the international sugar market. As the price of sugar dropped, Cuba found it more expensive to purchase the goods it did not produce at home. This situation is known as the 'deterioration of the **terms of trade**'. However, because of its international obligations with the USA, Cuba could not successfully develop an industry to substitute its imports, a measure many Latin American countries had taken by the end of World War II (see previous chapter). The rise in the cost of imports led to shortages and inflation. Furthermore, the rise in the price of oil affected transportation and the operation of sugar mills, increasing unemployment to an alarming 17 per cent during the late 1950s, to be combined with a 13 per cent level of underemployment and low wages for those who were employed.

Under these circumstances, opposition to Batista's dictatorship intensified. The rural workers, poorly housed and under-educated, did not support the regime. Urban workers were affected by the economic problems of inflation and unemployment, and student unions demanded freedom and democracy. The higher social classes, who were losing their purchasing power and whose businesses were being affected by the atmosphere of economic uncertainty, were another source of opposition to Batista. Opposition, however, was not organized and had not yet found a leading figure.

## The rise of opposition to Batista

One of the factors that contributed to the rise of Castro was the fact that the Cuban political parties did not seem to offer a genuine alternative to the existing order. The Authentic Party and the Orthodox Party were two main political parties in Cuba before the revolution. The communists were represented by the PSP, the Popular Socialist Party.

### **Partido Auténtico (full name: Partido Revolucionario Cubano or Cuban Revolutionary Party)**

Founded in 1934, this party's platform had socialist and nationalist elements. It defended the rights of workers to be represented by trade unions. Nationalism was expressed in its motto 'Cuba for the Cubans'. However, Presidents Ramón Grau San Martín (1944–48) and

### Terms of trade

Relationship between the prices at which a country sells its exports and the prices paid for its imports.





Carlos Prío Socarrás (1948–52) were Authentic Party leaders who ruled during one of the most corrupt and undemocratic periods in Cuban history.

**Partido Ortodoxo (full name: Partido del Pueblo Cubano or Cuban People’s Party)**

Born from a split of the Authentic Party, this party was founded in 1948 by Eduardo Chibás, who coined the party’s motto ‘Integrity against Money’. It played an important role in the denunciation of the corruption in Cuban politics. Its aims were to end government corruption and to nationalize US-owned companies. Orthodox leader Chibás was considered to be a solid presidential candidate, but he committed suicide in 1951. Fidel Castro was a member of the party until he formed his own organization, the 26th of July Movement.

**The Partido Socialista Popular (PSP; Popular Socialist Party)**

The PSP was Cuba’s communist party. Founded in 1925, it suffered persecution and was banned from participating in elections several times. In 1953, Batista banned the PSP again.

**SOURCE A**

*The Auténtico and Ortodoxo parties proved incapable of responding effectively to Batista’s seizure of power. The Orthodox were leaderless and the Auténticos could not lead. After 1952 Cuba’s two principal parties became irrelevant to a solution of the political crises. Both parties, to be sure, condemned the violation of the 1940 Constitution, but neither party responded to the army usurpation with either a comprehensive program or compelling plan of action.*

From Louis Perez Jr., ‘Cuba c. 1930–1959’ in Leslie Bethell (ed.), *Cuba: A Short History*, 1993

STUDENT STUDY SECTION	
QUESTION	Why, according to Source A, was opposition to Batista ineffective?
RESEARCH ACTIVITY	Find information on Eduardo Chibás’ ideas and roles. Explain how and why he decided to end his life.

The greatest challenge for the government would not come from any of the more traditional Cuban parties. It would come instead from the rise of Fidel Castro as leader of a totally new movement.

Section II:  
**The Cuban Revolution and the rise of Fidel Castro**

Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz was born in 1926 in the eastern province of Oriente. His father, an immigrant from Spanish Galicia, owned sugar plantations in the region. In 1945, Castro enrolled in law school in Havana and soon joined the Orthodox Party. He was an outstanding orator, who had an exceptional memory for everything he read and heard; he was also a fine athlete. All of these factors helped him gain popularity and support within the party. In 1952, Castro planned to run for a seat in Congress, but elections were never held, as

**ToK Time**

If you were to write a biography of Fidel Castro, what would you include? Would this choice be affected by the context in which you would be using the biography? In other words, is there a history of Castro the leader, one of Castro the student, another of Castro the family man or is everything relevant to understand the influence of a leader on historical events? Explain your answer fully.

When you need to find the biography of a historical character, where do you go? Do you go to Wikipedia? Evaluate the usefulness of the entry for Fidel Castro in Wikipedia. Is knowledge that is collectively produced in any sense 'better' than a biography written by one person? How much of one's knowledge depends on interaction with other knowers?



a result of Batista's coup against Prío Socarrás. From the very beginning Castro showed his opposition to the rule of Batista and in 1953 he tried to depose him for the first time. When analyzing the role played by Fidel Castro in the Cuban revolution, three stages must be taken into consideration:

- The attack against the Moncada Barracks (1953), which provided him with an opportunity to be known by fellow citizens and launch the 26th of July Movement.
- The landing of the *Granma* expedition (1956), which marked the beginning of the armed struggle at a national level.
- The campaign in the Sierra Maestra (1956–59), which ended with his Rebel Army's victorious entry into Havana city in January 1959.

## The Moncada assault (1953) and the birth of the 26th of July Movement

On 26 July 1953, a group of approximately 140 men dressed in military uniforms attacked a military garrison in Cuba known as the Moncada Barracks. Most of them were members of the Partido Ortodoxo, and they were led by Fidel Castro, his brother Raúl and **Abel Santamaría**. Moncada is situated in Santiago de Cuba, in the Oriente province, and was chosen for several reasons. It was the second-largest military garrison in the country and had large supplies of ammunition that Castro hoped to seize. Also, Oriente was one of the regions with the greatest social unrest, which Castro thought would provide popular support for the attack. Moreover, the distance between Santiago de Cuba and Havana (see map on p.54) ensured that if Batista's troops were sent from the capital to defend the building, there would be enough time to complete the takeover. Finally, the timing of the attack coincided with a popular celebration in the streets of Santiago, so Castro hoped to find fewer soldiers in the garrison.

The aim of the operation was to obtain weapons that would help spark a general insurrection against Batista. Castro believed that if the attack was successful and his men acquired weapons, they would gather massive popular support for the uprising.



### Abel Santamaría (1927–53)

A member of the Orthodox Party, Santamaría met Castro in 1952 and, like him, rejected Batista's coup. He was captured and tortured to death by Batista's forces after the Moncada raid.



Picture of the Moncada Barracks.

The attack had been carefully planned, but several last-minute problems complicated the work of the rebels. Although the surprise factor was intended to play in the rebels' favour, the army managed to defend the building successfully. Almost half of the rebels who participated in the attack were killed; many were captured and tortured to death, including Abel Santamaría. Fidel and Raúl Castro managed to escape, but were soon captured by Batista's forces and imprisoned.

Batista decided to make the trial of the rebels a great show of strength. He wanted Cubans to see how determined he was to crush any opposition to the regime, in the hope that it would work as a deterrent. Fidel Castro, a lawyer, decided to defend himself at the trial. Although Castro's own trial took place in a separate room and attendance was restricted, his speech **'History will absolve me'** became not only his defence, but a programme for the political and social reform of the country.

### SOURCE A

*There are two hundred thousand peasant families who do not have a single acre of land to cultivate to provide food for their starving children...*

*A revolutionary government with the backing of the people and the respect of the nation, after cleaning the various institutions of all venal and corrupt officials, would proceed immediately to industrialize the country, mobilizing all inactive capital, currently estimated at about 500 million dollars, through the National Bank and the Agricultural, Industrial and Development Bank, and submitting this mammoth task to experts and men of absolute competence, completely removed from all political machinations, for study, direction, planning and realization... A revolutionary government would solve the housing problem by cutting all rents in half; by providing tax exemptions on homes inhabited by the owners; by tripling taxes on rented homes; by tearing down hovels and replacing them with modern multiple-dwelling buildings; and by financing housing all over the island on a scale heretofore unheard of; with the criterion that, just as each rural family should possess its own tract of land, each city family should own its home or apartment... Finally, a revolutionary government would undertake the integral reform of the educational system, bringing it in line with the foregoing projects with the idea of educating those generations who will have the privilege of living in a happy land.*

From Fidel Castro, 'History will absolve me', 1953

### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### QUESTIONS

- How effective do you think the speech was in identifying Cuba's problems?
- Explain why you consider that 'History will absolve me', once printed and circulated among the Cubans, became an appealing speech.

## Consequences of the Moncada assault

The Moncada assault marked the foundation of Castro's political movement, '26th of July', named after the day of the attack. The rebels became known as the 'Generation of the Centenary', as 1953 marked the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Cuban hero, **José Martí**.

Fidel Castro became the only political leader who not only complained about Batista's dictatorship, but who was also ready to do something about it. Although the rebels were the aggressors, Batista's excesses in repression, torture and persecution affected his image and allowed Castro and his men to emerge as martyrs of the dictatorship.

In 1954, in an attempt to legitimize his rule, Batista held elections and ran as presidential candidate. With Castro in prison, the PSP banned and no effective opposition to his candidature, Batista used the elections to claim that he had been rightfully chosen by the people. The following year, among some other concessions made to appear democratic, Batista allowed political parties to regroup and released many political prisoners, including

### **'History will absolve me' speech**

When asked about the 'History will absolve me' speech, Castro claimed that he had written the speech while in prison waiting for his trial. He said that he had used lime juice to make it invisible to others and had inserted it between the lines of ordinary letters, so that it could be smuggled out of prison for printing and distribution in 1954.

### **José Martí (1853–95)**

Known as 'The Apostle', Martí is a hero of the War of Independence. His political writings had a large influence on Cuban politicians, including Fidel Castro. He died in combat in 1895, becoming a martyr of the independence struggle.



Fidel Castro and other prisoners leave prison after Batista's amnesty.

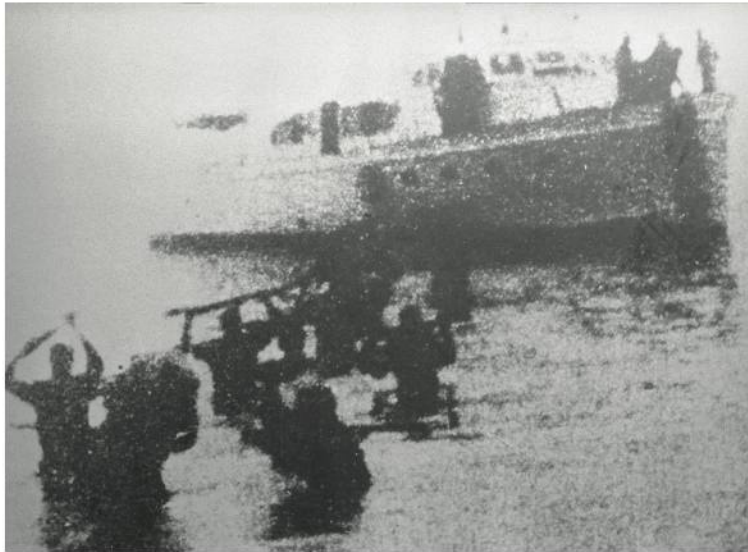
the leaders of the Moncada raid. Fidel Castro was now a free man and went into exile in Mexico to prepare the revolution.

Despite Batista's efforts to appear democratic, demonstrations in Cuba grew in size and led to armed clashes in towns and cities. Different revolutionary organizations spread through the countryside, promoting rural insurgency, sabotaging property across the island and organizing **guerrilla** groups. Communications and the delivery of food to towns and cities were often disrupted. Sugar production dropped as a consequence of acts of sabotage against sugar mills, oil refineries and railroads. Political parties – with the exception of the 26th of July Movement, which believed change in Cuba would only come after the use of force to overthrow Batista – demanded elections but Batista refused to hold them.

On 2 December 1956, Fidel Castro returned to Cuba and launched the next stage of the struggle that would take him to power.

## The *Granma* expedition (1956)

In 1956, Fidel and Raúl Castro returned from exile aboard the overcrowded and poorly equipped yacht *Granma*. They landed on the southern coast of Oriente with some 80 rebels who had been recruited in Mexico.



### Guerrillas

An irregular military force fighting small-scale, fast-moving actions against conventional military and police forces. Guerrilla tactics involve constantly shifting points of attack, sabotage, and terrorism. The strategy of the guerrilla is to wear down the enemy until he can be defeated in conventional battle or sues for peace. (The word 'guerrilla' means 'little/small war' in Spanish.)

Rebels disembarking from *Granma*.

The voyage was rough, as the *Granma* was heavily laden with men and weapons, and supplies of additional oil to enable it to reach the shores of Cuba. The radio failed and the engines were poor, so *Granma* reached Cuba two days behind schedule. The urban arm of the 26th of July Movement, under the command of **Frank País**, had prepared a strike in Santiago de Cuba in support of the landing, but coordination was affected by the delay in the *Granma*'s arrival. Castro also failed to make contact with those who had prepared land support for the operation. Spotted by government forces, Castro and his men landed in a



swamp and were forced to leave supplies and ammunition behind. They were ambushed at Alegria del Pío and those surviving (only 12 of the original 82-man crew) dispersed and hid in the Sierra Maestra to regroup and emerge as the Rebel Army.

Anti-government rebellions led by several groups in the cities continued throughout 1957 and 1958, and included an attempt to seize the presidential palace and murder Batista. Although it failed, it showed the President how difficult it had become to maintain himself in power. Batista struggled desperately to control the situation, but his response was so violent that it embittered the people against him.

## The cast of characters

Fidel Castro was not alone on the road to power. Although he was the leading figure, many men and women contributed to the success of the 26th of July Movement. Some of them played an important part in the struggle for power; others continued to work in the revolutionary government. Study these photographs and biographical details carefully. You will find reference to these characters throughout the chapter.



Raúl Castro



Vilma Espín



Camilo Cienfuegos



Ernesto 'Che' Guevara



Haydée Santamaría



Celia Sánchez

**Raúl Castro** – Fidel's younger brother Raúl took part in the attack on the Moncada Barracks, was imprisoned with Fidel and later exiled to Mexico, from where he helped prepare the *Granma* expedition. Since 1959, he has acted as Fidel's right-hand man and has served in many key positions, such as head of the (Cuban) Communist Party, Minister of Defence and Vice-President of the Council of State. He was appointed President in 2008 after his brother resigned for health reasons.

**Frank País (1934–57)**  
Student leader who fought against Batista since the 1952 coup and who joined the 26th of July Movement. He led the movement while Castro was in exile. His brutal murder in 1957 at the age of 23 led to one of the largest general strikes in Cuba.

### 'Che' Guevara (1928–67)

'Che' is an interjection widely used by Argentines when speaking. Guevara's use of it in conversations earned him the nickname of 'El Che'. Che Guevara believed in the need to expand the revolution to other areas of the world. In 1966, he arrived in Bolivia hoping to make the revolution succeed and to export it to neighbouring Argentina, Chile, Peru, Brazil and Paraguay. The Bolivian government asked the USA for help and CIA agents were sent to Bolivia to search for Guevara and his men. Guevara was captured on 8 October 1967 and was executed the following day.

### Haydée Santamaría's suicide

Her suicide on an anniversary of Moncada has been explained by the fact that she had never been able to overcome the suffering she endured that day. After her brother had been tortured and refused to give any information, his eyes were pulled out of their sockets and taken to Haydée on a tray. Her boyfriend also died as a consequence of tortures after the assault.

### ToK Time

In Source B, Batista used the word 'terrorists'. How far could it be said that the term is being used as a value judgement? To what extent does the choice of words affect the way we view and understand historical events?



**Vilma Espín** – Wife of Raúl Castro, she took part in urban uprisings in support of the *Granma* expedition. After the revolution, she founded the Federación de Mujeres Cubanas (FMC; Cuban Women's Federation) and became a member of several government organizations until her death in 2007.

**Camilo Cienfuegos** – A survivor of the *Granma* expedition, Cienfuegos was responsible for many of the victories of the guerrillas in the Sierra Maestra. With the success of the revolution, he became head of the armed forces, but died in an aeroplane accident in 1959.

**Ernesto 'Che' Guevara** – A medical doctor born in Argentina, Guevara travelled throughout Latin America widely and became convinced that the region needed a solution to its poverty and corruption. He met the Castro brothers in Mexico and joined the *Granma* expedition. He was a leading figure in the Sierra Maestra fighting and became an icon of the revolution. After the revolution, he was responsible for the purges of Batistianos and other opponents. He also acted as head of the Bank of Cuba and Minister of Industry. Persuaded of the need to spread the revolution worldwide, he travelled to Congo in 1965 in support of a revolution, which ended in failure. In 1967 he was killed in Bolivia.

**Haydée Santamaría** – A member of the 26th of July Movement and sister to Abel. Together with her friend Melba Hernandez, she was one of the few women to participate in the Moncada assault. She then became responsible for distributing copies of Castro's 'History will absolve me' speech. Her role in the development of a Cuban culture after the revolution was fundamental. In 1959 she founded Casa de las Américas, a key literary institution of Cuba, which was visited by leading intellectuals and artists from all over the world. She committed suicide on 26 July 1980.

**Celia Sánchez** – A close friend of Fidel and an early member of the 26th of July Movement, she was responsible for providing land support for the *Granma* expedition. Once in Sierra Maestra, she contributed to the founding of the female 'Mariana Grajales' army. She occupied different government positions until her death in 1980.

## SOURCE B

*Bombs exploded in the capital. Two stores were attacked and in the exchange between police and the assailants, three uniformed men were killed and several wounded. Twenty civilians died. On interurban and rural transportation lines, drivers of trucks and buses, as well as automobile passengers, were attacked and killed. When the strike failed, the terrorists sabotaged the electric companies and plants, throwing many rural cities into darkness. For three days a section of Old Havana had no lights. To make repairs more difficult, the aggressors blew up one of the main outlets which used special cables not found in the Cuban market.*

**From Fulgencio Batista, *Cuba Betrayed*, 1962**

## STUDENT STUDY SECTION

### QUESTIONS

- According to Source B, which methods were used by the rebels to fight?
- With reference to its origins and purpose, assess the value and limitations of Source B to an historian studying the nature of the Cuban Revolution.

## In the Sierra Maestra mountains (1956–59)

Support for Castro and the rebels by the people from the Sierra Maestra increased with time, and varied from supplying the army with food and shelter to joining the rebels. There

were several reasons why people all across Cuba felt attracted to the 26th of July Movement. First, peasants got to know a totally different type of army to the national army Batista had often used to suppress unrest. Castro's forces did not steal from the peasants and always paid for the food they were given. They respected women, put their medical doctors at the service of the peasants, taught them to read and write and even helped in the household chores. Any soldier breaking this code was sentenced to death. Peasants received more from the Rebel Army than they had ever received from the Cuban government.

Another factor that contributed to the popularity of and support for the Rebel Army was that their leaders explained what they were fighting for and what kind of new society they were hoping to achieve. The most important element in the new programme was the Agrarian Reform. The 26th of July Movement promised peasants an end to the ownership of large estates by a small sector of society or companies, and committed themselves to a fairer distribution of the land.

The rebels made use of the radio to spread their message and news about events in the Sierra. Radio Rebelde ('Rebel Radio') began to broadcast from 'the territory of Free Cuba in the Sierra' in 1958. People tuned in because they relied more on the news from Radio Rebelde than on the government media. Castro himself addressed the people on Radio Rebelde in a style that everyone understood. He also made sure people found out what government censorship was hiding from them about the fight against Batista.

News about the progress made in the Sierra Maestra encouraged urban support for the revolution. Workers in towns and cities joined the revolution underground. They printed leaflets in support of the rebels and condemning Batista. They planted homemade bombs to blow up government installations, railways and public buildings, and sabotaged telephone lines, electricity stations and gas services. They assassinated those they believed to be enemies of the revolution.



Fidel Castro talks with local people. What is the message of this photo?

## SOURCE C

*In the two-year period from Christmas, 1956, when the twelve men were alone on the mountain top until Batista fled and his army surrendered on January 1, 1959, nearly all classes of the population had identified themselves, in varying degrees, with the July 26th Movement. Some became an integral part of it because they believed in its revolutionary program; others made common cause with it because it had become the most effective force in the struggle to overthrow Batista.*

*To offset this overwhelming superiority in men and weapons, the revolutionary army had three advantages: (1) the battle was to be on its home grounds, a terrain of rugged mountains and treacherous jungle made to order for guerrilla warfare and defensive fighting; (2) unlike the government soldiers, the rebel soldiers weren't paid for fighting – they fought for something they believed in; (3) their leaders were men of outstanding ability – inspiring, humane, and master strategists in guerrilla warfare.*

*The rebel leaders' humanity – and excellent strategy – were illustrated in the order to the revolutionary army that captured soldiers were to be treated with kindness, their wounded given medical attention.*

**From Leo Huberman and Paul Sweezy, *Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution*, 1960**

### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### QUESTIONS

- a) What light does Source C throw on the reasons why the 26th of July Movement and the Rebel Army gained support across the country?
- b) What other reasons can you provide to explain the success of the Rebel Army?

Fighting in itself did not guarantee the success of the revolution. The 26th of July Movement also needed to make alliances with other political parties and define the future of Cuba after the fall of Batista. Castro, aware of such needs, made contact with leaders from different political parties. By 1958, under the Pact of Caracas, the vast majority of the opposition recognized the leadership of Fidel Castro in the struggle to overthrow Batista. The Pact of Caracas included all the main political parties and organizations, even the communist PSP, which had remained critical of the Moncada attack and Castro's leadership until then. The pact was a heavy blow to Batista, as it openly exposed his political isolation.

## To what extent did Batista contribute to the success of the revolution?

The success of the guerrilla war was due in part to the excesses of the incumbent regime. The police and the army imprisoned and tortured anyone they suspected of being a rebel or having helped rebels. This policy led to the death and imprisonment of many innocent men and women. To reduce support for the rebels, Batista ordered peasants to evacuate whole areas of the countryside, and those who remained behind were treated as traitors. In an attempt to wipe out rebels who could not be seen in the thick jungle, entire plantations were set on fire, causing the peasants to lose their crops. The government wanted to frighten citizens so that they would not help the rebels, but instead people were drawn to the rebels, in hatred of the government. Batista not only pushed people away from him, but also away from more moderate opposition into the arms of Fidel Castro, the 26th of July Movement and the Rebel Army.

Batista launched a major attack against the guerrillas in the Sierras in July 1958, but the campaign failed. Soldiers, fearful of the guerrilla forces and often isolated from relief, deserted in massive numbers or surrendered to the rebels without firing a shot. The weapons and equipment left behind by deserting soldiers were used by the resistance.

Elections were held in 1958 but Batista's candidate, Andrés Rivero, was fixed to win. This outcome disappointed the few who still hoped for a democratic solution to the conflict. For the same reasons, Rivero did not obtain US backing. In disagreement with Batista's violent actions, the USA imposed an arms embargo on Cuba in March 1958. The US position complicated government access to weapons and ammunitions and had a demoralizing effect on the army.

Batista still refused to negotiate. He rejected a proposal from the USA for him to capitulate to a caretaker government, to which the USA could give military and diplomatic support in order to prevent Fidel Castro coming to power. US officials feared Castro might turn to communism.

To access Worksheet 3.1 on the success of the Cuban revolution, please visit [www.pearsonbacconline.com](http://www.pearsonbacconline.com) and follow the on-screen instructions.



## STUDENT STUDY SECTION

### GROUP DISCUSSION

You have now read about the reasons why support for Castro grew and about Batista's mistakes and miscalculations. In groups, discuss the relative importance you think each factor had in contributing to the fall of Batista and the rise of Castro.

Now consider the following question: How and why did Fidel Castro come to power in Cuba?

Under 'why' (reasons) you are being asked about factors that contributed to Castro's rise. These could include an analysis of the economic and social problems in Cuba before 1959; the failure of previous governments to address these issues and the consequences of that failure; the greed and corruption prevailing in society; the suspension of the 1940 constitution after 1952; the part played by Batista; and the reasons why Castro was appealing to different sectors of the Cuban population, among other relevant factors. Be careful not to produce a narrative of the historical background; you should focus on the links between Castro's rise and each condition you select. You may want to go back to the period before 1953 (for example, to explain the economic problems of Cuba), but the focus should remain on Castro and the events as from 1953.

The second part of the question asks you to explain how Castro came to power; that is, the methods he used.

Read the following paragraph on how Castro came to power:

#### Student Answer – Antonio

Fidel Castro was seen as someone who could bring genuine change to Cuban society. His promises to end corruption in the government and to produce a fairer society were of great importance to gain him the support of peasants in the Sierras. The fact that his soldiers helped with the harvest and taught the peasants to read and write also showed that they meant to bring about genuine change in society. Castro was seen as a hero and that helped his rise.

#### Examiner's comments

This paragraph focuses on a specific example of Castro's methods – his popular appeal. The candidate shows he understands how the conditions against which Castro rose were used to present his movement as one prepared to bring about genuine change, explaining how Castro's men related to the peasants and using specific examples to prove a point. However, this response could offer a deeper level of analysis. For example: why were the promises to end corruption and bring about justice of such importance? To whom? Castro was certainly not the only opponent to the government who believed in the need for such change, so what made him different? Was it perhaps the fact that he had dared act upon his beliefs in the Moncada assault? Who saw Castro as a hero? Why did this contribute to his rise?

### REVISION ACTIVITY

Make a list of the methods used by Fidel Castro. Can you think of specific examples for each of the methods listed?

#### ● Examiner's hint

This is a two-part question. It asks you to explain why (reasons) and how (methods) Castro came to power. Both aspects of the question must be addressed and you need to show clear knowledge and understanding of both reasons and methods.

#### ● Examiner's hint

It is not sufficient to show that you know which methods Castro used in his rise to power. You also need to explain how they contributed to his rise. A paragraph explaining the events of the Moncada assault will not be an effective way to address how Castro came to power. You will need to explain the significance of the event in Castro's road to power by, for example, explaining how the use of force in Moncada enabled the Cuban population to identify Castro as a leader of the opposition who was prepared to act in order to change the situation.

## The triumph of the revolution

After the success against Batista's forces in the Sierra, Castro believed the time had come to spread the war to the other Cuban provinces. He trusted Camilo Cienfuegos, Raúl Castro and Che Guevara to lead the campaigns. As they moved around, they were joined by more

volunteers, marching at night or under the rain to hide from Batista's planes. By Christmas 1958, the city of Santa Clara, capital of the province of Las Villas, had been taken. Raúl and Fidel Castro marched towards Santiago de Cuba, while in Havana rebel leaders increased their acts of sabotage and their attacks against army installations. Politically isolated and unable to control the situation, Batista fled Cuba on 1 January 1959. The army refused to continue fighting against the rebels and an immediate ceasefire was ordered. Soon after, Fidel Castro and his *barbudos* ('bearded men') entered Havana and established a provisional government.

One explanation for Fidel Castro's rise to power can be found in his charisma. In an attempt to explain the sources of authority (i.e. why a leader was obeyed by the people), sociologist Max Weber defined the characteristics of charismatic leadership. He considers authority to come from the fact that the leader is set apart from the rest of the people because of his exceptional personal qualities or his exemplary actions, which inspire loyalty among his followers.

Eric Selbin in *Modern Latin American Revolutions* analyzes the part played by charisma in revolutions. He states that charismatic leaders promote and make the revolutionary process possible by their ability to represent the people's needs and aspirations in a vision of the future. Charismatic figures represent the potential for rejecting an old order, creating attractive future possibilities for the people.

### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

Analyze the following sources and answer the questions below each.

#### SOURCE D

Photograph taken at a speech given by Fidel Castro in January 1959. The man behind Castro is Camilo Cienfuegos.



## QUESTION

What is the message in Source D?

## SOURCE E

*Revolutionary leaders reached ascendancy in spectacular fashion, and en route were endowed with proportions larger than life. Already in 1959 the leaders of the revolution had become the stuff of legends and lore, the subjects of books and songs, of poems and films. Revolutionaries were celebrities, folk heroes, and the hope of the hopeful.*

Extract from Louis A. Pérez Jr, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 1988

## QUESTIONS

- Why do you think that, according to Source E, the leaders of the revolution were the 'hope of the hopeful'?
- Refer back to Source D and to Castro's 'History will absolve me' speech (Section II, Source A). How do you think these sources relate to the idea of charismatic leadership? Explain your answer fully.

Charismatic leaders are good communicators. They appeal to people's feelings and needs. In the next sections, you will study some of Fidel Castro's speeches. When you do, pay attention to the elements in the speech that relate to the ideas above.

## SOURCE F

*Castro thus stepped into a power vacuum that was not entirely of his making. He had skilfully seized the opportunities offered by a conjunction of historical conditions that were unique to Cuba. His success, moreover, owed as much to his imaginative use of the mass media as to the guerrilla campaign... By 1959 Castro had become the repository of many disparate [different] hopes for Cuba's regeneration. As he had made his slow triumphal way by road from Santiago to Havana, he was treated as the last in the long line of Cuban heroes – the last, because, unlike the others, he had survived and prevailed.*

From Sebastian Balfour, *Castro*, 1990

## QUESTIONS

- Explain the meaning of 'Castro had become the repository of many disparate hopes for Cuba's regeneration'?
- Which opportunities do you think had been 'skilfully seized' by Castro?
- Discuss the part played by the use of the mass media and the guerrilla campaign in Castro's success in the revolution. Explain your answer fully.
- How does Castro's rise compare to that of other leaders you have studied? Did they come to power by the use of force? Were they, like Juan Perón, elected by the people? Did they, like Castro, come to power as a consequence of a fight against a dictatorial system?

## Section III:

### The rule of Fidel Castro

Fidel Castro came to power certain that Cuba needed not only a new government, but a new order. This new order had to be based on Cuba's economic independence. The influence of the USA on Cuban affairs had brought, in Castro's view, many of the economic and social problems affecting the nation. It was not enough to have put an end to Batista's corrupt dictatorship. Just as Cubans wanted their political rights back, they also wanted better living conditions. Redistribution of land, improved working conditions and better wages were only a few of the demands people expected Castro and his men to address. Living standards needed to be raised; health and education made accessible to all. The question was how to meet these demands in the shortest period of time.

This section explains how and why Fidel Castro moved from being a member of the provisional government to becoming the undisputed leader of Cuba.

### The consolidation of power (1959–62)

In order to consolidate the revolution, Castro made use of several methods between 1959 and 1962. First, he removed the people associated with Batista's regime. Next, he consolidated the position of the 26th of July Movement within the provisional government. Third, he launched reforms to show that the revolution lived up to its promises, and to gain support. Finally, he exploited the idea that Cuba was threatened by the USA and appealed to the people's sense of nationalism.

Citizens who had served in the Batista government and armed forces were now imprisoned, their properties confiscated as they were brought to trial. They were either executed or given long prison sentences. The trials took place with little time to assess the real participation in the Batista regime of each of the people involved, and they did not conform to the standards of justice. As such, they were criticized not only in Cuba but also in the USA for not offering human rights guarantees to the prisoners. Those who believed justice had not been done were told that the revolution was endangered by these people and that 'immediate justice' was more necessary than a fair trial.

The provisional government established in January 1959 was formed by a significant number of liberals. They hoped to moderate the left-wing elements, which included the rebels of the 26th of July Movement as well as members of the PSP, the Cuban communist party. The government was led by moderates Manuel Urrutia as President and José Miró Cardona as his Prime Minister. Castro set up an office outside the presidential palace, at the Havana Hilton hotel, as commander of Cuban armed forces.

In spite of the provisional government representing many political sectors, real authority was in the hands of Fidel Castro from the very start. He was seen everywhere and heard by everyone. His almost daily speeches appealed to people's hopes for a new Cuba, based on the grand ideas of the leaders of the independence and the ideals of social justice, economic security and political freedom. He approached people in a way that Cuba had never experienced before, going out into the streets and travelling across the country to meet them face to face. It was not uncommon to see Castro spending an afternoon in a rural village discussing who should repair tractors or fixing refrigerators for the people.



Six weeks after the provisional government took over, Prime Minister Cardona unexpectedly resigned. Fidel Castro stepped in as Prime Minister. Next, in July 1959, President Urrutia resigned because he was opposed to the increasing influence of communists in the government, as well as to Castro's refusal to hold elections. He was replaced by Osvaldo Dorticós, who remained President until the 1976 constitution was passed.

Castro's appointment as Prime Minister enabled the revolution to move quickly, implementing reforms that led to the transformation of the country into a communist state by the end of 1961. He was supported in this move to the left by the members of the PSP.

## SOURCE A

*Personal turnovers in the government, in part voluntary, in part forced, increased quickly thereafter. Liberals and moderates resigned, or were forced out, their places taken by loyal fidelistas and members of the PSP. At the time, senior administrative positions in the Ministry of Labour were filled by the PSP. The presence of the PSP in the armed forces was also increased. Party members received teaching appointments at various Rebel Army posts in Havana and Las Villas. The appearance of the PSP in the armed forces, in turn, led to wholesale resignation and, in some cases, arrest of anti-communist officers. In October, Raúl Castro assumed charge of the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR), and forthwith launched a thorough reorganization of the military, distributing key commands to only trustworthy officers. By the end of the year, anti-communism had become synonymous with counter-revolution.*

**From Louis A. Pérez Jr, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 1988**

## STUDENT STUDY SECTION

### QUESTIONS

- With reference to Source A and your own knowledge, account for the increasing influence of the PSP in the revolutionary government.**
- What is the significance of the policies implemented by Raúl Castro?**
- What are the implications of 'by the end of the year, anti-communism had become synonymous with counter-revolution'?**

Castro and his supporters introduced dramatic changes in the organization of the political parties in Cuba. In 1961, various revolutionary organizations that had acted against Batista were unified under the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (ORI), which aimed to provide the government with a political party of its own. The ORI was formed by the 26th of July Movement (led by Castro), the PSP and the Directorio Revolucionario (Revolutionary Directorate), a revolutionary student organization. The following year, ORI became the Partido Unido de la Revolución Socialista de Cuba (PURSC; United Party of the Socialist Revolution of Cuba) under Castro's leadership. In 1965, the Party was renamed Partido Comunista Cubano (PCC; Cuban Communist Party).

The PCC remains the only officially authorized political party in Cuba and has ruled since 1965, as other existing political parties in Cuba cannot participate in elections. The PCC began to publish its own newspaper, *Granma*, and developed its youth branch (Young Communist League) and children's organization (the José Martí Pioneers).

**SOURCE B**

*Since we feel that we have already reached a stage in which all types of labels and things that distinguish some revolutionaries from others must disappear once and for all and forever and that we have already reached the fortunate point in the history of our revolutionary process in which we can say that there is only one type of revolutionary, and since it is necessary that the name of our party says, not what we were yesterday, but what we are today and what we will be tomorrow, what, in your opinion, is the name our party should have? The Communist Party of Cuba! Well, that is the name that the revolutionary conscience of its members, and the objectives of our revolution, our first central committee adopted yesterday, and that is quite proper.*

From a speech by Fidel Castro at the inaugural meeting of the PCC, 1965

**STUDENT STUDY SECTION****QUESTIONS**

- What reasons does Fidel Castro give in Source B for the foundation of the PCC?
- What other reasons can you suggest to explain the foundation of this party?

**RESEARCH ACTIVITY**

**In groups, carry out research on the history of the *Granma* newspaper. Find out information about its relationship with the Cuban state. Also, discuss why you think the PCC formed a youth branch and a children's organization.**

**Huber Matos (1918–)**

A former teacher and member of the Orthodox Party who joined the Rebel Army against Batista. He played a leading part in the Sierra Maestra days in the taking of Santiago de Cuba. In the early stages of the revolution he was appointed commander of the army in the province of Camagüey. Soon after that, he began to express his opposition to the radicalization of the revolution and was arrested by Castro. He spent 20 years in prison and was subjected to physical and psychological tortures. When released in 1979 he fled to Miami, where he has become a leading voice of the Cuban dissidence and published his memoirs, *How the Night Came*.

The growing influence of the PCC and of communist ideas in the government was looked at with some suspicion, even within Castro's inner circle. While men like Raúl Castro and Che Guevara welcomed the revolution's turn to the left, not everyone supported this shift.

One of the people who opposed the turn to the left was **Huber Matos**, a leader of the 26th of July Movement. He decided to resign as Military Chief of Camagüey – where he enjoyed immense popularity – because he opposed the increasing influence of communist ideas in the revolution and also objected to Castro's refusal to set a date for elections in Cuba. The resignation of someone who had played a leading role in the revolution would have been a great embarrassment for Castro. Also, there was fear that Matos' attitude could encourage more dissidence within the movement. After failing to persuade Matos not to resign, Castro ordered Camilo Cienfuegos to inform Matos that he was under arrest and would be tried for conspiracy and treason against the revolution.

Shortly after his visit to Camagüey, Cienfuegos' plane disappeared in an accident. The bodies of the passengers and the remains of the aircraft were never found. There are several theories that propose that Castro had Cienfuegos eliminated. One claims that Cienfuegos had also expressed his concerns about the communist nature of the reforms. Another theory claims that what disturbed Castro above all was Cienfuegos' popularity. The Cuban government has always explained these events as an accident. Matos was accused of treason and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment. He was released after he fulfilled his sentence and left Cuba in 1979.

## The reforms of 1959–62

### SOURCE C

*We will not forget our peasants in the Sierra Maestra and those in the interior of the country... I will never forget those country people and as soon as I have a free moment we will see about building the first school city with seats for 20,000 children. We will do it with the help of the people and the rebels will work with them there. We will ask each citizen for a bag of cement and a trowel. I know we will have the help of our industry and of business and we will not forget any of the sectors of our population.*

*There will be freedom for all men because we have achieved freedom for all men. We shall never feel offended; we shall always defend ourselves and we shall follow a single precept, that of respect for the rights and feelings of others.*

From a speech by Fidel Castro in Santiago de Cuba, 3 January 1959

### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### QUESTIONS

- What, according to Source C, were Castro's aims?
- How did he plan to achieve them?
- In your view, who is the speech addressed to? Explain your answers fully.

The speech above (Source C) was one of many of similar tone delivered by Castro immediately after the overthrow of Batista, focusing on the challenges ahead and the proposed solutions. If you refer to a complete version of the 'History will absolve me' speech, you will be able to identify many similarities with this speech. Castro offered every sector of society what they needed: work for the unemployed, land for rural workers, improved working conditions for the urban workers. The middle class were promised they would be able to become professionals; women that they would be able to work in equal conditions to men. Castro concentrated on his role as a man of action, designing policies to bring about these changes.

The most significant of the measures in this period was the Agrarian Reform Act, which aimed at making the distribution of land more equitable, agriculture more efficient and Cuba less dependent on sugar. The act, which had been promised by the rebels in the Sierra Maestra days, restricted the land that could be owned; anyone having more than the established limit had that extra part **expropriated** and received **bonds** as compensation. Expropriated land was to be organized in **cooperatives**. The Act also nationalized the land in foreign hands and ended both Cuban and foreign ownership of large estates, while still allowing private medium- and small-sized farms. These would be the targets of the second (1963) and third (1968) Agrarian Reform laws.

The act was opposed by property owners affected by the reform, and was widely criticized in the Cuban press. It also raised alarm in the USA, as the companies affected saw it as a confiscatory measure and refused to settle for the compensation in Cuban bonds that was offered. Washington began to consider cutting the sugar quota in retaliation.

Other reforms included an increase in wages and the reduction of rents. These created great enthusiasm amongst the lower classes but, again, antagonized the middle and upper classes. Foreign-owned companies began to face waves of strikes as workers took advantage of a more favourable political situation to demand increases in wages and improved working conditions. They found support in the new government, which intervened in many of the



#### Expropriation

Taking property out of an owner's hands by public authority.

#### Bond

An official document issued by a government or a company to show that you have lent them money that they will pay back to you at a fixed interest rate.

#### Cooperative

An association that is managed by the people who work in it.

conflicts, often in favour of the workers. Some foreign companies were threatened with expropriation, accused of representing countries that had provided Batista with weapons.

Import taxes were imposed on 'luxury goods' with several aims. Making these goods more expensive aimed at reducing their imports so that less money was spent on them by Cubans. But also, with the money raised with these taxes, the government hoped to invest in industrialization and the diversification of the economy (i.e. break with the sugar monoculture). This again affected the USA, which saw its sales to Cuba decrease by as much as 35 per cent.

To improve the living conditions, the government began to work on education and health reforms. Later in this chapter, you will be offered a detailed analysis of the literacy campaign of 1961.

#### ● Examiner's hint

The study of a leader's rise to power requires considering the links between the conditions that contributed to his rise, the promises made in response, and the eventual policies implemented. You should be able to assess the extent to which the promises made addressed the problems of the country, and whether the policies implemented were effective in fulfilling those promises. Once you have completed the table opposite, see if you can produce a chart for other leaders you have studied.

#### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

**You have now examined the conditions of how and why Castro came to power. You have also analyzed the promises he made to the Cuban population and some of the reforms implemented in the period 1959–62. Copy and complete the following chart to help you establish the links between these three factors. There are some suggestions already inserted to help you get started; add as many rows as you consider necessary until you have addressed as many aspects as you can. Compare your chart with others in your group.**

CONDITION	PROMISE	POLICIES
		Agrarian Reform
Illiteracy		
	Economic independence	

## Effects of the reforms

The reforms announced between 1959 and 1962 had several results. First, they allowed Castro and the PSP to become more popular among many sectors of society and to consolidate their position in the government. Many Cubans therefore became less concerned about when Castro would call for elections and restore the constitution. They seemed to accept the idea that it was first necessary to dismantle the old political, social and economic systems.

Yet there was a certain level of resistance to the changes, as small groups opposed the pace of the revolution and took up arms in some parts of the country. Local opposition was controlled by the government and did not lead to major crises, particularly because at this stage Castro still allowed those against the revolution to leave the country. Between January 1959 and October 1962, approximately 250,000 people left Cuba, including former *batistianos*, middle-class citizens who feared the radicalization of the revolution, and members of religious congregations who disliked the communist nature of the reforms.

Castro was less successful in dealing with opposition from the USA. Relations between Havana and Washington deteriorated dramatically between 1959 and 1962. Two major incidents developed in these years, the Bay of Pigs invasion (1961) and the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962).

## American–Cuban relations (1959–62)

Even before 1959, Fidel Castro had made it clear that he believed Cuba needed to develop its economy outside the shadow of the USA. When US interests began to be affected by Cuban policies, Washington pressed other countries to prevent economic aid from reaching the island. Castro then ordered the expropriation of US property in Cuba. In turn, Eisenhower cancelled the sugar quota, a measure which extended into an economic embargo that was intensified in October 1960, after all US banks in Cuba had been confiscated.

While tensions between the USA and Cuba increased, Cuban relations with the USSR improved. Probably encouraged by the direction of the early reforms, in May 1960 the Soviets established formal diplomatic relations between the two countries. (Previously, relations between Cuba and the USSR had been severed as a consequence of Batista's coup in 1952.) Trade agreements were signed and Cuba found a new market for its sugar production. The USSR also granted Castro loans to purchase industrial equipment and weapons. It was not long before the USSR promised to help Cuba 'prevent an armed United States intervention against Cuba.'

## The Bay of Pigs Invasion (1961)

While Cuba was cementing its relationship with Moscow, Washington contemplated a plan for the invasion of the island. The plan aimed at using Cuban exiles, trained as a paramilitary force, to return to Cuba and overthrow Castro. This was the origin of the Bay of Pigs invasion of April 1961.

President J.F. Kennedy (1961–63) had promised a tough attitude against the penetration of Marxism in Latin America. He approved the plan, which had been devised during President Eisenhower's administration (1953–61). Cuban exiles trained in Guatemala and Nicaragua in preparation to invade Cuba to start a popular uprising against Castro. US troops were not to be directly involved in the invasion. The Cuban Revolutionary Council, an anti-Castro group led by former Prime Minister Miró Cardona, now exiled in the USA, was ready to take over and form a provisional government after the fall of Castro.

The operation was a failure on many levels. When the troops landed in Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón), Cuban forces led by Castro himself defeated them and imprisoned more than 1,000 participants. The hope that the invasion would spark spontaneous uprisings against Castro revealed that the significance of his reforms had not been fully understood by Washington.

Fidel Castro emerged from Bay of Pigs more powerful than before. The victory against the USA made Cubans conclude that Castro was definitely making Cuba a stronger country, and the credibility of the revolution was reinforced. The image of Castro leading the resistance against the invasion added a new dimension to his hero-worship and reinforced Cuban nationalism. In addition, the Bay of Pigs episode gave Castro what he needed to demand increasing commitment to the revolution: a visible enemy. In the face of this, Cubans needed to remain united and accept the leadership of Castro in preparation for another attack. A final implication of the Bay of Pigs was that it tempted the USSR to establish stronger military ties with Cuba, and a military presence within Cuba itself.

## The Cuban Missile Crisis (1962)

The next incident between Cuba and the USA came with the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962, when Washington and Moscow confronted each other over the Soviet placement of nuclear missiles on the island. The crisis took the world to the brink of



To access Worksheet 3.2 on cartoon analysis and the Cuban revolution, please visit [www.pearsonbacconline.com](http://www.pearsonbacconline.com) and follow the on-screen instructions.

### ● Examiner's hint

Paper 2 will not ask specific questions on the foreign policies of leaders. In the case of Fidel Castro, however, it becomes very difficult to understand his domestic policies without making some reference to Cuban relations with the USA and USSR. Although no question will ask about Cuba's relations with other countries, you need to have some understanding of events like the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis to grasp the changes in, for example, Cuba's economy.

To access Worksheet 3.3 on Fidel Castro, Agrarian Reform and the USA, please visit [www.pearsonbacconline.com](http://www.pearsonbacconline.com) and follow the on-screen instructions.



#### ● Examiner's hint

If a Paper 2 question asks you to discuss issues relating to the consolidation of power, answers on Castro should only include events up to 1962.

nuclear war. After 13 days of tense negotiations, the Soviets removed the missiles and dismantled the sites in Cuba. In exchange, the USA removed its own nuclear missiles from Turkey and made a promise that it would not invade the island. Although this pledge was good news for Cuba, Castro was faced with the disappointment that the Soviets would no longer defend his island.

### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### RESEARCH ACTIVITY

**Find information to help you understand the context against which the Bay of Pigs incident and the Cuban Missile Crisis took place. What do you know about the Cold War? How was Cuba affected by this conflict?**

#### CLASS DISCUSSION

**With your class, discuss whether the Bay of Pigs incident and the Cuban Missile Crisis strengthened or weakened Castro's position in Cuba. Find material to support your views. This could include treatment of these events in the Cuban press, public speeches, popular songs, etc.**

By 1962, Fidel Castro had freed himself from the *batistianos* and the liberals in government. He had also extinguished revolts in the provinces and implemented revolutionary domestic policies. No other figure from the revolution seemed to be in a condition to dispute his authority. Furthermore, he emerged from this period with a more radical position by accepting Soviet assistance, and also making public that he was a Marxist-Leninist. In December 1961, for example, he declared 'I am a Marxist-Leninist and shall be one until the end of my life.'

## Fidel Castro's ideology

It is often discussed whether Castro had always intended to align the revolution with Marxism or whether this was the product of US policies that pushed Cuba into the arms of the USSR. It was not clear in 1959 that Cuba would soon adopt a communist ideology. The inclusion of liberals in the provisional government, for example, seemed to indicate that all the revolution was hoping to change was tyranny for democracy. Also, in 1959 Castro seemed little inclined to commit himself to any specific ideology or detailed programme, and he publicly denied any relation between the 26th of July Movement and the communists. He refused to answer questions about which global political ideology matched his own. Any observance of a fixed set of principles, such as communism, would have restricted the methods at Castro's disposal.

### SOURCE D

*The 26 July movement which is a truly revolutionary movement, which wants to establish the economy of the country on a just basis, which is a revolutionary movement and at the same time a democratic movement with broad human content, was established in Cuba, its ranks were swelled by many people who previously had no political alternative and who inclined toward parties with radical ideas. The 26 July movement is one with radical ideas, but it is not a communist movement, and it differs basically from communism on a whole series of basic points. And those in the 26 July movement, both Raúl and Guevara, like all the others, are men who agree very closely with my political thinking, which is not communist thinking. The thinking of the 26 July movement is not communist thinking.*

**From a transcript of a press conference given by Fidel Castro at Havana Presidential Palace on 27 February 1959**

## STUDENT STUDY SECTION

### QUESTION

What does Source D reveal about Castro's political ideology in 1959?

### RESEARCH ACTIVITY

In groups, find additional information to help you discuss the following questions:

- Why did Castro change his views about communism by December 1961?
- To what extent did the more radical members of his movement, such as Che Guevara and Raúl Castro, contribute to this change?
- How far do you consider the USA policies towards Cuba may have influenced Castro's turn to the left?
- Can you think of other elements that played a part in the shift towards a Marxist-Leninist society?

Once your group has collected sufficient evidence, discuss with the rest of the class the strengths and limitations of the different arguments which explain Cuba's shift to the left.

Answer the following question after you have read the examiner's hint: 'Assess the role played by the policies implemented between 1959 and 1962 in the consolidation of power of Fidel Castro.'

### Examiner's hint

The final question here does not ask you to evaluate the successes and failures of the policies in themselves, but the extent to which they enabled Castro to consolidate his position by 1962. In other words, you need to analyze how far the policies contributed to making Castro an undisputed leader.

### The embargo on Cuba

The US commercial and financial embargo upon Cuba reached 50 years' duration in 2010. Its stated aim is to bring democracy to Cuba by forcing the collapse of Castro's regime. However, the embargo has been criticized for humanitarian reasons, as it affects the living conditions of the Cuban population in a negative way. Another source of criticism comes from the fact that the embargo placed on Cuba has actually given Fidel Castro a scapegoat on which to blame all the economic and social problems, proof of which is the fact that in 50 years the embargo has not reached its aim of democratizing Cuba.

### Centrally planned economy

A system in which the state directs and controls all major economic areas and decides upon the distribution of resources and production, following a national plan.

### Socialist emulation

A term used in the USSR to refer to a competition among workers as a method to achieve the set targets.

## Section IV:

### Castro in power: Economic policies and their impact

Fidel Castro aimed to make Cuba an economically independent and industrialized nation. However, the Cuban economy was to remain linked to the decisions and policies of other nations. The US **embargo**, the economic dependence on the Soviets and the impact of the subsequent collapse of the USSR on Cuba helped shape Castro's different economic policies. Although these policies were claimed to uphold the aims of the revolution, Cuba responded to the internal and international challenges with different – and at times contradictory – instruments.

This section analyzes the economic policies adopted by Cuba after 1962 in order to assess their levels of success in achieving the revolutionary aims.

### The influence of Che Guevara: Moral incentives and voluntarism

A revolutionary who played an important part in the design of Cuba's economic policies was Che Guevara. He occupied the positions of President of the National Bank of Cuba and, later, Minister of Industries. With the revolution in power, Guevara believed it was time to leave capitalism behind and adopt communism. He favoured a **centrally planned economy**, with an emphasis on moral incentives and self-sacrifice. By this he meant that people should work for the ideals and values of the revolution rather than for personal gains. Moral incentives included **socialist emulation**, party membership and state recognition, amongst others. All workers were to receive equal pay; overtime would not be

### ● Examiner's hint

Paper 2 questions may ask about the economic policies of leaders. In your answers, you will be expected to provide sufficient detail to support your views. The following section will equip you with detailed material on some of Castro's economic policies, so that you are able to provide specific evidence when assessing, for example, whether they have been successful. You can also find additional information about any of these policies and share your findings with the group.

Ernesto 'Che' Guevara at work with Cuban locals.

paid for, as workers were expected to cover it voluntarily as their personal contribution to the revolution.

Guevara aimed at creating a new consciousness, and with it a 'new man' prepared to sacrifice himself for a higher good – a society ruled by the principles of the revolution.

### SOURCE A

*We are doing everything possible to give labour this new status of social duty and to link it on the one side with the development of a technology which will create the conditions for greater freedom, and on the other side with voluntary work based on a Marxist appreciation of the fact that man truly reaches a full human condition when he produces without being driven by the physical need to sell his labour as a commodity.*

*This is not a matter of how many pounds of meat one might be able to eat, nor of how many times a year someone can go to the beach, nor how many ornaments from abroad you might be able to buy with present salaries. What is really involved is that the individual feels more complete, with much more internal richness and much more responsibility.*

From Ernesto Guevara, 'Socialism and Man in Cuba', 1965

### SOURCE B



### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### QUESTIONS

- What, according to Source A, were the aims of the revolution? How does this speech compare to Castro's 'History will absolve me' speech?
- What is the message of Source B? How do you think this photograph relates to Source A?
- In groups, discuss the ideas presented by Guevara in 'Socialism and Man in Cuba'. Can you identify any source of inspiration for Guevara's ideas? Who do you think they were appealing to and who might have opposed to them? Justify your answers.



The push to transform the Cuban economy into a communist one continued after 1961. In 1962, Cuba changed the national currency and anyone caught with their savings in banks that did not belong to the state lost them overnight. In the cities, rents – which had been reduced by 50 per cent in 1959 – were abolished. This meant that those people living in a property that they did not own virtually became property owners overnight. In 1963, a second Agrarian Law reduced again the amount of land that could be owned by a single person or entity, to prevent the existence of ‘rich’ peasants. After 1963, the state owned 70 per cent of the land, the rest being small farms, which were expropriated in 1968.

But the economic plans to increase productivity met several obstacles. First of all, Cuba faced a lack of specialized personnel and technicians, many of whom had left the country since the revolution. This deficit meant that the assessment of problems and the implementation of solutions was limited. Also, moral incentives were not efficient in raising productivity levels and tackling poor-quality work and absenteeism. Farmers in collective farms were forced to sell their product to the state at very low prices. They consequently lost motivation to produce more than what they needed to survive. As a result, sugar production levels were very low and government plans to diversify away from the cultivation of sugar did not compensate for the drop in those levels.

Determined to advance the industrialization programme, the government continued to buy machinery from the USSR and Eastern European nations and to increase its debt. Cuba was again trapped in trade relations of subsidized sugar in exchange for goods and, by 1964, it had to return to intensive sugar production to reduce debt.

## The Revolutionary Offensive (1968)

In March 1968, Castro launched the ‘Revolutionary Offensive’ to move Cuba further towards a communist state and remove the last vestiges of capitalism from the island. The Offensive emphasized the ideas of Guevara’s ‘new man’, in which work was a social duty rather than a way to achieve personal aims. Under the Revolutionary Offensive, Castro ordered the expropriation of all remaining privately owned enterprises, such as family stores, restaurants, handicraft stores, grocers, service shops and street vendors. All of these were to be owned and managed by the state and put at the service of a centrally planned economy. Farmers’ markets were eliminated. Self-employment was banned, as it was seen as pursuing individualist aims.

The Offensive did not achieve an increase in productivity, but instead produced administrative chaos as the number of government agencies needed to organize the different fields of production and sales grew exponentially. Also, the return to the policy of moral incentives was met with high levels of absenteeism and vagrancy.

## The ‘Year of the Ten Million’ (1970)

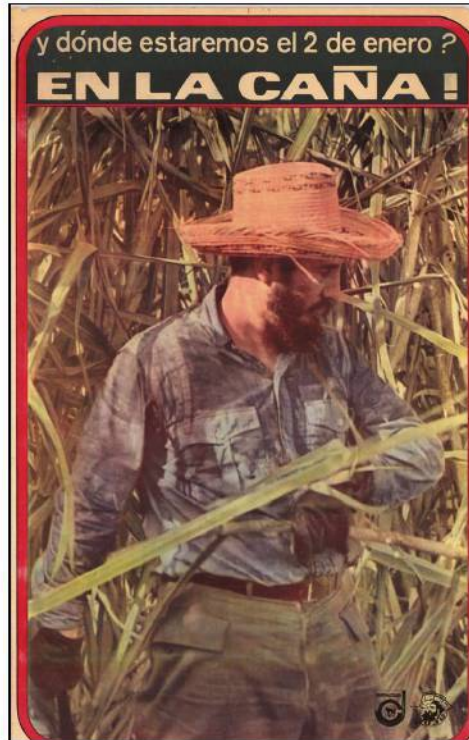
In order to solve the problems left by the revolutionary offensive in 1969, Castro announced that he intended Cuba to break its previous sugar production record and reach a 10 million ton output in 1970. The campaign aimed to obtain from the harvest enough money to pay off Cuban debts to the USSR and, by selling surplus sugar, make investments to achieve economic diversification. In Castro’s words, it was ‘a liberation campaign’.

With 1970 becoming the ‘Year of the Ten Million’, the *zafra* (sugar season) became another battle for Cuban pride. It was intended to show those who remained sceptical about the revolution that it could attain its dreams. The campaign became a crusade that mobilized the entire population and became a political test for Castro.

In order to achieve the 10 million tons target, and aware that the appeal to voluntarism and solidarity had not guaranteed results in the past, Castro appealed for the ‘militarization’ of labour (organized and disciplined like an army). Students, conscripts, law breakers, emigrants awaiting their turn to leave the island – all worked cutting cane side by side as ‘volunteers’. The armed forces occupied the sugar-producing regions and were put in charge of the sugar mills. Castro himself was seen cutting cane in street posters, to motivate people to work. To increase productivity, bars and theatres were closed and even Christmas and New Year celebrations were cancelled.

### SOURCE C

Propaganda poster used in 1970. It reads ‘And where shall we be on January 2? AT THE SUGAR CANE!’



### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### QUESTIONS

- What is the message of Source C?
- What do you think was the purpose of the poster?
- How does it help you understand the nature of the campaign?

Despite the fact that the entire nation had been put at the service of the campaign, and that a record harvest of 8.5 million tons was reached, Castro was forced to admit that they had been unable to reach the 10 million tons target. Deep harm had been inflicted on the economy. The agricultural machines had been over-used; agricultural production of crops other than sugar had suffered; other economic areas such as forestry and fishing had seen important losses. Rather than raise the morale of Cubans, the campaign had exhausted them and made them sceptical. The soldiers, for example, who had been mobilized to oversee operations, had felt their status diminished – they had been used to cut cane when they had been trained to defend the nation.

Because the campaign had been given so much importance, its failure was a terrible blow for Castro not only at an economic but also at a political level. In an address to the nation on 26 July 1970, he admitted that the campaign's failure was due to the administrative apparatus rather than the ordinary citizens' commitment. In doing so, and by offering his resignation to a crowd that cheered his name, Fidel Castro managed to survive the political effects of the failure. The price he had to pay was the abandonment of Guevara's ideas of solidarity, voluntarism and self-sacrifice, and the acceptance of a greater economic dependency on the USSR.

Farmers' markets were reinstated. State-owned companies were given enough autonomy to take some daily decisions without having to go through the state bureaucracy. Material incentives, such as pay for overtime work, were introduced. However, Cuba continued to suffer similar economic problems.

The end of the 1970s brought new levels of recession. Cuba was badly hit by the international economic situation as the USSR cut the price it paid for Cuban sugar. Unemployment, debt and policies that limited consumption led to increased discontent, which contributed to the 1980 **Maríel** exodus, when 125,000 abandoned Cuba for the USA.

## The Rectification Campaign (1986)

In 1986, Castro blamed the more liberal measures that had been adopted in the past for the present economic problems. He consequently advocated a return to the values of solidarity and voluntarism under the 'Rectification Campaign'. The aim was to 'rectify errors and negative tendencies' linked to the relaxation of communist principles after 1970.

Under the Rectification Campaign, farmers' markets were again banned; bonuses and extra pay were abolished and self-employment was discouraged. Farm cooperatives were given new emphasis as, under a new Agrarian Reform Act, the percentage of land managed by independent farmers dropped to 2 per cent. Labour discipline was enforced and the workers lost many union rights.

The economic results of the Rectification Campaign were poor. Productivity fell; absenteeism at work increased. Reduced supplies of milk, oil, textiles and sugar led to an increase in their prices. Parallel or black markets reappeared to offer goods that were difficult to obtain, or that had been added to the list of rationed products. Transport and electricity rates also increased and affected the population's living standards. But Cuba had not yet seen the worst.

## The Special Period (1991)

The dissolution of the USSR in 1991 was, in Castro's words, 'the most unfavourable international economic juncture ever faced by the Cuban economy in the entire history of the Revolution'. The 30-year period in which the USSR had become central to Cuba's economy and social development ended suddenly and unexpectedly. Soviet technicians left Cuba as hundreds of projects were abandoned. Subsidized goods, oil, access to international loans and everything the USSR had provided to Cuba were finished.

As a result, Castro announced Cuba had entered a 'special period in peacetime'. Cubans faced new levels of rationing as basic goods disappeared from the market. With Soviet oil gone, the need to save energy limited the working hours of the population, imposed long black-outs and restricted public transport.



### Maríel

Maríel was one of Cuba's emigration ports. Built between 1762 and 1768 on the Maríel Bay in the province of Pinar del Río, it soon became an important deep-water port and integral to the country's economy.

**SOURCE D**

*Large cuts had been made in food rations, and gasoline, electricity and other goods and services were in short supply. Food was scarce. People were not starving, but they could definitely not eat as much as they had before and they complained that there was no lard or cooking oil and that the food therefore had no taste. A disease was spreading that affected the eyes and the legs of many people and that was later diagnosed as caused by the drastic drop in food intake.*

**From Mona Rosendahl, *Inside the Revolution: Everyday Life in Socialist Cuba*, 1997**

**STUDENT STUDY SECTION****QUESTIONS**

- What does Source D reveal about the state of the Cuban economy during the Special Period?**
- To what extent can it be argued that the Special Period demonstrated that the Cuban revolution had failed in its economic aims?**

In order to adjust to the new scenario, and in response to growing unrest at home, new policies were implemented:

- A large percentage of state-owned farms began to be run as worker-managed cooperatives in an attempt to increase levels of productivity.
- In an effort to attract capital and diversify economic activities, Cuba was opened to international business. Foreigners were invited to join the state in the development of certain areas of the economy, such as tourism, mining and energy. Tourism in particular developed positively.
- In 1993 it was made legal for Cubans to buy and sell US dollars in an attempt to attract dollars from the relatives of Cubans overseas. The fact that Cubans could now buy and sell dollars freely had a positive impact on the demand for goods and contributed to the reactivation of the economy.
- Farmers' and handcraft markets reappeared and some level of self-employment and private businesses was allowed. The state aimed at saving money by reducing some subsidies and increasing taxes.

By 1994, those who had predicted the collapse of the regime were again proved wrong, as Cuba was showing some signs of economic recovery. Sugar had been replaced by tourism.

**STUDENT STUDY SECTION**

**Fill in the following chart by identifying the aims of the different economic programmes you have studied in this section and listing their successes and failures. It will be useful revision before you approach the next exercises.**

POLICY	AIMS	ACHIEVEMENTS	FAILURES

**QUESTION**

**Consider the following question: 'Fidel Castro's government tried to promote economic development, but his policies did not succeed.' To what extent do you agree with this view?**

**Now read the following introduction to the question above:**

**● Examiner's hint**

An effective approach to this question requires that you first show that the revolutionary government sought to generate economic growth. Because the question does not ask you to focus on a specific period, it would be a good idea to decide, before you start writing, which specific policies you plan to address. For each of the selected policies, you should show how the government hoped it would produce economic growth and then decide the extent to which this was achieved.

### Student Answer A – Jenna

Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba in 1959 with the aim of making radical changes to the country. He promised to end inequality, corruption and the economic dependency on the USA. With these aims, he implemented economic policies to generate economic growth. These policies included the nationalization of industries and banks, the passing of an Agrarian Reform Act and the development of national industries. However, they did not bring about economic growth. Castro's attempt to increase the production of sugar to pay for the industrialization of the country did not succeed, as shown by the failure to reach the target of the 10 million tons of sugar in 1970. Also, after the revolution Cuba began to depend on the USSR and, with the collapse of that state, Cuba entered a very difficult economic period.

### Examiner's comments

This introduction shows specific knowledge of the aims and policies of Castro's economy and the candidate is aware of the need to assess them. More could have been done to show explicitly which period/policies are treated in the essay and the attempt to assess the 10 million tons campaign could have been left for the essay itself.

## Now read the following conclusion to the question above:

### Student Answer B – Jenna

The Cuban revolution did not produce the promised economic growth. Under Fidel Castro, Cuba continued to experience the problems caused by economic dependence and the consequences of the collapse of the USSR on the island were devastating. Castro was equally unable to develop a national industry that would make Cuba more self-sufficient and the country was never really able to reduce the influence of the sugar market on the national economy. Economic policies increased the shortage of goods, which made the living standards of the population drop, as seen during the Rectification Campaign. Although the Cuban population gained access to land to work and houses to live in, the levels of economic recession were very high at different times, as shown by the analysis of the late 1970s. All in all, the economic policies of Cuba never brought economic growth.

### Examiner's comments

This conclusion is very focused on the demands of the question. It also makes reference to specific arguments which, presumably, have been developed throughout the essay. Make sure you do not introduce new arguments and new evidence in your conclusion because there will be no time for you to develop the ideas. Use the conclusion to round up the supporting arguments you have presented in the essay with a clear focus on how they have helped answer the question before you.

## Now read the following question: 'To what extent were the economic aims of the revolution achieved by Fidel Castro's government by 1990?'

- In what ways is this question similar/ different to the previous one?
- How would you approach it?
- Think of the arguments you could develop and which examples you would be using to illustrate each point made.

### ● Examiner's hint

This question requires a more specific treatment of the aims of the revolution and you will need to identify them early in your essay.

## Section V:

### Social policies

The revolution aimed to introduce social justice and allow all sectors of society to have equal opportunities. Reforms in health, education, and the treatment of women and of minorities were implemented, among other areas. Some of these reforms clashed with Cuban traditions and culture. Therefore, the arts played a fundamental role in designing a new Cuban culture in which, for example, the role of women as workers was promoted.

The following section analyzes two significant areas of social policy: the status of women and education. It evaluates the parts played by the FMC and the literacy campaign to change the status of women and promote education. It analyzes the relationship between the Cuban government and the arts to understand the attempt to transform Cuban culture through revolutionary values. It also addresses the relationship between the revolution and religious and racial groups.

### Status of women

The status of women in Cuba by 1959 was different from that in many Latin American countries. Women were given the right to vote as early as 1934. The 1940 constitution also granted them equality before the law: women could not be discriminated against at work and were to receive equal pay for equal work. Yet although women were allowed to vote, study, work and even sue for divorce, pre-revolutionary Cuba remained in many ways a traditional society. Only a few occupations, such as teaching and nursing, were considered to be appropriate for women in the pre-revolutionary years. Women often faced discrimination at work, as the jobs with greater responsibility went to men. In the middle and upper classes, men preferred women to stay at home to look after their families rather than join the workforce.

The defence of the rights of women at work was largely a response to Cuba's economic needs. To achieve modernization, and in order to produce record harvests, women needed to become an active part of the workforce. This implied having to fight against two main problems: discrimination against women at work and finding how to make women's role in the workforce and the household compatible.

To address the first problem, new legislation was passed reinforcing the equal rights of men and women to access all types of jobs. Women were offered training at technical and professional levels to prepare themselves for posts with greater responsibility. They entered fields that had so far been almost exclusively all-male, such as construction, biotechnology and IT. In the rural areas, the Agrarian Reform acts opened the opportunity for women to work in areas that had also been limited to men, such as driving and repairing tractors. In the towns and cities, an increasing number of daycare centres for working mothers were made available so that women could become part of the workforce.

Under Castro, women were expected to leave their families and homes for long periods and work in 'Agricultural Legions', cutting cane and harvesting coffee and other crops. There was pressure on women to be efficient workers, participate in political life, volunteer to serve the revolution while at the same time fulfil their responsibilities as wives, mothers and housewives.

Cuba nevertheless remained a very patriarchal society. Women were expected to fulfil their roles as housewives, but men refused to share household responsibilities or live with potentially economically independent women. This conflict proved difficult to manage and

resulted in many women giving up work and in entire families leaving Cuba.

In the 1970s, a new 'Family Code' was put in place. It stipulated equality of sexes both at home and at work. Men were to share in the household duties and the education of children; not doing so was seen as the exploitation of women. The presence of women in the workforce, however, remained lower than government expectations, a fact that even Castro was forced to admit.

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### SOURCE A



Photograph showing a peasant woman ready for work.

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### SOURCE B



A group of Cuban women enjoy a music class, c. 1965.

## STUDENT STUDY SECTION

## QUESTIONS

**Explain the message of Source A and Source B. To what extent do you consider the sources reflect a change in the role of women in Cuba?**

### Case study: The Federación de Mujeres Cubanas (FMC)

The FMC was created by Vilma Espín (wife of Raúl Castro) in 1960 with the aim of helping women integrate into the revolution. It trained women to take up new jobs in farming, construction and teaching, among others. The FMC also organized many aspects of the campaign against illiteracy, and created and ran successful health programmes. FMC women joined 'Sanitary Brigades' that travelled to the rural areas to deliver vaccination campaigns, and they also served as social workers. The FMC worked with the Ministry of Education in the design of new textbooks to be used in revolutionary Cuba. In them, women were portrayed as committed workers and soldiers. Former domestic workers were trained to work as seamstresses or cooks, and they received education in history, geography and the new laws of revolutionary Cuba. Housewives were also taught in FMC headquarters so that they could complete their schooling.

### Assessment

The policies aimed towards encouraging the equality of women seem to have been more geared towards increasing the size of the Cuban workforce than towards gender equality. More than 600,000 Cubans, many of whom were middle-class professionals, left the island in the 1960s. In order to fill up these vacancies, Cuban women trained for jobs and professions that had been denied to them in the past, and women played an important role in the success of literacy and health campaigns.

Yet despite the work of the FMC, the government could not achieve the levels of female employment it had hoped for. Furthermore, the low number of women in decision-making positions and in the higher levels of the PCC leads us to question whether the government really intended equality between the sexes or was merely creating policies to ensure their economic goals.

## STUDENT STUDY SECTION

## GROUP ACTIVITY

**In previous sections of this chapter, you have read about women who contributed to Castro's rise to power: Celia Sánchez, Haydée Santamaría, Vilma Espín. Split into groups, and each group should choose one of these women and research her role after 1959. Share the information with the other groups and discuss their importance in the revolutionary government. Why did they become role models?**

## QUESTION

**'Single-party states allowed women to play a fuller role in society.' How far do you agree this was the case in Cuba under Fidel Castro?**

**Read the following introduction**



### Student Answer – Chang

Castro's Cuba aimed at making a significant change in the lives of women. It expected to incorporate women into the revolution and the workforce. Several women played important roles in the government, such as Celia Sánchez and Vilma Espín. The latter founded the Federation of Cuban Women, which was the institution that led the policies for women in Cuba. Although Castro tried to limit the traditions which demanded women to be mothers and wives above all, he did not succeed and Cuban women were forced to be housewives, mothers, workers and party members, so they were not truly liberated by the revolution.

### Examiner's comments

The candidate has missed the opportunity to define what 'a fuller role' is meant to be. He has an implicit understanding, however, of the idea that women had to play multiple roles and seemed to be worse off. Perhaps this introduction would be clearer if the candidate had omitted the specific examples mentioned and tried to establish the context: what is meant by a 'fuller role'? What was the situation of women at the time of the revolution? In general terms, in which areas were women allowed to play a fuller role and where were they limited by the revolution?

### Examiner's hint

In order to answer this question, you should start by explaining what you understand by 'a fuller role in society'. It is not only about whether more women were allowed in the workforce, but it is also about what their role was in that workforce. You could also use your research about some important women of the revolution and discuss whether the fact that they seemed to have played a 'fuller role' was the exception or the rule in Castro's Cuba.

## SOURCE C



Female soldiers of the Cuban armed forces seen here marching on parade.

## Education

Cuba's access to education in the pre-revolutionary years varied significantly across geographical regions, becoming more restricted in the rural areas. It was also limited by economic status. Cuba had one of the highest illiteracy rates in Latin America. It reached 24 per cent among children under 10 and was high in the adult population as well. Public education was poor, while access to university was limited to those who could afford it and lived near one of the few universities in the island.

### Case study: The literacy campaign

As he rose to power, Castro had promised Cubans improvements in education. During the years in Sierra Maestra, the Rebel Army taught children and adults alike to read and write.

Under the slogan of ‘If you do not know, learn; if you know, teach’, 1961 was declared ‘The Year of Education’ and Castro promised to end illiteracy within the year. To achieve this aim, he needed to solve two initial problems: lack of schools and lack of teachers. To solve the shortage of buildings, military barracks were turned into educational complexes, while new schools were built all across the country, particularly in the rural areas. Between 1959, when Castro began his policy of school expansion, and 1962 more schools were built than in the previous 58 years of Cuban history.

To produce more educators for the literacy campaign, Castro implemented a training programme for 271,000 teachers. To reach all areas, they were sent across the country to teach people in their homes. Literate citizens were expected to act as ‘literacy volunteers’ in their free time. They were dressed in an olive-green uniform and were also sent to the countryside to teach the peasants. These *brigadistas*, as they were known, lived with rural families during the campaign.

The Year of Education brought the entire Cuban population into a joint patriotic effort. By 1962, illiteracy had dropped to 4 per cent. The success of the campaign was spectacular and, as such, it increased the hopes in the revolution.

The aims of the literacy campaign had been twofold. First, it sought to fight illiteracy among the poor. Second, it also aimed to make the middle-class literate youth familiarize themselves with the living conditions and hardships of the poor, and to act in response to the values of the revolution: service and self-sacrifice. Their work in the literacy campaign opened their eyes to the ‘other Cuba’, and thousands of volunteers emerged from the experience totally transformed. The illiterate peasants, in turn, learnt what the revolution could do for them and were given another reason to support it.

#### SOURCE D

*[The aim] was no longer simply to raise the level of basic knowledge and skills, but to foster the creation of a new man; a socialist man, honest, selfless, devoted to the community, and freed from greedy and corrupt bourgeois inclinations... The overall purpose of education at all levels is to produce better Communists, men and women, unconditionally loyal to the party and party leadership.*

From Julie Marie Bunck, *Fidel Castro and the Quest for a Revolutionary Culture in Cuba*, 1994

#### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

##### QUESTIONS

- What is the message of Source C on p.85?
- What does Source D reveal about the purpose of education in Cuba?
- Explain the meaning and the significance of ‘to foster the creation of a new man’.

## Education in communist Cuba

The shift towards communism in 1961 affected education. That year, all private schools were nationalized, boarding schools opened and a large scholarship programme for gifted and committed students was established. Participants were selected by the government, who often decided the subject areas in which particular students should specialize. Free time had to be used in ‘intellectually valuable choices’, such as volunteer work.

Teachers who did not support the revolution lost their jobs, and the new ones who came to replace them soon realized students acted as spies. On the other hand, teachers who supported the regime were rewarded with training in the USSR and Eastern Europe, where communist values were reinforced. New textbooks were adopted and teaching focused on the history of the revolution and the lives of heroes: Fidel, Che and Camilo (on first-name terms). Libraries were purged of what was considered to be inappropriate material. In Castro's words: 'The task of the schools... is the ideological formation of revolutionaries, and then, by means of the revolutionaries, the ideological formation of the rest of the people.'

## SOURCE E

*It doesn't take me long to discover that despite my initial reservations, I am going to enjoy school after all. We sit at our uncomfortable wooden desks learning to recite an alphabet where the F is for Fidel, the R for rifles and the Y is for the Yankees. Learning about Fidel and rifles and why we should hate the Americans can sometimes take up a fair amount of the school day, even in primary school. As we get older, more and more time is taken out for what my parents describe with growing alarm as indoctrination.*

From Luis M. Garcia, *Child of the Revolution: Growing Up in Castro's Cuba*, 2006

### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### QUESTIONS

- According to Source E, what were students expected to learn?
- Explain the message in 'the F is for Fidel, the R for rifles and the Y is for the Yankees'.
- Explain the meaning of 'what my parents describe with growing alarm as indoctrination.'
- To what extent does Source E support Castro's view that schools had to provide the 'ideological formation of revolutionaries'?

## The arts

The revolution's new order aimed to change Cuban culture. Castro believed that Cuban culture before the revolution had been marked by foreign influence and that truly nationalist values had not been established. He therefore founded many organizations aimed at developing a Cuban culture based on nationalist and revolutionary values. These organizations coordinated the different policies to ensure the arts reflected and encouraged these values.

Among the early measures taken to end foreign influence was the translation of English terms into Spanish, such as on all wrappers and labels. Terms such as 'struggle', 'battle', 'victory' and 'enemy' were used to explain different events, from the campaign against illiteracy to the harvest season. Visual images of what constituted the ideal man and the ideal woman were based on the revolutionary heroes of the wars against Spain, as well as the revolutionary war against Batista.

The National Ballet and the Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC; Cuban Institute of Arts and Cinema Industry) were created in 1959. Two years later, the Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (UNEAC; Union of Artists and Writers of Cuba) was formed. Its declaration stated that 'The writer must contribute to the revolution through

**ToK Time**

'Language shapes the way we see the world.' By making reference to the emergence of a revolutionary culture, discuss the extent to which you agree with this quotation.



his work, and this involves conceiving of literature as a means of combat, a weapon against weaknesses and the problems that, directly or indirectly, could hinder this advance.'

## Case study: The *PM* affair and 'Words to the intellectuals'

*PM* (1961) was a short film documenting Afro-Cubans dancing and enjoying themselves. It was considered to show a decadent aspect of Cuba, and was accused of being counter-revolutionary and was eventually censored. The censorship of *PM*, a truly apolitical film, angered many Cuban writers and artists who had been enthusiastic supporters of the revolution. They feared that the government, and particularly Castro, would direct culture by dictating the themes and content of their work. In response to these concerns, Castro organized the First Congress of Cuban Writers and Artists, from which UNEAC emerged.

At this congress, Castro gave a speech that has become an essential document in the study of the history of the arts in the revolution. His objective was to enforce revolutionary discipline and to mobilize support for the regime. This speech, known as 'Words to the intellectuals', defined the responsibilities of artists in times of revolution when Cuba was being threatened by the enemy (the Bay of Pigs invasion had taken place earlier that year). The intellectuals were no longer free to create what they wanted; they were at the service of the revolution and had to work to strengthen its values.

In this speech, Castro made another point very clear. Art had a purpose, and this purpose was dictated by the needs of the revolution. An artist had to be a revolutionary first; he could not paint or write about what he wanted, he had to do it in such a way that the masses – the focus of the revolution – would receive a clear message. In other words, inspiration had to come from what the revolution demanded from the artist.

### SOURCE F

*The Revolution should maintain a majority, not only of revolutionaries, but also of all honest citizens. The Revolution should only turn away those who are incorrigible counter-revolutionaries. And, the Revolution must have a policy for that part of the population so that everyone in that sector of artists and intellectuals who are not genuinely revolutionary may find that they have a space to work and to create within the Revolution; and that their creative spirit will have the freedom to express itself. This means that within the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing. This is a general principle for all citizens; it is a fundamental principle of the Revolution.*

From Fidel Castro, 'Words to the intellectuals', 30 June 1961

### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### QUESTIONS

- a) What is the significance of 'This means that within the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing'?
- b) To what extent is Castro's speech consistent with his policies? Explain your answer fully.

In the light of these new directives, the arts were to promote revolutionary values. Poets wrote to encourage people to work in the *zafra* or the coffee harvest; novels described women who were role models at work and at home; films highlighted the achievements of the revolution, such as Manuel Herrera's *Girón*, which represented the Bay of Pigs incident, or Jorge Fraga's *Me hice maestro* (*I Became a Teacher*).



The arts came under even closer supervision after the Revolutionary Offensive was launched in 1968. The economic problems, the demoralizing effect of the death of Che Guevara and the need to stimulate people to achieve the 10 million tons sugar target demanded an even greater control of intellectuals and artists.

## The Padilla affair and the ‘grey years’ (1971)

In 1971, conflict between the writers and the government broke out again over the work of poet Heberto Padilla, who had become disappointed with the revolution. In 1968, Padilla was awarded the UNEAC poetry prize for his work *Fuera del juego* (*Out of the Game*), which contained poems critical of the revolution. These appeared at a very sensitive time in Cuba, since the 10 million tons harvest programme had just failed and Castro was prepared to be far less tolerant towards dissent. Padilla was put under arrest and tortured. He was given a confession he had to learn and deliver in a staged public trial. The confession admitted to the charges of being an enemy of the revolution and Padilla was made to accuse his wife and friends of being counter-revolutionaries.

Padilla’s detention and trial had an enormous impact not only in Cuba, but among intellectuals worldwide who had supported the revolution. Numerous artists intervened on Padilla’s behalf and asked Castro to respect freedom of expression. Many of them broke away from the revolution.

The Padilla affair was followed by what became known as the ‘grey period’, in which artists were afraid to produce anything that could be interpreted as counter-revolutionary. Closer surveillance of their actions and work was carried out by the state and extended to other forms of academic and scientific activities.

### SOURCE G

*Cuban poets no longer dream  
(Not even at night).  
They close their doors to write alone.  
But suddenly the wood creaks...  
Hands seize them by the shoulders,  
Turn them about,  
  
Put them face to face with other faces  
(Sunk in swamps, burning in napalm).  
The world flows over their mouths.  
And the eye is obliged to see and see and see.*

‘Cuban Poets no Longer Dream’, poem by Heberto Padilla (trans. by Daniela Senés)

### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### QUESTIONS

- a) In pairs, discuss the message of the poem and the reasons why it was seen as contrary to revolutionary values.
- b) To what extent do you consider the poem reflected the atmosphere in which artists and intellectuals worked in Cuba?

Little has changed in Cuba ever since. The 1976 constitution established that ‘there is freedom of artistic creation as long as its content is not contrary to the revolution’, echoing Castro’s ‘Words to the intellectuals’ speech. (For more on the 1976 constitution, see Section VI on p.91.) Although there have been times when censorship appeared to loosen, most



#### ToK Time

In groups, discuss the following questions in relation to policies towards the arts under Fidel Castro:

- To what extent can art change the way we understand the world?
- Should art be politically subversive? Or should it serve the interests of the community, or the state, or the patron or funding organization?

Cuban writers who dissented from the revolution found the only way of publishing their work was to have it smuggled out of the island. In 1998, Castro again accused film-makers who criticized Cuba's social and economic conditions of being counter-revolutionaries.

### SOURCE H

*In the case of Cuba, we have the one Latin American country that has overcome the lockstep of school failure, the absence of educational opportunity, and poverty. Cuba has gone a long way toward fulfilling the educational needs of children at all school levels and has adopted broad measures to provide sound health care and proper nutrition, indispensable ingredients in a comprehensive effort to achieve victory over a history of neglect.*

From William Luis, *Culture and Customs of Cuba*, 2001

#### ● Examiner's hint

Question b): If this were an open question in an exam, Fidel Castro would certainly be an appropriate example to use in discussing the quotation. In the treatment of Castro's educational policies you will find material to both agree and disagree with the statement. Discuss all views before you come up with a conclusion.

To access Worksheet 3.4 on Castro's views on freedom and democracy, please visit [www.pearsonbacconline.com](http://www.pearsonbacconline.com) and follow the on-screen instructions.

#### Afro-Cuban religions

These faiths are based on the religious beliefs of former West African slaves, and they have incorporated some aspects of Catholicism. As they were forced to adopt Catholicism during the Spanish rule of Cuba, these slaves hid their religious secrets inside the imagery of their masters' saints. *Santería*, or 'the way of the Saints', is the term slave owners used to refer to their slaves' worship.

### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### QUESTIONS

- What, according to Source H, were the educational achievements of Castro's Cuba?
- 'Single-party states use education to obtain support rather than to instil knowledge.' How far do you agree with this statement?

## Treatment of religious groups and minorities

Cuba is considered a Catholic country. However, along with Catholicism, **Afro-Cuban religions** also have a great influence. There are also minorities of Protestants and Jews.

The relationship between religious congregations and the revolutionary government has been a complex one. When the revolution triumphed in 1959, some sectors of the Catholic Church welcomed the opportunity to achieve social justice. Others looked at it with suspicion, particularly as the revolution began to move to the left. Castro thought many of the congregations in Cuba represented foreign interests, as their members were Americans or Spaniards. Whenever bishops criticized the policies of the revolution, Castro accused them of abandoning their pastoral duties and getting involved in politics. The nationalization of schools following the Bay of Pigs incident, and the government's decision that religious education could only take place in churches, increased tension between the state and many religious leaders. Many congregations lived in what historian Antoni Kapcia called 'internal exile', that is, as invisible groups with limited or no influence. Some pastors, however, thought that the only way to attract people back to their churches was to participate in the campaigns of the revolution as volunteers, and they joined the *zafra*, health campaigns and other forms of voluntary labour.

In an attempt to show there was no room for putting religious beliefs before the revolution, the constitution of 1976 stated that: 'It is illegal and punishable by law to oppose one's faith or religious belief to the Revolution, education or the fulfilment of the duty to work, defend the homeland with arms, show reverence for its symbols and other duties established by the constitution.'

The hardships experienced during the Special Period – which seemed to augur the end of the revolution – strengthened attendance of people in their churches. In 1998, Pope John Paul II paid an historic visit to Cuba. A strong anti-communist, the Pope addressed the lack of political freedom in Cuba but he also criticized the US economic embargo. As a sign of improved relations, the government modified the PCC statute and allowed religious people

to join. The separation between state and Church, however, continued to exist and religious education remained forbidden in all schools.

As for racial relations, in the years before the revolution Afro-Cubans (approximately 50 per cent of the population) were discriminated against in education, work opportunities, shops and restaurants. Supporters of the revolution in Cuba claim it has eradicated racial discrimination. Those who disagree maintain that the revolution raised the living standards of the poor – which happened to include a significant number of non-whites – but that inequality between the races continues to exist. Evidence of this is found in the limited number of non-whites who occupy positions of power within the PCC or decision-making posts in the Cuban government.

## STUDENT STUDY SECTION

### QUESTION

**Assess the role of social policies as factors explaining the consolidation and maintenance of power of Fidel Castro.**

## Section VI: Political policies and propaganda

Previous sections have addressed how Fidel Castro consolidated his political power between 1959 and 1962 by a combination of legal methods and the use of force. From 1962, Castro continued to use this combination of methods to maintain himself in power. This section analyzes the structure of the government administration, the policies for dealing with the opposition and the use of propaganda.

### The 1976 constitution

When Fidel Castro overthrew Fulgencio Batista, he said that elections would be held at the appropriate time, after Cuba had successfully replaced Batista's dictatorial system with the revolution. However, it was not until the year 1976 that a new constitution was given to the people of Cuba and elections were held for the first time. The constitution, which is still in effect at the time of writing, is communist in nature and explicitly recognizes the influence of the political and social ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin. It establishes the importance of the PCC in the administrative structure of the country by stating that 'it is the highest leading force of society and of the state, which organizes and guides the common effort towards the goals of the construction of socialism and the progress toward a communist society.'

Elections in 1976 were the first ones to take place since the revolution, but the only party allowed to campaign was the PCC and all nominees to elections at any level were chosen by the party. Under the new constitution, Fidel Castro became head of state, replacing Dorticós. He was also Head of the Government, President of the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the PCC and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. As in the period before 1976, Castro remained personally involved in all governmental decisions. Although a legislative body – the National Assembly – was created and elected provincial and municipal authorities established, the 1976 constitution brought little change in practice. The National Assembly only met twice a year for a period of four to five days.

### ● Examiner's hint

This section has provided you with information about Castro's social policies. It has addressed the status of women, education, the role of the arts, religions and the treatment of minorities. You need to bear in mind you have approximately 50 minutes to answer this question. There will be no time to use everything you have studied. Spend a few minutes planning your answer and thinking which specific examples you will use to illustrate your arguments. Also, remember this question asks you to assess how the social policies helped Castro consolidate AND maintain power, so you need to ensure your answer addresses both aspects.

After 1976, however, there was some room to discuss issues such as crime-related problems and family legislation at a local level, and the contents of the laws passed reflected this to an extent. Yet freedom of association to protest against government policies does not exist. All mass media has been controlled by the state since the 1960s.

Another characteristic of the Cuban government that has prevailed over time is an excessive level of bureaucratization. The different social, political and economic plans launched in Cuba led to the creation a large public sector, which employs a vast proportion of the workforce in an inefficient bureaucracy, as seen with the implementation of policies such as the Revolutionary Offensive.

## Treatment of opposition

Previous sections have addressed policies implemented to control opposition, such the use of show trials (Padilla affair) or the restrictions placed on people's freedom to express their views. The role played by the Comités de Defensa de la Revolución (CDR; Committees for the Defence of the Revolution), set up in 1960 to 'defend the revolution', is also significant for understanding how Castro has treated opposition. The committees were responsible for some social projects, but their primary role was to report counter-revolutionary activity. There were CDR in operation in every workplace, street block and inside residential buildings. Members were instructed to identify 'enemies of the revolution' and report on their activities. By the end of its first year, the CDR had more than 800,000 members and had become an important tool in government surveillance. By 1963, one third of the Cuban population worked for a CDR. It meant that the level of peer surveillance was very high, which intimidated people. Many Cubans, however, felt that being members of a CDR was a way to contribute to the goals of the revolution and to ensure that what they had gained by it would not be lost.

The use of force to control and repress opposition was clearly illustrated in the creation of the Unidad Militar de Ayuda a la Producción (UMAP; Military Units to Aid Production). Between 1965 and 1968, about 25,000 young men were sent to UMAP labour camps. Everyone opposing military service on whatever grounds was sent to these camps, together with a variety of other 'offenders': children of political prisoners; youngsters imitating US dress codes and tastes; homosexuals and political dissenters. All were sent to the labour camps to be 're-educated through the liberating effects of collective work'. The camps were finally closed in 1968 as a result of domestic and international pressure on Castro, although he continued to claim that he had made that decision himself.

One of the distinguishing features of Fidel Castro in his treatment of opposition is that he has, at different times, allowed the exodus of Cubans from the island. You have already seen in an earlier section of this chapter how this policy helped him consolidate his power between 1959 and 1962. That was not the only time when Castro tolerated, and to some extent encouraged, the opposition to leave the island.

## Case study: The Peruvian embassy and the Mariel boatlift

Economic problems in Cuba made 1980 a year of political challenge for Castro's leadership. In April that year, a bus full of Cubans crashed the gates outside the Peruvian embassy in Havana, the occupants seeking **asylum**. In the incident, a Cuban guard was shot. In response to the Peruvian embassy's refusal to hand over the asylum seekers, Castro withdrew all guards from the embassy. Soon after, more than 10,000 Cubans forced themselves into the building, demanding asylum.

### Asylum

Granting a citizen of one country refuge in a foreign, sovereign state or its territory.





'Let them all go!' shouted Castro at a rally in his support in Havana. The Cuban press treated them with disdain, and hundreds of supporters of Castro and the PCC staged demonstrations outside the Peruvian embassy to express their rejection of those seeking asylum, referring to them as 'scum'. Castro announced that anyone who wanted was free to leave the island. Soon after that, hundreds of boats of all sizes, rented by Cubans living in Florida, arrived to assist in the emigration of 125,000 Cubans in the Mariel boatlift. These *marielitos*, as they became known, were not only opponents to Castro or people wanting to be reunited with their relatives. Thousands of prisoners and mentally ill people were released by the government and forced to board the arriving boats.

The Mariel boatlift showed levels of discontent that had been unheard of in Cuba before. Despite demonstrations in support of Castro, it put into question the level of commitment of the people towards the revolution and its very legitimacy. It seemed the readiness to tolerate hardship in the name of the revolution was coming to an end. The relaxation of the legislation that allowed Cubans living overseas to return to visit their relatives had exposed thousands of Cubans to, at times exaggerated, stories of success and accomplishment of their visiting relatives. This contributed to create a feeling of disillusion at the revolution and its gains.

This crisis was also unique in other aspects. This was not the first time that Castro had used emigration as a valve to defuse conflict. In the early days of the revolution, thousands of Cubans, mostly middle class and professionals, left the island as the early manifestations of what would become a communist state appeared. But unlike these previous migration waves, the people leaving in 1980 were more economic than political emigrants.



Cuban refugees sailing out from Mariel port towards the USA. Overcrowding on many of the refugee boats made the trip extremely perilous.

## SOURCE A

*Of course, at first they took the refined bourgeois, the well-dressed landowner. And then they took the physician, the professional. And remember they took half of our country's doctors... Now it is very difficult, very difficult to take a doctor away, because the ones that stayed behind were the best ones, and doctors who trained along other lines, with a solidarity and human spirit, doctors who are not money-minded.*

From a speech by Fidel Castro in Havana on 1 May 1980

## STUDENT STUDY SECTION

### QUESTIONS

- With reference to their origins and purpose, assess the value and limitations of the photograph above and of Source A to an historian studying the 1980 Mariel boatlift.
- In pairs, find information about other times when Castro used emigration as a method to control or reduce opposition. How effective do you consider this method has been?

## Propaganda

Previous sections in this chapter have made reference to the use of propaganda in Castro's rise, consolidation and maintenance in power. Propaganda was used to mythologize the revolution and to create the cult of Castro. Ever since the founding of Radio Rebelde, Castro used Cuban radio and, later on, television to make the revolution a permanent presence in Cuban homes. Magazines such as *Bohemia* and newspapers like *Granma* were used to raise awareness of the ideals and actions of the government and increase commitment to its policies. In a Cuba where educational levels had increased so much, written propaganda was a very effective tool.

Castro relied on his skills as a speaker to create the image of an engaged leader, who fought for the ideals of the revolution in the Sierras, on the shores of Bay of Pigs, and at international and diplomatic conferences. His nationalistic speech, his appeal to the idea that Cuba's integrity was threatened by imperialism, and that it was essential for Cubans to remain united and follow the directives of the government, were fundamental in shaping the political system with which Castro has remained in power since 1959.

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### SOURCE B

*He lectured to soldiers on military matters, schoolteachers on education, physicians on medicine, agronomists on plant cultivation, coaches on athletics, filmmakers on the art of the cinema, master chess players on the best opening gambits, poets and novelists on the guidelines of acceptable writing. These speeches served various purposes. He instructed, explaining the workings of the revolution to the Cuban people. He responded to some crisis, announced a new policy. He spoke almost daily, and on some days more than once. Each assembly provided an opportunity to 'mobilize the masses,' to assure popular support for him and for the revolution. He marked important landmarks in the history of his revolution – the landing of the Granma, the defeat of Batista..., the attack on the Moncada barracks...*

**From Robert E. Quirk, *Fidel Castro*, 1993**

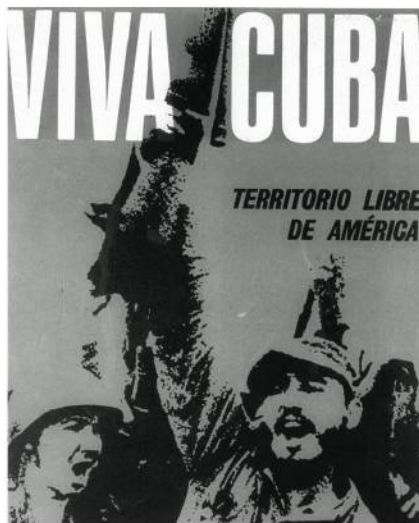
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Propaganda was also used to rally support for new policies or to emphasize the successes of the regime by the use of posters like the ones below:

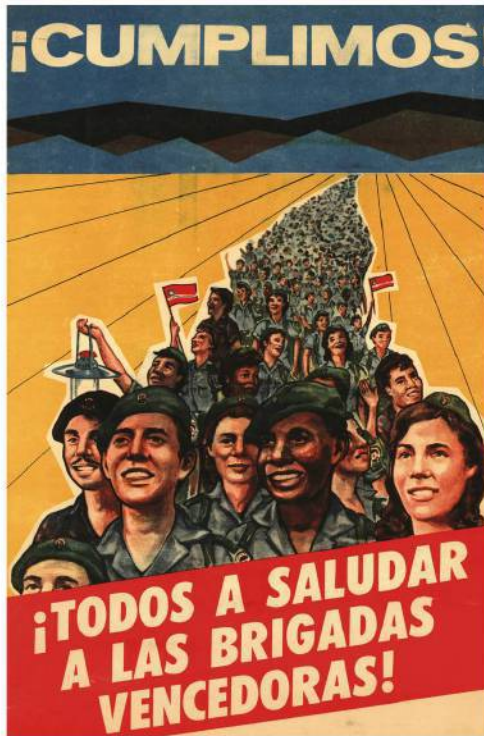
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### SOURCE C

'Long live Cuba. Free territory of America.'



## SOURCE D



This 1961 poster reads: 'We have accomplished it! Everyone to greet the victorious brigades!'

### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### QUESTIONS

- What, according to Source B, was the purpose of Castro's public addresses?
- Explain the message in Source C.
- What event does Source D make reference to? What message does it convey?

## Fidel Castro – an assessment

The question of why Fidel Castro was able to remain in power for so long is one that has fascinated historians. They agree in the fact that there is a combination of factors which have made Castro's rule the longest personal dictatorship in the history of Latin America, but they differ in the relative importance given to each.

Some studies emphasize Castro's appeal to Cuban history and to the belief that the revolution was the continuation of the war for Cuban independence. They analyze the use made of events such as the Sierra Maestra campaign or the defeat of the USA at the Bay of Pigs to appeal to nationalism and unite the country behind him. Other researchers claim that what helped Castro most were his policies to promote social justice and equality of opportunities, which guaranteed him a significant level of support to overcome the crises that followed. There are also historians who claim the figure of Castro himself is the truth of the matter. His charisma, political skills and his capacity to turn defeat into success are some of the qualities mentioned.

Study the following sources and answer the questions in the Student Study Section:

**SOURCE E**

*Yet Castro has also been an astute politician, playing world politics as easily as playing the domestic scene. Within Cuba he has often demonstrated a clever ability to read the popular mood, occasionally, as in 1970 in his criticisms of the disastrous zafra, acting as his own opposition, but also, in the early 1960s, recognising the popular demand for rapid social reform and mobilisation.*

From Antoni Kapcia, *Cuba in Revolution*, 2008

**SOURCE F**

*The main source of the inspiration and legitimacy of Castro's revolution, however, has been the Cuban nationalist tradition in its more radical version. Castro saw his movement as a culmination of a time-honoured struggle for independence and development stretching from the first revolt against colonial rule in 1868 to the student rebellion of the thirties. His own supreme self-confidence was based on the conviction that he embodied that struggle.*

From Sebastian Balfour, *Castro*, 1990

**SOURCE G**

*Nonetheless the Cuban government retained an undetermined level of popular support. For many citizens, breaking with the government meant breaking with their lives: they had grown up or were young adults during the 1960s when the social revolution engulfed Cuban society, and they had committed themselves to a new Cuba. Many others – particularly poor and non-white Cubans – remembered their plight before the revolution and feared a post-socialist Cuba that would disregard their welfare.*

From Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course and Legacy*, 1993

**● Examiner's hint**

If you would like to use different historiographical interpretations when answering a question, it is important that you analyze the ways in which they help you answer the specific question asked. Examiners will not be impressed by the fact that you can remember the names of historians, but might place your answer in a higher markband if you make use of their interpretations to offer different explanations.

**● Examiner's hint**

The first task is to determine to what extent you consider the Cuban economy a 'successful one'. If you consider that the economic successes some sectors of Cuban society experienced are not a sufficient explanation as to why Castro remained in power for so long, then you will need to explain the reasons for your position. Only after you have shown why a successful economic policy is not the explanation for Castro's maintenance in power, can you offer alternative explanations, such as social policies, propaganda, the use of the party, or any other elements you consider to be a more appropriate explanation for Castro's longevity in power.

**STUDENT STUDY SECTION****GROUP ACTIVITY**

**In groups discuss the views about why Castro maintained himself in power for so long. Look for examples that could be used to support each of the views presented above. Choose one of the views and present it to the other groups using relevant examples. Listen to their arguments for alternative explanations.**

**Can you think of other explanations as to why Fidel Castro was able to remain in power for so long? How would you illustrate your views?**

**Answer the following question, reading the examiner's hint opposite:**

**'A successful economic policy is the most important factor for a single-party ruler to remain in power.' To what extent does the rule of Fidel Castro support this view?**

**REVIEW SECTION**

**This chapter has examined Castro's rise to power and his rule of Cuba until 2000. It has focused on:**

- **The conditions and methods that led to Castro's rise to power.**
- **The methods used to consolidate power after the success of the Cuban revolution.**
- **The nature, implementation and effects of his social, political and economic policies.**
- **The different methods used by Castro to deal with opposition.**