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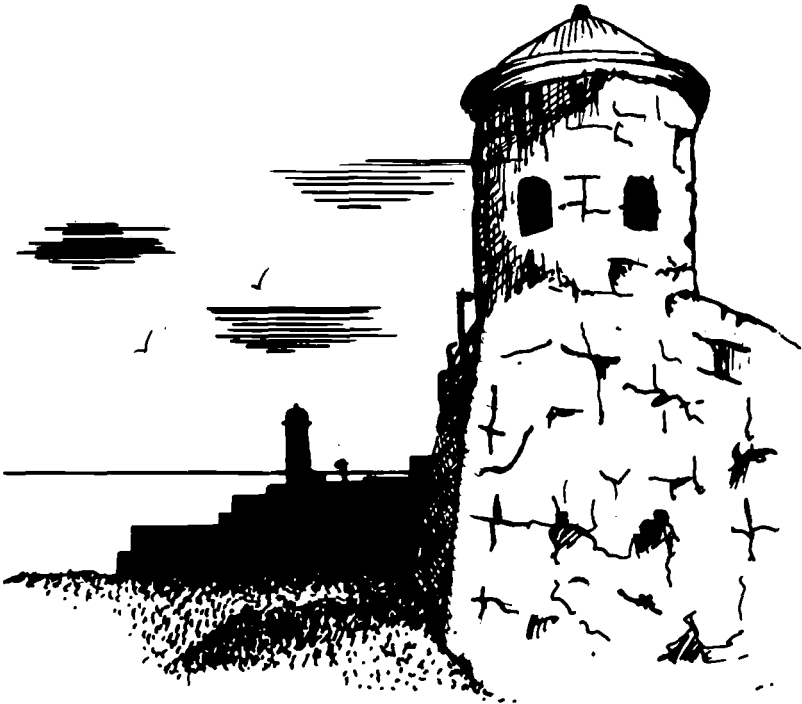
**Cuba**  
a country study



# Cuba

## a country study

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Edited by  
James D. Rudolph  
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March, 1985



On the cover: Representation of portion of Spanish colonial

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## Foreword

This volume is one of a continuing series of books prepared by Foreign Area Studies, The American University, under the Country Studies/Area Handbook Program. The last page of this book provides a listing of other published studies. Each book in the series deals with a particular foreign country, describing and analyzing its economic, national security, political, and social systems and institutions and examining the interrelationships of those systems and institutions and the ways that they are shaped by cultural factors. Each study is written by a multidisciplinary team of social scientists. The authors seek to provide a basic insight and understanding of the society under observation, striving for a dynamic rather than a static portrayal of it. The study focuses on historical antecedents and on the cultural, political, and socioeconomic characteristics that contribute to cohesion and cleavage within the society. Particular attention is given to the origins and traditions of the people who make up the society, their dominant beliefs and values, their community of interests and the issues on which they are divided, the nature and extent of their involvement with the national institutions, and their attitudes toward each other and toward the social system and political order within which they live.

The contents of the book represent the views, opinions, and findings of Foreign Area Studies and should not be construed as an official Department of the Army position, policy, or decision, unless so designated by other official documentation. The authors have sought to adhere to accepted standards of scholarly objectivity. Such corrections, additions, and suggestions for factual or other changes that readers may have will be welcomed for use in future new editions.

Director, Foreign Area Studies  
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## Preface

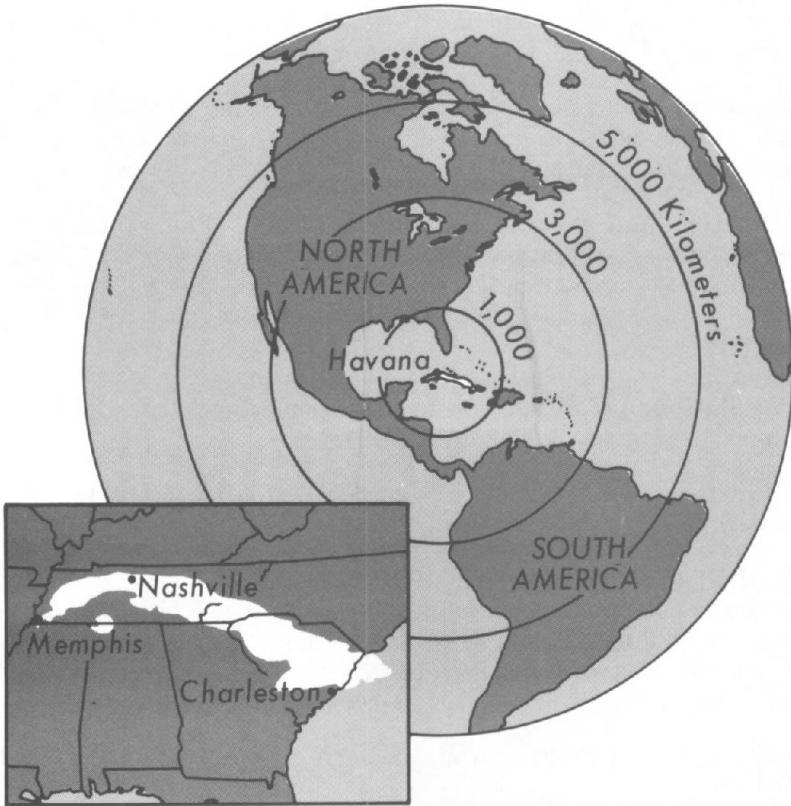
The reversal of processes of liberalization within the Cuban regime and of relaxation of long-standing tensions between Cuba and the United States became apparent in the mid-1980s. This necessitated a replacement for the 1976 *Area Handbook for Cuba*, which was reprinted in 1985 as *Cuba: A Country Study*. Like its predecessor, the current edition of *Cuba: A Country Study* is an attempt to treat in a compact and objective manner the dominant social, political, economic, and national security aspects of contemporary Cuban society. Sources of information included scholarly journals and monographs, official reports of governments and international organizations, foreign and domestic newspapers, numerous periodicals and newsletters, and interviews with individuals who have special competence in Cuban and Latin American affairs. Chapter bibliographies appear at the end of the book; brief comments on some of the more valuable sources appear at the end of each chapter. Measurements are given in the metric system, and a conversion table is provided to assist those readers who are unfamiliar with metric measurements (see table 1, Appendix). A Glossary follows the Bibliography.

Although there are many variations, Spanish surnames most often consist of two parts: a patrilineal name followed by a matrilineal name. In the instance of Fidel Castro Ruz, Castro is his father's name and Ruz is his mother's maiden name. In nonformal use Cubans very often drop the matrilineal name. Thus, after the first mention the president is referred to simply as Castro. (His brother is referred to as Raúl Castro on second mention in order to avoid confusion.) The patrilineal name is listed in the Index and the Bibliography for filing purposes.

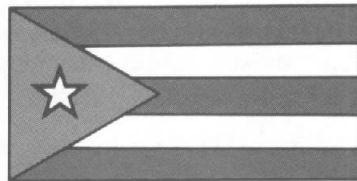
Some literature on Cuba refers to the Cuban Revolution as the guerrilla struggle that culminated in the fall of Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar during the last days of 1958 and the first days of 1959. In this book the Cuban Revolution refers to a historical process that began on January 1, 1959, and continues into the present. This definition, as well as the practice of capitalizing "Revolution" in this context, conforms with official Cuban government practice and with much scholarly literature.



## Country Profile



### Country



**Formal Name:** Cuba (República de Cuba).

**Short Form:** Cuba.

**Term for Citizens:** Cubans.

**Capital:** Havana (called La Habana in Cuba).

**Flag:** Vertical bands of blue and white; red triangle with white star on staff side.

## Geography

**Size:** Formation of some 3,715 islands, islets, and keys comprising combined area of 110,860 square kilometers.

**Topography:** Least mountainous of Greater Antilles. Three mountainous zones isolated and separated by extensive plains and flatlands that cover almost two-thirds of main island surface.

**Climate:** Annual mean temperature 25.5°C; little variation between January, coldest month, and August, warmest month. Different kinds of storms, especially hurricanes, from June to November.

## Society

**Population:** Mid-1985 estimated population 10.1 million. Annual growth rate 1.1 percent.

**Education and Literacy:** Education free at all levels. In 1985 official literacy rate 98 percent.

**Health and Welfare:** In 1985 Cuba one of Western Hemisphere nations best served by health care and general welfare services and facilities. Health system free. In 1984 life expectancy 74. Infant mortality 16 deaths per 1,000 live births. Leading causes of death accidents, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and diabetes.

**Language:** Spanish, official language, spoken by all. No local dialects.

**Ethnic Groups:** White society with large, fully integrated black community. Mixture of Hispanic (white), African (black), and mulatto (mixed race). Indigenous population decimated in colonial period (mainly by disease).

**Religion:** Predominantly nonreligious country. Roman Catholicism professed by 32 percent of population; other Christian denominations, 10 percent.

## Economy

**Global Social Product (GSP):** In 1983 equivalent to US \$27.9 billion (in constant 1981 prices), approximately US\$2,825 per capita. Growth of economy linked closely to production and export of sugar and to world market price for sugar, which fell from 1981 to 1985.

**Agriculture:** Contributed 14 percent of GSP in 1983. Main crops for domestic consumption: corn, beans, rice, potatoes, and

cassava. Leading agricultural exports: sugar, citrus fruits, tobacco, and coffee.

**Industry:** Contributed 42 percent of GSP in 1983. Major industries: sugar milling, nickel milling, electric power, petroleum refining, food processing, cement, light consumer products, and industrial products.

**Exports:** US\$6.4 billion in 1983. Main exports: sugar, nickel, citrus fruits, shellfish, and tobacco.

**Imports:** US\$7.2 billion in 1983. Main imports: petroleum, capital equipment, industrial raw materials, and foodstuffs.

**Major trade partners:** Principal export markets: Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China, Canada, Japan, and Spain. Principal import markets: Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China, Canada, Spain, Japan, France, and Argentina.

**Currency:** Peso, divided into 100 centavos, is unit of currency; symbol is dollar sign.

**Exchange Rate:** From 1914 to 1971 peso exchanged at parity with United States dollar. Since early 1960s peso not freely exchanged in international market. Value of peso tied to Soviet ruble. Value of ruble and peso raised in early 1970s as dollar was devalued. Since 1980 value of ruble and peso lowered as dollar appreciated. Official exchange rate set at US\$1.40 per peso in 1980; US\$1.28 in 1981; US\$1.20 in 1982; US\$1.16 in 1983; and US\$1.13 in 1984.

## **Government and Politics**

**Government:** 1976 Constitution in force in 1985. Unitary system with municipal and provincial governments subordinate to national government in all matters. At national level, formally a parliamentary system with members of Council of State and Council of Ministers; People's Supreme Court elected by relatively weak National Assembly of People's Power. Judiciary subject to jurisdiction of Council of Ministers. Provincial and municipal governments constructed similar to national government. Central government power concentrated in Council of State and Executive Committee of Council of Ministers.

**Politics:** Authoritarian system governed by some 22 individuals occupying multiple positions on policymaking bodies. Major figure Fidel Castro Ruz, president of Council of State and Council of Ministers and commander in chief of Revolutionary Armed Forces. Major political organization Communist Party of Cuba. Large



number of mass organizations provide major mechanism for popular participation in policy implementation. Elections held at regular intervals. Municipal assemblies elected directly; provincial assemblies and National Assembly elected indirectly. No legal opposition organizations.

**Foreign Relations:** Close ally of Soviet Union, but exercises limited independence within basic alliance. Active military and development aid programs with many countries in Africa and Caribbean Basin. Major attention devoted to United States; diplomatic relations severed in 1961. Interest sections established in Washington and Havana in 1977.

**International Agreements and Memberships:** Member of United Nations and specialized agencies, Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon), and Nonaligned Movement, Organization of American States participation suspended in 1962. Numerous economic and cultural agreements with Soviet Union and East European countries.

## **National Security**

**Armed Forces:** Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces had total strength in 1985 of between 151,000 and 163,500 regular, active-duty personnel: Revolutionary Army, 125,000 to 130,000; Antiaircraft Defense and Revolutionary Air Force 16,000 to 20,000; and Revolutionary Navy, 10,000 to 13,500. Reserve forces, able to be mobilized on two to four hours' notice, numbered between 135,000 and 190,000. Paramilitary Youth Labor Army numbered approximately 100,000. Civilians in Territorial Troops Militia and Civil Defense numbered 1.2 million and 100,000, respectively.

**Military Units:** Personnel in Revolutionary Army divided among three regional armies, each assigned varying numbers of army corps. Each army corps composed of three infantry divisions. Each regional army had one armored division and one mechanized division. Antiaircraft Defense and Revolutionary Air Force personnel, under separate command, divided among three regional air zones. Air force included fighter-ground attack squadrons, interceptor squadrons, fighter-bomber squadrons, transport squadrons, helicopter squadrons, and a helicopter gunship squadron. Revolutionary Navy personnel also under separate command and divided among three territorial flotillas. Seagoing units included a submarine division, a missile boat flotilla, a torpedo boat flotilla, a submarine chaser flotilla, and a minesweeper division.

**Internal Security:** Key positions in Ministry of Interior—government body responsible for internal security—filled by military officers in 1985. National Revolutionary Police, Department of State Security, and General Directorate of Intelligence under Ministry of Interior. Border Guard Troops and Special Troops were military forces only nominally controlled by ministry.



Figure 1. Administrative Divisions, 1985

## Introduction

CUBA—THE LARGEST ISLAND NATION of the Greater Antilles archipelago, strategically located at the northwestern limit of the Caribbean Sea and the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico—was inhabited by some 10 million persons in 1985. One could go little further in a description of Cuba without reference to its socialist revolution, the most thorough and radical in twentieth-century Latin America, which had profoundly altered nearly every aspect of life on the island during the 26 years since its triumph on January 1, 1959.

At that time few persons had expected the ragtag revolutionaries led by Fidel Castro Ruz to pursue such a thoroughgoing overhaul of the nation's social, economic, and political structures. Castro had been known to favor social reform, but his 26th of July Movement had detailed neither a policy program nor an ideological affinity other than a vague left-of-center nationalism. During its first three years in power, however, the revolutionary government nationalized all the island's major industrial and commercial enterprises, as well as its largest landholdings, thus ending the preponderant roles long played by local elites and United States-based private concerns in the Cuban economy. Also by the end of 1961, diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union had blossomed, and Castro had declared the socialist nature of the Cuban Revolution and his own adherence to Marxist-Leninist ideology.

Nor was it expected during those early years that the revolutionary experiment would be allowed to survive and mature into a middle-aged, institutionalized system of governance. Its antecedents in Cuban history—the nationalism of José Martí and the rest of the generation of 1895 and the radicalism of the generation of 1933—had been short-lived owing in large part to repeated United States intervention in Cuban political affairs during the first third of the twentieth century (see *Cuba Between Empires*; *The Republic*, ch. 1). Between 1960 and 1965 the United States, indeed, made numerous attempts to subvert, both economically and militarily, Cuba's revolutionary experiment. These modern versions of

intervention failed, however. Their unintended effect was to contribute to the consolidation of power by the revolutionary leadership and to increase its ability to mobilize the island's population in defense of the Revolution, which over the years became increasingly identified with the fatherland itself. By 1985 the existence of a Marxist-Leninist state in the Western Hemisphere, less than 150 kilometers from the southern tip of Florida, was an established fact that was highly unlikely to be reversed short of a major war of possibly cataclysmic proportions. The status quo ante was unknown to the majority of Cubans—those born since 1959—and was an ever more faded memory to the island's older inhabitants.

In 1985 Fidel Castro was 58 years old and had ruled longer than any Latin American chief of state except Paraguay's Alfredo Stroessner. Whether revered or vilified, Castro had gained legendary stature throughout the Western Hemisphere, where he had to be placed among the most influential leaders of the second half of the twentieth century. Within Cuba his political legitimacy stemmed from his leadership of the military struggle against Fulgencio Batista in the 1950s, from his personal charisma, and from his embodiment of the ideals and accomplishments of the Revolution, which were sources of immense national pride. The wide scope of Castro's leadership was evident in his numerous official titles, which included president of both the Council of Ministers and the Council of State, commander in chief of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias—FAR), and first secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba (Partido Comunista de Cuba—PCC).

Of course, public debate over the legitimacy of Castro's leadership role and other fundamental aspects of the revolutionary process was forbidden within a political system that allowed no organized opposition to the PCC, gave the government absolute control over the mass media, and jailed and/or exiled dissidents. Although the 1976 Constitution institutionalized a system of government in which authority is dispersed among a large number of governing bodies, real political power was highly concentrated in Castro and a handful of his subordinates. After a large-scale purge in late 1979 and early 1980 in response to political and economic difficulties, this political elite consisted of 22 individuals, almost all of whom were veterans of the guerrilla struggle of the 1950s, who held multiple key decisionmaking positions within the government and the PCC. Second in command and clearly Cas-

tro's heir apparent was his brother Raúl, who was first vice president of the Council of Ministers and the Council of State, Minister of the FAR, and second secretary of the PCC (see National-level Politics, ch. 4).

Popular participation in the governmental process was institutionalized in the 1976 Constitution through the creation of the Organs for People's Power, which were elected directly at the local level and indirectly at the provincial and national levels. Public policy was debated, and citizen's complaints were registered within these bodies, as well as within the various mass organizations, thus giving a large percentage of the Cuban citizenry a voice in issues that affect their daily lives. But while these quasi-representative bodies often brought about changes in legislative details, they had virtually no power to change the way in which the system itself functioned.

The institutionalization of the Revolution, which permeated Cuban politics in the 1970s, had a profound effect on two of the nation's most powerful institutional bodies: the FAR and the PCC. Founded in 1965, the modern-day PCC finally held its first party congress in 1975. Its membership grew from only 55,000 in 1969 to 434,000 in 1980 and no doubt would be much higher by the time of the party's third congress initially scheduled for December 1985 but postponed until February 1986. The armed forces grew much more slowly but, more important, were reorganized in 1973 and thereafter underwent a professionalization along Soviet lines while dropping a number of their former nonmilitary roles. Throughout this period of impressive institution building, however, there was very little circulation of political and military elites; the tiny revolutionary family—the generation of the 1950s led by Fidel Castro—retained firm control of both the armed forces and the PCC. Hence, while the trappings of an institutionalized Marxist-Leninist system of government were in place in 1985, beneath the surface lay what, in many respects, was a classic case of a traditional Latin American regime: rule by an entrenched oligarchy led by a president-for-life who has dictatorial powers.

The revolutionary regime's greatest boast—after the longevity of its survival—was its provision of social services. It held a conscious bias in favor of the provision of services to rural residents, both to rectify their relative deprivation in prerevolutionary days and to discourage further migration into overcrowded urban areas. Indicators of Cuban standards

in health and education had been quite high prior to the Revolution, but the revolutionary government was faced early with the emigration of many of the island's skilled professionals in these fields. Large-scale efforts to build facilities and train new health and education personnel were subsequently undertaken, however, and by the early 1980s Cuba's standards in these areas far surpassed those of the 1950s.

The Cuban government measured literacy at 98 percent in 1985, although its standard for this measurement was considered by many foreign observers to be below the United Nations standard accepted by most nations. The number of students in postsecondary (or higher) education increased dramatically to some 200,000 by the mid-1980s. Critics argued, however, that the emphasis placed on technical training and on Marxist ideological content detracted from the accomplishments of the Revolution in the areas of education (see Education, ch. 2).

With respect to measurements of the health of Cuban society, infant mortality (16 per 1,000 live births) was among the lowest in Latin America; and life expectancy (73 years) was the highest in the region. These gains were largely the result of government programs in health care and other areas, such as subsidized food, clothing, and housing, that were designed to meet the basic needs of the poorest members of society. Although social stratification still existed in Cuba, it was far less pronounced than previously. Dire poverty, pervasive in prerevolutionary times, had been eliminated (see Health and Welfare, ch. 2).

Cuba's relatively homogeneous social structure was also owing in part to the emigration of many of the island's upper- and middle-class inhabitants that began in 1959. The 125,000 Cubans who took part in the 1980 exodus from the port of Mariel, however, were much more representative, both socioeconomically and racially, of Cuban society as a whole than were previous emigrants. After the Mariel boatlift it was estimated that a total of some 1 million Cubans had left the island permanently since 1959. As many as 800,000 of these had made the United States their new home. Although the departure of fully one-tenth of the island's population over a 22-year period was a profound embarrassment to the revolutionary regime, emigration also contributed to a blessedly low rate of population growth and, more important, provided the regime a safety valve for the exportation of its political opposition.

The Revolution's achievements in health and education were in stark contrast to the failure of the state-owned economy either to register sustained patterns of growth over time or to overcome historical patterns of dependency (see *Growth and Structure of the Economy*, ch. 3). In 1985 Cuba was still a poor country, subject to the vagaries of a persistent monoculture in sugar, which accounted for about 80 percent (the same percentage as in prerevolutionary days) of its export earnings and was still dependent on one trading partner (the Soviet Union rather than the United States) for the vast majority of its foreign commerce. Although Cuba had witnessed some success in diversifying its economic life away from the production of sugarcane, the exportation of sugar remained the backbone of the national economy. Two-thirds of sugar exports were committed to fellow members of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon—see Glossary) under long-term contracts. The one-third sold on the world market provided Cuba with about half its total earnings of hard currency, which were necessary to obtain vital imports (see *Trade*, ch. 3).

The importance of sugar sales to non-Comecon nations was evidenced by the fact that only during a period of extraordinarily high world market prices for sugar—the early 1970s—was Cuba able to sustain high rates of growth. As sugar prices fell from a high of about US\$0.30 per pound in 1974 to less than US\$0.04 per pound in early 1985, Cuba's economic growth became uneven, its dependency on the Soviet Union deepened, and it grew ever more in debt to foreign creditors. By 1985 it was estimated that Cuba owed US\$3.5 billion to Western creditors and the equivalent of US\$9 billion to the Soviet Union. The foreign currency "squeeze" created by these huge debts led the government to undertake an austerity campaign in 1985 aimed at increasing exports at the cost of domestic consumption.

There was a bright side to developments within Cuba's sugar industry. The mechanization of nearly two-thirds of the sugarcane harvest by the early 1980s was itself revolutionary, saving Cuban *guajiros* (sugar workers) untold millions of hours of backbreaking labor. In addition, Cuba's receipt from Comecon of what the government liked to call a "fair price" for its sugar (a floor price of US\$0.30 per pound had been in effect since 1976) amounted to a sizable subsidy at a time when world market prices for sugar were expected to remain low. Without this subsidy, which together with Soviet devel-



opmental aid and funds gained from Cuba's resale of the unused portion of its quota of oil imports from the Soviet Union was estimated to total over US\$4 billion in 1984, the Cuban economy would have experienced a far more serious crisis.

Nevertheless, Cuba's growing dependency in its foreign trade on Comecon nations (accounting for 87 percent of Cuba's total trade in 1984 as opposed to 60 percent in the early 1970s) left it vulnerable to a variety of pressures. The deep-seated economic problems that became evident in the Soviet Union in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as a result, did not augur well for Cuba. In 1984 and 1985, by some accounts, the Soviet Union denied Cuban requests to increase its level of aid and instead insisted that its Caribbean client work harder to meet its export obligations within Comecon. Although the level of Soviet aid had increased markedly over the previous decade, it appeared in the mid-1980s that Cuba may have reached the limit of Soviet largesse.

Another factor behind Cuba's economic difficulties was low labor productivity, a problem that was endemic to a socialist economy in which a job was virtually guaranteed and little incentive to work hard was provided (see Labor, ch. 3). The government undertook a number of measures during the late 1970s and early 1980s to combat the problem of productivity. Among these were an increase in wage differentials, new laws that made it easier to fire substandard workers, the encouragement of self-employed moonlighting by those with highly valued service skills, the establishment of "free markets" for the sale of agricultural surpluses, and an increased availability of a variety of consumer goods at prices well above those for rationed basic commodities. The government argued that these constituted pragmatic solutions to labor productivity problems that were not inconsistent with its ongoing commitment to the development of a socialist economy. Among their consequences, however, were an increase in social stratification and the emergence of unemployment on the island.

The greatest impact of the Cuban Revolution was in the arena of foreign affairs. By playing a key role in the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, building a formidable military force, and undertaking a messianic mission to champion revolutionary causes in the Third World, Cuba became an important actor on the world stage and had an influence disproportionate to the size of its terri-

tory, population, and economy. Cuba's dogged pursuit of "proletarian internationalism" (a policy mandated in the 1976 Constitution) whereby thousands of Cuban personnel—both civilian and military—were sent to assist friendly nations overseas and thousands of students from these nations studied in Cuba was a policy suitable for a big power, not a Caribbean island of 10 million persons. Cuba's military power, including its 160,000-strong professional army and 1.2 million-member armed civilian militia, both projected its influence overseas and played a primary role in fulfilling the regime's principal foreign policy objective—survival against external attack. Although it was not a member of the Warsaw Pact or party to a mutual defense treaty with the Soviet Union, Cuba developed a close military and economic relationship with the Soviets that enabled it to pursue policies, in violation of the logic of both history and geography, that were fundamentally contrary to the interests of the United States.

Relations between revolutionary Cuba and the United States have been characterized by varying degrees of hostility (see Relations with the United States, ch. 4). Hopes of a rapprochement during the mid-1970s were dashed by large-scale Cuban military interventions in support of revolutionary governments in Angola and Ethiopia. Nevertheless, interest sections, which opened lines of communications, though not diplomatic relations (closed since 1961), were established in one another's capitals in 1977. The 1980s dawned ominously as the Mariel boatlift dramatically increased Cuban-United States tensions, and Cuba was vehemently denounced during the United States presidential campaign as the prime instigator of the widening Central American revolution.

Tensions rose to a near-fever pitch during 1981 and 1982 as the newly inaugurated administration of Ronald Reagan, determined to douse Central American revolutionary fire and convinced that Cuba was providing the matches, threatened on numerous occasions to take actions against Cuba if it did not halt its flow of arms to the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and to guerrillas in El Salvador and Guatemala. Frequent United States military exercises in Central America and the Caribbean and the October 1983 United States military action in Grenada, during which United States and revolutionary Cuban troops fought one another for the first time ever, demonstrated that the Reagan administration was willing to back up its threats with the use of its military

firepower in order to reverse Cuba's expanding role in the Caribbean Basin.

Grenada was only the most spectacular of a number of setbacks in Cuba's relations with Latin American countries during the early 1980s. In the wake of Mariel its relations had soured with Peru, Venezuela, Costa Rica, and Ecuador over incidents involving right of asylum and with Colombia over the issue of Cuban support for guerrilla forces in the country. Three of Castro's closest friends had either been defeated electorally (Jamaica's Michael Manley in October 1980), had died suddenly (Panama's Omar Torrijos in July 1981), or had been overthrown and executed (Grenada's Maurice Bishop in October 1983). In the wake of the United States intervention in Grenada, Suriname downgraded its relations with Cuba and sent home more than 100 Cuban advisers and diplomats.

This growing isolation in the hemisphere was offset, however, by Cuba's staunch support of Argentina during the South Atlantic War of 1982. Argentina soon surpassed Mexico as Cuba's largest regional trading partner, and Cuban relations with other South American countries, notably Ecuador and Bolivia, improved dramatically. In mid-1985 Uruguay, Peru, and Brazil were also said to be close to reestablishing diplomatic relations with Cuba after long hiatuses. United States officials expressed concern with these developments in light of the fundamental disparity of Cuban and United States interests in the region. As if to underscore this disparity, Castro issued a call in early 1985 for the creation of a multilateral debtors' cartel among the financially strapped Latin American debtor nations. A sizable portion of their debt burden—totaling some US\$350 billion at that time—was owed to private United States banks.

Cuba and the United States were also at odds in Africa, where Cuba's "internationalist" policies were at their most active. The major source of dispute was the continued presence of 25,000 to 30,000 Cuban troops in Angola a decade after their initial arrival in 1975 (see *The Cuban Military Abroad*, ch. 5). During the early 1980s there was apparent progress made in discussions among officials of the United States, South Africa, and Angola (which has requested the Cuban troops to help it defend against South African incursions) that were designed to lead to a gradual withdrawal of the estimated 20,000 Cuban military personnel south of the thirteenth parallel. Progress was halted, at least temporarily,

after the interception of a squad of South African soldiers in Angola's northern Cabinda Province in May 1985, barely a month after South Africa had pledged that all its troops had been withdrawn from Angola. Castro subsequently declared the United States unfit as a mediator and pledged to maintain or increase Cuba's military presence in Angola.

The inauguration of the United States Information Agency-sponsored Radio Martí, also in May 1985, likewise halted progress in another area of United States-Cuban relations. The Spanish-language broadcasts that were beamed daily from Florida to Cuba offended the Cuban government less for the mildly anti-Castro programming, officials said, than for the use of Cuba's most revered patriot in the name of the radio station. Castro immediately suspended a December 1984 bilateral agreement that had allowed the return to Cuba of nearly 3,000 "undesirables" from the Mariel boatlift, the emigration of some of 3,000 Cubans—ex-political prisoners and their families—to the United States, and the resumption of regular emigration of up to 20,000 Cubans annually to the United States. Soon afterward the United States stopped processing Cuban visa applications.

Although the United States objected to Cuba's support of revolutionaries in Latin America and to its military role in Africa, it was Cuba's relationship with the Soviet Union that it found most objectionable. Although the Cubans and the Soviets had often been at odds during the early years of the Revolution (particularly over the 1962 Cuban missile crisis), Cuba's endorsement of the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia marked the beginning of a period, which continued into the mid-1980s, of much closer Cuban-Soviet cooperation. There was substantial evidence, nevertheless, that Cuba did not merely become a surrogate of the Soviet Union. It was particularly in Latin American and African affairs that Cuba often initiated what only later became Soviet policy (see Cuba and the Soviet Union, ch. 4).

Occasionally, Cuban disagreements with Soviet foreign policy were apparent, for example, over the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the failure of the Soviets to assist Cuban forces on Grenada in October 1983, and what Cuba viewed as the Soviets' weak response to Reagan administration pressures on Nicaragua. Disagreements were not voiced publicly but were inferred by foreign observers who noted such things as the absence of Castro at the June 1984 Comecon summit

in Moscow and at the March 1985 funeral of Soviet president Konstantin Chernenko.

As distasteful as it was to the United States, the Cuban-Soviet relationship remained essentially a solid one that, despite occasional disagreements, was based on mutual need. The Cuban regime needed ongoing Soviet economic and military aid for its very survival. The Soviets, in turn, needed Cuba as a vital link with Africa and the Caribbean Basin. Perhaps what was most threatening to the United States was that Cuba provided the Soviets with a powerful political message that a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist regime, even in a tiny nation with close geographic and historical ties to the United States, can endure over time and, even if only partially successful, can fulfill many of the historical aspirations and material needs of its citizens.

July 5, 1985

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The third party congress of the PCC, held in Havana February 4-7, 1986, marked significant, if not unexpected, changes in the personnel within the party leadership. Although Fidel and Raúl Castro were confirmed as the first and second secretaries of the PCC, respectively, four of the 14 full members and eight of the 10 alternate members of the Political Bureau were replaced. The new full members were Abelardo Colomé, one of Raúl's main deputies within the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces; Vilma Espín Guillois, Raúl's wife and head of the Federation of Cuban Women; Esteban Lazo, a black man and secretary of the PCC in Matanzas Province; and Roberto Veiga Menéndez, the secretary general of the Federation of Cuban Workers. They replaced four long-time party activists: Guillermo García Frías, Ramiro Valdés Menéndez (who had also lost his post as minister of interior to his deputy, José Abrahantes Fernández, in December 1985), Sergio del Valle Jiménez, and Blas Roca (Francisco Calderío). Fully one-third of the 221-member Central Committee was also replaced.

Although these changes were officially explained as a "necessary renovation" intended to bring more youth, women, and blacks into the top party leadership, foreign observers saw them as a clear effort to consolidate Raúl Cas-

tro's position as eventual successor to his brother by removing potential rivals and installing his allies into the party's most important organ. A new five-year plan was also launched at the party congress, and once again Fidel Castro (who appeared to lack his usual boundless vigor according to some observers) attacked the inefficiencies in the Cuban economy and bureaucracy, while calling for a diversification away from the export of sugar and a reduction of imports in order to improve the nation's external accounts.

James D. Rudolph

March 3, 1986



## Chapter 1. Historical Setting



*San Martín*



*José Martí and his signature*

THE NEW WORLD was discovered as a result of the great scientific achievements and the expansionist drive of late fifteenth-century Europe. The conquest and settlement of the new domains were the work of zealous missionaries and Europeans searching for wealth and prestige.

Cuba's historical development stemmed from its geographical location in the Caribbean, and the island became Europe's jumping-off point to the New World. During the Age of Discovery, Cuba was a way station for the preparation of the expeditions to the mainland, and later it became a resupply and marshaling port for the great transatlantic fleets carrying gold and silver bullion back to Spain. During the colonial period it became the prey of enemy pirates and as Havana grew up as a port city, it suffered several destructive attacks by pirates. Cuba developed in response to the needs of Spain and was considered the crown's prize possession.

Changes in the world's balance of power were reflected in Cuba. Spain's perception of Cuba's strategic importance was later shared by the United States. Cuba's location in the Caribbean, some 150 kilometers south of Florida's Key West, first attracted the attention of the chief naval power in the Western Hemisphere in the late nineteenth century. The United States regarded the island as a vantage point from which to monitor its growing interests in the Caribbean Basin, and in 1903 it established a permanent naval base at Guantanamo Bay.

Good soil was a determining factor in Cuba's economic development. Tobacco was indigenous to Cuba, and in time it became widely popular in European society. Sugarcane, another tropical crop, became the mainstay of the island's economy in the nineteenth century and continued to pervade all aspects of Cuban life into the 1980s. Sugar determined the land tenure system of large plantations, the class structure, and the racial composition of Cuban society. It also created a dependent economy that rested upon the vagaries of the international sugar market.

The major cleavages within Cuban society were inherited from the colonial period. Colonial society was broken down between *peninsulares* (Spanish-born whites) and *criollos* (Cuban born whites). Cubans had to accept being governed by foreigners and being second-class citizens in their own land. Spanish domination lasted longer in Cuba than in any of Spain's other overseas possessions. When independence was finally achieved in 1902, it was tempered by the often-exercised power of intervention by the United States under the terms of the Platt Amendment until it was abrogated in 1934. After the victory of the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the

Soviet Union replaced the United States as the dominant foreign influence.

During the twentieth century Cuba's attempts at self-government failed because of the lack of democratic institutions and the prevailing colonial mentality of Cuban politicians. The politico-economic life of Cuba was forever dependent on a powerful planter class and on foreign support, thus generating a lopsided society of privileges. However, a strong nationalist sentiment developed over the years of United States intervention in 1906-09, 1912, and 1917. The inspiration for this wave of nationalism came from José Julian Martí y Pérez, the nineteenth-century "Apostle of Cuban Independence," whose ideas were to have a lasting impact on Cuban revolutionaries. By 1933 Cubans were ready for revolutionary changes after eight years of Gerardo Machado y Morales' dictatorship. But the revolution of 1933 was curtailed by the conservatives, the foreign interest groups, and a shrewd army sergeant, Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar, who aborted the democratic process in Cuba.

For 25 years of Batista's effective rule, Cuba was a paradise for foreigners and their business interests. However, economic prosperity was not sufficient to placate revolutionary ideals, which were exacerbated by the unfulfilled political expectations of a large sector of Cuban society. The country was fertile ground for political activism despite Batista's repressive politico-military machinery. Opposition to Batista was widespread, especially in Havana. Students centered at the University of Havana were among the most vocal groups against Batista; Fidel Castro Ruz was among them.

Batista's regime began to collapse after the unsuccessful revolutionary attempt of 1956, when Castro and his fellow revolutionaries landed in the province of Oriente at the southeastern tip of the islands. For then on, the dictatorship kept losing ground to the opposition, and finally, on New Year's Day 1959 Batista fled into exile. The revolutionaries came down from the Sierra Maestra and began a complete restructuring of Cuban society.

Since 1959 the revolutionary government has committed itself to the improvement of life for all Cubans. Education, health, and social welfare were among the first priorities of the Revolution, which created opportunities for all Cubans. In 1961 a national campaign claimed to have reduced illiteracy to 3.9 percent. At about the same time, the government set out to control infectious diseases and to improve the overall quality of medical services in the country. In this period education continued to be an integral part of the revolutionary program that aimed at providing technical training and ideological orthodoxy to the Cuban masses. In the

1980s Cuba ranked among the top Latin American countries in terms of health services dispensed to the population. In other areas, such as housing and income distribution, Cuba still strived to fulfill its goals.

Cuba in the 1980s was an example of a society still struggling for self-determination. After more than 26 years of revolutionary government, Cuba faced problems common to a monoculture export economy, despite the preferential trade conditions assured by the Soviet Union. Although control of its economic life still followed the pattern of foreign dependence established during colonial times, Cuban politics was the realm of the Cuban revolutionary elite led by Castro. In spite of the inherent pressures of such dependency, Cuba maintained an independent political stance in regard to the Soviet Union, unlike many other Soviet allies. Cuba's political independence, however, had not produced a more representative pattern of political freedom at home.

The presence of the United States across the sea from western Cuba has remained a constant reminder of past intervention. In the 1980s it continued to permeate the psychology of the Cuban leadership, and the threat of another United States attempt to draw Cubans like a magnet to Castro, ready to defend the fatherland at all costs.

## **The Age of Discovery**

The year 1492 marked the end of the Wars of Reconquest in the Iberian Peninsula. After almost eight centuries of Moorish occupation, the fall of Granada represented the beginning of an era of Iberian expansion into new frontiers. The men of the Age of Discovery wanted to circumvent the Ottoman Empire and to establish new trade routes to the Far East. In this spirit Christopher Columbus (whose Italian name was Cristoforo Colombo, also known as Cristóbal Colón in Spanish) set sail to the West on a voyage that would bring about the conquest of new domains for the Spanish crown. When Columbus reached the island of Hispaniola in that same year of 1492, he believed he had landed somewhere in Asia (Indies); because of that initial mistake, the new lands became known as the Indies, and its inhabitants as Indians. Spiritual and material aspirations lured the early sixteenth-century explorers, who sought to promote the conversion of all peoples to the Catholic faith, to conquer new domains for the Spanish monarchs, and to acquire wealth and prestige for themselves.

The dominant note in Spanish society at the time of the Reconquest and during the Age of Discovery was religion. The Roman Catholic Church and the Spanish crown supported each other; in Spanish America the church was under the direct control of the crown, except in religious matters. Papal concessions in the early sixteenth century made the king the virtual head of the church in the New World through the Patronato Real (Royal Patronage), which gave the crown control over the appointment of clerics and the establishment of religious houses for charity and instruction. The secular clergy and the religious orders (Franciscans, Dominicans, and Jesuits) went to the New World as another branch of the royal administration and as such maintained an extreme royalist stance for most of the colonial period.

### **Pre-Columbian Cuba**

Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, Cuba had been inhabited by three native groups: the Cyboneys, the Guanahacabibes, and the Taínos. The first two were nomadic societies of hunters and gatherers who used natural materials, such as unpolished stones, seashells, and fish bones, for tools. The third group, the Taínos, inhabited the islands of Cuba and Hispaniola. They were more advanced than the other two native societies but still could not be compared with the high civilizations of the Mayas, Incas, and Aztecs on the mainland of the New World.

The Taínos had a more sedentary social organization. Besides performing the traditional activities of fishermen and hunters, they introduced agriculture to the island. They cultivated several staples, including maize, beans, squash, peanuts, yucca, and tobacco, and they used polished stones and carved wooden artifacts for tools. Their houses called *bohíos*, were made out of cane or bamboo and were grouped in villages. They were ruled by caciques or *behiques*, whose functions comprised those of priests, doctors, and chiefs. Tobacco was used for religious, medicinal, and ceremonial purposes (see Mechanisms for Social Mobility, ch. 2).

### **Discovery and Occupation**

The discovery of the Americas and of the island of Cuba were closely related. During his first voyage to the New World, and while exploring the Bahamas, Columbus heard of a great island the natives called Cuba, and on October 29, 1492; he landed there (see fig. 1). Still convinced that he had arrived at the Asian shores, Co-

lumbus believed that Cuba was a misnomer for Cipango, as Japan was sometimes known. He named the land Juana after Prince Juan, heir to the Spanish throne. After Juan's death it was renamed Fernandina, but the native designation of Cuba persisted.

Upon arrival Columbus sent Spanish scouts to contact the people in the area, and on their return the scouts described the natives as very peaceful. The Europeans departed and left the islanders undisturbed. By 1510 Spain decided to investigate the possibility of exploring for gold on the island, and the governor general of Hispaniola, Diego Columbus (son of the discoverer) commissioned Diego Velásquez, a wealthy planter in Hispaniola, to outfit an expedition. In 1511 Velásquez sailed from Hispaniola to conquer and colonize Cuba. Among the adventurers in that expedition was Hernán Cortés, who later conquered Mexico.

Velásquez' expeditionary force consisted of three or four ships and about 300 men-at-arms who brought with them some horses and dogs. When he arrived in Cuba, Velásquez founded the island's first Spanish settlement, at Baracoa. Meanwhile, reports from the Indians of Hispaniola reached Cuba. Hatuey, a Taíno chief and a refugee, organized a resistance against the white men who had already inflicted much suffering on his people in Hispaniola. Hatuey's strategy against the Spaniards was to attack and then disperse to the hills, where the Indians would regroup for the next attack. In spite of this, Spanish military superiority was much too strong, and in the end the Indians capitulated. According to legend, Hatuey was punished by the Spaniards and sent to be burned at the stake. At that moment a priest offered him spiritual comfort, but Hatuey refused to have anything to do with a god that protected cruelty against the Indians. Hatuey's valiant stance against the invaders of his adopted land procured for him a special place in history as the first martyr in the struggle for Cuban independence.

Following pacification of the island in 1513, Velásquez started the effective colonization of Cuba. By 1515 seven settlements had been established; Baracoa (the center of colonial administration), Bayamo, Santiago de Cuba, Puerto Príncipe (present-day Camagüey), Sancti Spíritus, Trinidad, and La Habana (hereafter called Havana). The next step was to organize the remaining Indians into a labor force to work the mines, cultivate the soil, tend the cattle, and perform other tasks as servants and porters for the Spaniards.

## The Colonial Period

### Encomienda and Repartimiento

Once the Indians had capitulated, Velásquez set out to organize both the labor force and the available land. Grants of land and labor were distributed among Velásquez' men according to their rank and valor during the conquest through a system of *encomiendas* (literally, to place in trust) and *repartimientos* (allotments). The *encomienda* system derived from Spanish feudal institutions of Roman origin, and in the New World it established a series of rights and obligations between the *encomendero* (grantee) and the Indians "granted" to be under his care. The Indians were required to provide tribute and free labor to the *encomendero*, while he was responsible for their welfare, their assimilation into Spanish culture, and their Christianization. The *repartimiento* was a permit given by the crown to individuals that enabled them to task Indian labor for specific purposes, such as work in the mines, on public works, and on farms.

Both the *encomienda* and the *repartimiento* became sources of abuse, although several measures attempted to curtail the excessive powers of *encomenderos* and *repartidores de indios* (licensed contractors of Indian labor). Finally, in 1542–43 the New Laws were promulgated in response to pressures by Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas (1474–1566), known as the "Protector of the Indians" and the "Apostle of the Indies." As a young Spanish priest, Las Casas was sent to Cuba to assist Velásquez in the conquest, pacification, and settlement of the island. His firsthand observations of the destitution and misery of the natives prompted him to plead their cause to the Spanish crown. He challenged the racist overtones of the Spanish expansion and called upon the ideas of the thirteenth-century theologian St. Thomas Aquinas on the dignity of man. The New Laws emphasized humanitarian ideals toward the Indians, regulated tributes, abolished inheritance rights for the *encomiendas*, and prohibited their being held by religious and royal officials. The laws had little effect, however, and by the mid-sixteenth century, the Indian population had dropped to a few thousand as a result of disease and exploitation.

### Colonial Administration

The Spanish government in the New World was structured, in the words of historian Hubert Herring, to provide the means "to

fortify royal power in America, curb anarchic forces, and buttress the political unity of the scattered kingdoms." The most important instruments of royal control were its appointed officials, viceroys, and captains general and the *cabildos* or *ayuntamientos* (city councils), and *audiencias* (high courts).

Diego Velázquez was the first governor of Cuba, the highest ranking official on the island, from 1511 to 1524. Later in that century, the governors of Cuba received the additional title of captain general, which carried greater military responsibilities. Governors were subject to the judicial powers of the *audiencia* and the political authority of the governor of the Indies in Hispaniola. They were also accountable to the king and to the Council of the Indies. The Casa de Contratación (Board of Trade) in Seville was the highest authority on commerce and financial matters in Spanish America. After the establishment of the viceroyalty of New Spain in Mexico in 1535, royal control over Cuba was transferred there from Hispaniola. Spain also exercised other means of control through *visitadores* (royal inspectors). *Visitas* (inspections) either followed charges against colonial officials or were a matter of simple routine, and a *residencia* (a hearing or a trial) was conducted at the end of an official's term in office. These and other control mechanisms were more effective on paper than in reality because corruption and deception were rampant in the colonies. Authority was delegated to the local level through the *cabildos* of the *municipios* (counties), which corresponded to the seven initial settlements on the island and were responsible for the legal arrangement of all matters relating to the welfare and interests of the colonists.

### **Economic Structures**

The 1530s brought changes to the lives of the Cuban settlers. Greater potential wealth in Mexico and Peru attracted a large number of them, thus leaving Cuba depopulated. However, Havana was soon transformed into an important port city, a supply station for the fleets carrying bullion between the New World and Spain. The island of Cuba became a favorite prey of pirates, often operating under the authority of one European power or another. In 1554 Peg-Leg Leclerc seized Santiago de Cuba; in 1555 Jacques de Sores burned Havana, a city that had also been occupied by a French fleet in 1538. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the whole Caribbean was plagued by pirates. Only after the end of the War of the Grand Alliance (1688–97) between



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France and a coalition of European powers and the signing of the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697 were their incursions outlawed.

To counteract enemy attacks, Havana was fortified and outfitted to provide goods and amenities for the fleets. Its importance grew rapidly, and in 1589 Havana became the capital of Cuba. Havana maintained its position as the chief port of Spain's overseas empire for 200 years, until the end of the fleet system. But aside from Havana, Cuba was of little interest to the mother country throughout the seventeenth century. Corrupt and incompetent administrators turned Cuba into a haven for bandits, smugglers, and prostitutes.

By the mid-sixteenth century all gold deposits had been exhausted, but copper exploration continued. Despite Cuba's potential as a producer of sugar and tobacco, the main activity was centered on extensive cattle raising, and herds roamed wild throughout the island. Cultivation of yucca, used to make cassava flour, was another important economic activity, because it was essential to the production of both dried meat and bread taken on expeditions to the mainland. A royal decree in 1588 granted the Cuban sugar mills the same rights formerly enjoyed by those in Hispaniola, which exempted them from attachment for debts. For the first 200 years, however, Cuba was primarily a transit station for the expeditions and fleets between Europe and the New World and, according to historian Philip Foner, "not [considered] as a colony to be developed on its own."

The eighteenth century was to bring about important changes in the economic life of Cuba. The end of the European wars and the treaties that followed opened new avenues for the development of the island. After the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 between Britain and France and the rise of Philip V to the Spanish throne, British vessels were allowed to carry African slaves to Cuba as well as an annual cargo of British goods. By providing a cover, the legal importation of slaves and goods furthered the already thriving illegal contraband. The sugar industry benefited from the importation of slaves but still did not surpass the importance of tobacco, for which Europeans had acquired a taste. Realizing the economic potential of tobacco, the Spanish crown placed Cuban tobacco production under government monopoly in 1717 and established a purchasing agency for the control of all aspects of its production and trade. The tobacco growers revolted in protest several times in the 1720s, but they effectively bypassed the crown's restrictions through contraband practices. The monopoly of tobacco lasted until a successful uprising of the tobacco growers took place in 1812. By 1740 the Royal Company of Commerce was estab-

lished as a monopoly agency on all trade to and from Cuba. During its 20 years of existence, the company controlled all commercial transactions in Cuba; it bought goods from Cuban producers at very low prices and sold imported items to them at exorbitant prices.

The British occupied Havana between August 1762 and February 1763, a short period that was to have far-reaching effects on the lives of Cubans. It opened the city to free trade with all nations and fostered the importation of goods and slaves at low prices. This period of British occupation, important for the development of the sugar industry, was also marked by the introduction of religious tolerance and Freemasonry to island society. However, this climate of religious freedom was not easily shared with the Spanish crown.

Cuba indirectly benefited from events abroad, such as the American and the French revolutions in the late eighteenth century. The independence of the United States opened new consumer markets for Cuban products, and the French Revolution provoked political turmoil in the overseas colonies, leading to the Haitian Revolution in 1796. Slave revolts, widespread killing of white planters, and burning of cane fields led to the destruction of the Haitian sugar industry. An estimated 300,000 French refugees fled to Cuba and brought with them their skilled mulatto laborers as well as their more advanced sugar technology and managerial skills. The decline of Cuba's major competitor in the European sugar markets was providential for the establishment of Cuba as the leading exporter of sugar in the Spanish overseas empire. The new prospects for the sugar industry prompted the crown by a royal decree of 1791, to allow the importation of slaves free of duty for six years. Trade was further liberalized by another royal decree in 1818.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Cuba had been transformed into an economically viable Spanish possession with "king sugar" as the major booster of the island's development. The availability of new markets and the arrival of more slaves caused agricultural production to thrive. Coffee, another Haitian export crop, had been introduced to Cuba in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and now began to be exploited fully. Tobacco continued to be a major item in the shipments to Europe, while cattle raising became a more rational undertaking.

### **Colonial Society**

Cuban society was organized along color and class lines. There were two racially distinct groups, each comprising very specific differentiations. Whites were divided according to origin: *peninsulares* and creoles, or criollos. The blacks were either free or slave. By the latter part of the eighteenth century, according to the census of 1774, Cuba had a total population of 172,620 inhabitants: 96,440 whites, 31,847 free blacks, and 44,333 black slaves.

Rivalries between *peninsulares* and creoles derived from the preferential treatment given to the former for positions in both civil and religious administrative jobs in the colony. As the wealth of the island increased in the eighteenth century, money and prestige were attached to high posts in colonial administration for which creoles did not qualify. However, creole society had been built on the ownership of Cuban land and the performance of economic roles, such as cattle raisers, tobacco and sugar planters, teachers, lawyers, priests, and journalists. Creole society had generated the wealth that was appropriated by the *peninsulares*. Educated creoles were influenced by the writings of Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Thomas Paine and by such documents as the United States Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man. By the late eighteenth century, creoles were demanding an end not only to economic restrictions on colonial development but also to political and human rights.

Religious orders were among the most prestigious groups in Spanish America. Their influence derived from the educational, doctrinal, and economic roles they performed throughout the Spanish empire. The Jesuits had virtual control over education in the colonies, and they became large plantation owners as well as urban landlords. Their prestige, influence, and wealth in Spanish America were seen as a threat to royal control of the colonies prompting the expulsion of all Jesuits from the Spanish domains in 1767. The Jesuits were reestablished as a religious order in 1814.

## **The Road to Independence**

### **The Age of Reforms**

The period of the Napoleonic Wars, 1792–1815, brought prosperity to Cuba despite the ongoing restrictions and obstacles placed on the island's economic life by the crown. Demand for sugar, tobacco, and coffee increased, and more capital was injected into

crop production. More slaves were introduced, more land was brought under cultivation, and a new class of wealthy planters emerged within the creole society. Trade between Cuba and the United States increased during the war years. By that time the Cubans had turned most of the available land to sugar and coffee cultivation and therefore had to import basic foodstuffs and other provisions from the United States. Trade flourished between the United States and Cuba under both legal and illegal trade conditions.

Cleavages existing within Cuban society became more pronounced over time because of the obscurantism of the colonial administration. The Haitian Revolution and the resulting establishment of a black republic in the Caribbean worked to Spain's advantage, however. Free Cubans from all walks of life, fearing a similar situation at home, sought reform. Some reformists were willing to continue under a revised form of Spanish rule, but others sought annexation by the United States. More radical elements longed for independent status.

In the 1790s a wealthy planter, economist, and statesman, Francisco de Arango y Parreño, and the island's governor, Luis de Las Casas, came to play leading roles in Cuban politics. Under their influence a royal decree was issued that established the Economic Society of Friends of the Country, the Society for Progress, and the Royal Consulate of Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce. These were semipolitical associations, founded to upgrade economic and educational life in Cuba, which functioned as auxiliary bodies of consultants to the island's government. The Economic Society of Friends of the Country was created in 1793 and promoted the establishment of schools and other educational programs. The Cuban reformist school of thought was represented by the economic society, the royal consulate, and the municipality of Havana. They advocated freedom of trade, continuation of slavery and slave trade, and either assimilation of Cuba into the Spanish kingdom or its annexation by the United States. The program led by Arango y Parreño exemplified the major political currents in Cuban society as the nineteenth century unfolded. In general, creole society was completely indifferent to the slave issue. One exception was Father Félix Varela, an educator and reformist who advocated independence for Cuba and the abolition of slavery. In 1823 Varela started publishing a periodical in New York called *El Habañero*, in which he defended his version of the reformist program.

### **The Dawn of Independence**

Although many in continental Spanish America were seeking political freedom from the mother country, the wealthy Cuban landowning class supported the crown's policies against independence, for which it was rewarded with some trade relaxation. These concessions included the end of the tobacco monopoly in 1817, freedom from trade with all nations beginning in 1818, and private ownership the following year of Cuban lands already occupied or at least cultivated by an individual. In the second decade of the nineteenth century, Cuba experienced increases in population and wealth. Between 1815 and 1819 the value of Cuban exports rose to over 56 million pesos while the crown's revenues from sugar rose to unprecedented levels. The island's prosperity helped finance Spanish undertakings against the independence movement throughout the continent. However, the picture of the "ever-faithful isle" was to change in the 1820s; that decade witnessed several unsuccessful revolts for Cuban independence.

By 1824 Spain had lost all its American possessions save Cuba and Puerto Rico, which remained colonies as a result of widespread local opposition to independence. Another blow to the aspirations of Cuban nationalists had come from United States president James Monroe, whose message to the United States Congress in December 1823 enunciated the doctrine that bears his name. The Monroe Doctrine stated United States support of the political status quo throughout the New World. It defended the rights of the newly independent republics against foreign interference at the same time that it maintained the rights of Spanish domination over Cuba.

Cuba's slaveholding society lived in constant fear of losing its preeminence and even more, it feared a repetition of the Haitian situation. Spontaneous slave uprisings took place in Cuba in 1832, 1835, 1837, and 1838 that heralded a rise in antislavery sentiment. In 1843 royalist battalions brutally crushed three slave revolts. The following year a slave conspiracy was discovered in Matanzas. The planned uprising became known as *la escalera* (the staircase), a designation taken from one of the tortures used to extract confessions from the insurrectionists; they would be tied to a ladder and lashed until they furnished information to their captors. But violence went beyond punishment of the rebels. It reached the Cuban freemen, subjecting many innocents to the repression that followed.

The alternative to independence was annexation by the United States. This idea had support both in Cuba and in the American

slaveholding South. Cuban annexationists could count on the slave-owners, but their allegiance to the cause depended on actual threats to slavery on the island. Three separate efforts at annexation between 1848 and 1851 failed. In the United States, aside from the Southerners, there was no support for the annexation cause. Both the United States abolitionists and the Northerners fought vigorously against the addition of another slaveholding society to the Union.

By the mid-nineteenth century, competition from European beet-sugar producers forced the Cuban sugar industry to adopt more efficient production techniques, including the use of skilled white wage laborers in the sugar mills. A further sign of slavery's growing decadence was evident when small planters began renting slaves to large plantations at harvest time. A new labor force of slave, free, and contract workers entered the sugar industry and thereby changed the structure of sugar production. It was then only a small step to the abolition of slavery in Cuba.

### **The Ten Years' War, La Guerra Chiquita, and the Abolition of Slavery**

On October 10, 1868, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes and a group of planters from the province of Oriente proclaimed the independence of Cuba in the historic Grito de Yara (Cry of Yara). Initially, there was no mention of the social question of slavery, but as the military campaign went on, it became clear that revolutionary success depended upon uniting all Cubans against Spanish rule. Men like Antonio Maceo, a mulatto from Santiago de Cuba, and Maximo Gómez, a black Dominican exile, contributed to the revolutionary effort. The Cuban masses changed the character of the revolution into a democratic one that sponsored abolition. After a few military victories, the nationalist forces controlled half the island of Cuba. However, the Spanish government was not about to lose its prize possession in the Caribbean. Royalist forces launched a "total war" of destruction, inflicting terrible losses throughout the island.

Even though the Spanish armies were being supplied by the United States, the Cubans remained confident that people in the United States supported them morally and would eventually influence their government to render the Cubans much needed assistance. After 10 years of bloodshed and the loss of an estimated 50,000 Cuban and 208,000 Spanish lives, the war was over. Under the 1878 Pact of Zanjon the crown agreed to enact reforms.

## *Cuba: A Country Study*

However, the end of the war represented only the beginning of a truce between Spain and the Cuban revolutionaries. Men like Maceo and Gómez had become experts in guerrilla fighting and led the Cuban nationalists during the following years of the independence movement.

The next rebellion was organized in New York by a group of veterans of the Ten Year's War under Calixto García, one of the few revolutionary leaders who had not signed the Pact of Zanjón. In 1878 he organized the Cuban Revolutionary Committee in New York and issued a manifesto against Spanish despotism. A positive response came from several revolutionary leaders and La Guerra Chiquita (The Little War) started in Cuba on August 26, 1879. Once again, the ill-prepared revolutionaries met with strong resistance, and the war was over by September 1880. Even though this defeat had a tremendous impact upon the exiled revolutionaries and plans for a future uprising came to a halt, the idea of fighting for Cuban independence was not completely abandoned.

The 15 years that preceded the war of 1895 were politically uneventful, and the Spanish promises of reform remained unfulfilled. In 1881 the Spanish constitution of 1876 was extended to Cuba, but it was of little practical effect. Even though Cubans were entitled to send representatives to the Spanish Cortes, or parliament, Cuban deputies represented the more conservative segments of society. In 1880 the Cortes approved the abolition law, which provided for a period of eight years of *partronato* (tutelage) for all slaves liberated according to the law. This system amounted to indentured servitude, because under the *patronato*, slaves were required to spend those eight years working for their masters at no charge. On October 7, 1886, slavery was abolished in Cuba by a royal decree that also made illegal the *patronato*.

### **United States Economic Presence**

After 1878 the Cuban sugar industry had to face strong competition from the European beet-sugar producers. They had been so successful that Europe did not need imports to satisfy consumption on the continent. Cuba thus became even more dependent upon the United States market, which was controlled by a single company, the American Sugar Refining Company. This company controlled 19 refineries in Cuba and supplied 70 to 90 percent of the sugar consumed in the United States, and it set prices at will. Once again, to compensate for low prices, production had to become more efficient. A complete reorganization took place in the Cuban

*José Martí*  
Courtesy Organization  
of American States



sugar industry. Small mills were absorbed into *centrales* (large sugar mills), and less efficient plantations became suppliers of cane to the *centrales*. Despite the increased productivity and the minimization of capital losses, this restructuring of the sugar industry in Cuba created a greater dependence on the United States-based monopoly. Furthermore, the abolition of slavery, combined with the European beet sugar competition, generated the need for more imported machinery from the United States.

Private investors from the United States entered all sectors of the Cuban economy, iron-ore exploration, cattle raising, fruit and tobacco plantations, and public utility companies. Some estimates place the total investments by United States private enterprises in 1895 at about US\$50 million. However, in early 1895 international trade conditions and Spanish commercial restrictions on the Cuba economy provoked serious discontent. The main complaints against the crown were excessive taxation, a huge Cuban foreign debt, discrimination against Cubans for government positions, royal



absolutism, and lack of the basic freedoms of speech and press and the right of assembly.

### **The War of Independence**

The inspirator and organizer of the War of Independence was José Martí (1835–95). Martí was a lawyer who also excelled as a poet and journalist. His dedication to the cause of independence inspired his fellow revolutionaries in their struggle for freedom from Spanish rule. Martí's skills went beyond his literary writings to the practical organization of forces both in Cuba and in the United States. He believed that together they would deal the final blow to Spanish domination of the island.

Born in Havana, Martí spent his youth in Spain with his parents. Upon his return to Cuba, still a young boy, he expressed shock upon seeing the treatment of black slaves on Cuban plantations. As a secondary school student, Martí was imprisoned in Havana for anti-Spanish political activity in 1869–70. After being later sentenced to six years in a military prison, his sentence was commuted to one year of exile in Spain, where he entered the university. Martí traveled all over Europe and the New World and taught in Guatemala in 1877. The following year he returned to Cuba. Accused of conspiring against the Spanish crown, he was deported again to Europe. From Spain, Martí went to France and from there to the United States in 1880. Upon his arrival in New York, he started to organize the Cuban exiles. Martí's journalistic works were widely read and helped shape Cuban political attitudes. In 1890 he helped organize an educational center for black Cuban exiles called La Liga (The League), where he began teaching again. In 1892, at a meeting with several Cuban exile leaders, Martí presented the "Fundamentals and Secret Guidelines of the Cuban Revolutionary Party." This program underlined the goals of the revolution: freedom from foreign political and economic domination, equality among Cubans regardless of class or color, and establishment of democratic processes. In March 1892 the revolutionaries started publishing *Patria* (Fatherland), which publicized the ideas and aspirations of the group under the leadership of Martí.

Between 1892 and 1895 Martí devoted himself to the cause of liberation and received both political and financial support from Cuban exiles from all walks of life. During these early years of preparation, Martí left the military leadership out of his plans until the revolutionaries were fully organized. In 1893 Martí recommended Máximo Gómez as his choice for military leader, and the

revolutionaries approved his selection. Maceo was also invited to participate in the revolutionary effort, and together with Martí, Gómez, and other veterans of the Ten Years' War, he set out to coordinate operations in Cuba. Local military leaders appointed on the island included Guillermo Moncada in Santiago de Cuba, Bartolomé Masó in Manzanillo, Julio Sanguily in Havana, Pedro E. Betancourt in Matanzas, Manuel Garcia Ponce in Havana, and Francisco Carrillo in Las Villas. The conspirators appointed Juan Gualberto Gómez to be military coordinator between the invading armies and the islanders. Martí's organization qualities and leadership were responsible for the future success of the independence movement.

The order to begin the war was signed on January 29, 1895. In Cuba, Juan Gualberto Gómez set February 24, 1895, as the date to start military operations. The insurrection began with the Grato de Baire (Cry of Baire), named for the village near Santiago de Cuba where it was proclaimed. That same day the forces in the western part of the island were defeated by the Spaniards, and Sanguily, chief commander of the armies of the west, was imprisoned. Meanwhile, the supreme chiefs of the revolution had not yet arrived in Cuba. Máximo Gómez and Martí were still in Santo Domingo working out the details of the invasion, and Maceo was in Costa Rica. On March 25, 1895, Martí presented the *Manifiesto de Montecristi* (Proclamation of Montecristi) and outlined the policy of the war: the war of independence was to be waged by blacks and whites alike; participation of all blacks was crucial for victory; Spaniards who did not object to the war effort should be spared, private rural properties should not be damaged; and the revolution should bring new economic life to Cuba.

On March 29 Maceo and his followers landed in eastern Cuba, and on April 11 they were joined nearby by Máximo Gómez and Martí at Playitas. On April 16 Martí was named major general of the Armies of Liberation. In an article written for the *New York Herald*, Martí defined the goals of the war, stating "Cuba wishes to be free in order that here Man may fully realize his destiny, that everyone may work here, and that her hidden riches may be sold in the natural markets of America . . . The Cubans ask no more of the world than the recognition of and respect for their sacrifices." On May 19 Martí fell at Dos Rios in his first encounter with the Spanish royalist army. He was buried in Havana on May 27, 1895.

Martí had emphasized the need to free Cuba from any foreign power, be it Spain or the United States. The "Apostle of Independence" left a great responsibility to the Cuban people, that of creat-

ing a truly sovereign nation. Martí had also wanted to end the role played by Cuba throughout the colonial period as a bridgehead for further conquests in Latin America. Martí's ideals and example remained a source of inspiration to scores of Cuban patriots in the twentieth century, including Castro.

Martí's death did not stop the independence movement. In September 1895 representatives from the five branches of the Army of Liberation proclaimed the Republic in Arms, and they appointed Salvador Cisneros Betancourt its president and Masó vice president. Gómez was given the title of *general en jefe* (general commander), and Maceo was made his vice commander of the Army of Liberation. Tomás Estrada Palma was appointed diplomatic agent abroad. Meanwhile, the United States government refused to recognize the legitimacy of the revolutionary government.

In early 1895 Gómez and Maceo sent orders to end all economic activity in the island that might be advantageous to the royalists. The population supported the rebellion, despite its economic consequences. A new offensive by royalist forces under the command of Valeriano Weyler y Nicolau succeeded in containing the revolutionaries. Máximo Gómez was isolated in Camaguey and Oriente, and Maceo was killed in Pinar del Rio. The royalist army inflicted widespread destruction of life and property. Weyler's tactics, publicized by revolutionary propaganda in New York, helped arouse public opinion in the United States and even in Spain. Weyler was finally replaced, and a more conciliatory Spanish policy was adopted on January 1, 1898.

The Cubans were not willing to compromise after so many years of sacrifice and the loss of so many lives to the cause of independence. Riots broke out in Havana, and the United States representatives in Cuba requested protection from their home government. On February 15, 1898, a United States battleship, the U.S.S. *Maine*, which had been sent to the Havana harbor to protect United States citizens, exploded and sank; 266 lives were lost. Investigations were made by both parties, and the United States conclusion was that the explosion had been perpetrated from outside the ship. Public opinion pressured the United States government to demand as reparation that Spain grant independence to Cuba. No agreement was reached, and the United States declared war against Spain. By the provision of the so-called Teller Amendment, however, the United States acknowledged that it would make no attempt to establish control over the island.

## **Cuba Between Empires**

### **The Spanish-Cuban-American War**

On April 25, 1898, the United States Congress voted to declare war against Spain. Although the Cuban revolutionaries had wanted only political recognition and material aid from the United States, they accepted military intervention and offered their assistance to the foreign expeditionary forces in order to win. The United States entered the war without recognizing the Republic of Cuba, even though the revolutionaries assumed that the Teller Amendment was sufficient protection for Cuban sovereignty. Thus, despite the early warnings of Martí against allowing Cuba to be used as a bridgehead for foreign penetration of the New World republics, the Cuban revolutionaries greeted the arrival of United States troops.

The war was short. In June, 17,000 United States troops landed at Siboney and Daiquirí, east of Santiago de Cuba. On July 3 the Spanish fleet was destroyed, and a few United States land victories prompted the final surrender of Spanish troops on August 12. The terms of the armistice represented the end of the Spanish overseas empire. Spain lost Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippine islands, and other islands in the Pacific and in the West Indies to the United States. The quick victory over Spain was attributed only to the United States, but such reports failed to recognize that the Cuban struggle for independence had been weakening the crown's resources for several decades. Spain had become impoverished and worn out. In Cuba the Army of Liberation forced Spain to concentrate its troops in urban areas. The countryside was controlled by the revolutionaries, which made it impossible for the royalist army to retreat, once attacked by the United States. The naval blockade of the island prevented reinforcements from reaching the Spanish garrisons. These factors were extremely important to the final victory. In reality, the war was fought between Cuban revolutionaries, Spanish royalists, and United States interventionist forces. According to the terms of the armistice, a peace commission met in Paris on October 1, 1898, and prepared the text of the Treaty of Paris, which was signed by representatives of the United States and Spain.

### **United States Occupation and the Platt Amendment**

On January 1, 1899, the Spanish administration retired from Cuba, and that same day General John R. Brooke installed a military government on the island. This was the beginning of the United States occupation of Cuba. However, the United States government was bound by the Teller Amendment, which placed Cuba in a category different from the other areas previously controlled by Spain. Furthermore, the strong annexationist drive had waned in the United States; the realities of Cuba as economically destroyed by the war and having a large black population were responsible for the change in United States attitudes toward the island.

Brooke's administration restored some services while controlling customs, postal services, sanitation; and health agencies. In December 1899 General Leonard Wood initiated the second period of United States administration in Cuba. Wood was a very energetic man who led the most impressive United States-administered reconstruction programs in Cuba. As a former United States surgeon general, Wood undertook a campaign for the eradication of malaria and yellow fever in Cuba. Dr. Walter Reed, an army surgeon, worked on epidemiology and tropical parasitological diseases projects using research results obtained previously by Dr. Carlos Juan Finlay of Cuba. A census taken in 1900 gave a bleak picture of the island's population of 1.5 million (200,000 less than in 1895), in both economic and educational terms. Schools were built, students were enrolled, special training was provided for teachers, and the University of Havana was restructured. Several public works programs were also established for the improvement of railroads, roads, and bridges.

The road to Cuban self-determination was prepared under United States guidance. In 1900 a new electoral law was passed that established a limited franchise for Cubans to elect officials at the municipal level. A constituent assembly convened and drafted a constitution that provided for universal suffrage, a directly elected president, a bicameral legislature, and the separation of church and state. The United States conditioned its approval of the constitution on the acceptance of a series of clauses that would preserve its upper hand in future dealings with "independent" Cuba. These clauses, which were to be appended to the draft of the constitution, were prepared by United States secretary of war Elihu Root and attached to the arms appropriation bill of 1901; they became known as the Platt Amendment. It provided that Cuba should not sign any treaties that could impair its sovereignty or contract any

debts that could not be repaid by normal revenues. In addition, Cuba had to accept the legitimacy of all acts of the military government, permit the United States to purchase or lease lands for coaling and naval stations, and give the United States special privileges to intervene at any time to preserve Cuban independence or to support a government capable of protecting life, property, and individual liberties.

The Platt Amendment represented a permanent restriction upon Cuban self-determination. Cuba's constituent assembly modified the terms of the amendment and presented it to the United States only to be turned down. The United States-imposed amendment was a tremendous humiliation to all Cubans, whose political life would be plagued by continual debates over the issue until its repeal in 1934. On June 12, 1901, Cuba ratified the amendment as a permanent addendum to the Cuban constitution of 1901 and the only alternative to permanent military occupation by the United States. Nevertheless, the United States acquired rights in perpetuity to lease a naval coaling station at Guantanamo Bay, which remained in the hands of the United States as the United States Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay into the 1980s, under the terms of the May 1903 Treaty of Relations (also known as the Permanent Reciprocity Treaty of 1903) and the Lease Agreement of July 1903.

Under the tutelage of the United States, the political life of Cuba prior to 1933 followed a certain pattern. Incumbent presidents would attempt reelection, but if they were unable to secure their own party's nomination, they would shift their support to the opposition candidate. The incumbent president's candidate would inevitably win at the polls, either legally or fraudulently. The losing party would usually dispute the final results, claim that they were fraudulent, and rise in revolt. The United States would send an arbiter, sometimes backed by United States troops. The mediator would then call for new elections, but the incumbent president's opposition would not accept the arrangement and would boycott the polls. Thus the presidential nominee would win by default. This did not happen every time, however. In 1906 Estrada Palma refused to accept the United States compromise plan, which in fact favored him; and in 1924 there was no electoral boycott or rebellion.

## **The Republic**

### **Fragile Independence and Fragile Republic**

After the ratification of the Platt Amendment, United States occupation forces remained on the island for almost a year to complete the reconstruction program and to supervise the first presidential elections in Cuba. Estrada Palma, a longtime resident of the United States and a revolutionary delegate abroad in previous years, received the support of most revolutionaries and was elected to the presidency. On May 20, 1902, General Wood transferred power to the new president, formally ending the military occupation of Cuba. Universal good feeling spread over the island, and appreciation was publicly expressed to Wood. At long last, Cuba had become an independent nation, even though subjected to the restriction of the amendment. There was a certain feeling of relief both in Cuba and in the United States, where groups against intervention, annexation, and imperialism were partially appeased by developments on the island. Cuba remained in the hands of politicians friendly to the United States until 1933. The Treaty of Relations signed in May 1903 also guaranteed a 20-percent lower tariff for Cuban sugar exports to the United States and gave preferential treatment to United States exports to Cuba.

Estrada's first administration corresponded to a period of growth in the Cuban sugar industry. By 1906 United States investments in the sugar, tobacco, and cattle-raising industries had risen to US\$200 million. Cuban development attracted an influx of immigrants, which in 1906 included 10,000 Spaniards. Improvements reached all areas of the country's life, and 25 percent of the national budget was channeled to education. Cuban finances were handled with such care that taxes were low, and there was still a surplus cash flow. However, corruption was still very much alive. Cuban politicians were divided over the Platt Amendment: the National Liberal Party was more outspoken against the restrictions imposed upon Cuban sovereignty, while the Conservative Republican Party was more lenient to foreign demands. As the elections of 1905 approached, Estrada identified himself with the Conservatives and became their candidate for reelection. The Liberals abstained from participation, and Estrada Palma won his second term despite opposition. Unable to control the ensuing Liberal revolt, which became known as the Little War of August, the president requested United States intervention under the terms of the Platt Amendment and resigned the presidency. The administration in

Washington vacillated, but the threats to United States interests in the island prompted intervention.

To restore peace and stability, the United States sent then secretary of war William Howard Taft to Havana. He arrived on September 9, 1906, and found the country in disarray and few government troops scattered through the island. Taft blamed the recent presidential elections for all the commotion, and decided that the elections had been fraudulent because the Liberals were supported by most Cubans. Taft then commissioned 2,000 United States Marines and 5,600 other United States troops to the island and proclaimed a provisional government on September 29. Taft remained as acting governor until October 13, 1906, when he was replaced by Charles E. Magoon, a lawyer from Nebraska, who gained popularity during his stay in Havana.

Magoon's administration was fairly successful. He sponsored the drafting of the organic laws regulating the functioning of the judiciary, provincial and municipal governments, the civil service, and the electoral system. He also encouraged public works to curtail unemployment and built 600 kilometers of roads. However, Cubans remember Magoon for the free-spending policies of his government, which used up the budgetary surplus inherited from Estrada Palma and the graft that accompanied the public works program. The 1908 elections were sponsored by Magoon. Liberal candidates José Miguel Gómez and Alfredo Zayas won the presidency and vice presidency, respectively. Magoon left Cuba on January 28, 1909, thus ending the United States occupation.

The presidency of Gomez was marked by overall growth and modernization in Cuba. United States investment declined, but European capital poured into the island. Services were improved through the construction of railroads, port facilities, drainage projects, and the construction of public buildings. Gómez created rural schools, a national museum, and several academies of arts and letters and history, and he also sponsored some prolabor legislation. In 1912, in response to uprisings led by the outlawed Independent Colored Union (which claimed that racism had prevented blacks from holding political jobs), the United States Marines returned to Cuba. Despite this display of power at a time of imminent crisis, Gómez was not able to secure reelection for himself. Vice President Zayas, the Liberal candidate for the next elections, was defeated by the Conservative ticket. Mario García Menocal and Enrique José Varona were elected president and vice president, respectively, serving from 1913 to 1916.

To guarantee himself a second term, Menocal rigged the 1916 elections. The Liberal protest was upheld by the Cuban Supreme



Court, and the United States instructed Menocal to hold new elections in the disputed districts. The Liberals boycotted the new elections and revolted under the leadership of former president Gómez. United States Marines were again ready to intervene, but the forces of Menocal were able to win without outside help. Gómez then won the Liberal nomination in 1920, and Menocal secured the Conservative nomination for Zayas, who had formed his own Popular Party. Menocal was accused of having rigged the elections a second time. General Enoch Crowder, later to become United States ambassador to Cuba, was then its envoy and a member of a Cuban independent consulting board; it was in this latter capacity that he intervened. Again the Liberals boycotted the elections, and Zayas won. The Liberals complained that United States intervention had twice taken the electoral victory away from them.

President Zayas (1920–24) had to contend with Crowder, who became the overseer of Cuba's political life. The postwar depression and problems inherited from the previous administration had to be confronted. Crowder's mission was to help stabilize the political situation and to ease the financial crisis. As an adviser to the Cuban government, Crowder could apply considerable pressure on the Cubans. The Marines, who had been in Camagüey since the war, went home, and Zayas negotiated a treaty with the United States whereby Cuba received permanent title to the disputed Isle of Pines (subsequently known as Isle of Youth or Isla de la Juventud). The country was divided between interventionists, who welcomed the presence of the United States adviser, and noninterventionists, who were critics of the Platt Amendment. In 1922 Crowder helped to set up an "honest cabinet," which did away with many of the abuses from the previous administration. The sugar boom of the war years, 1914–18, created by good crop and market conditions, suffered a major setback in the summer of 1920. By then the international sugar market started on a downward spiral, and prices fell from US\$0.23 to US\$0.04 a pound in less than six months; in addition, a higher sugar tariff was imposed, leading to a crisis in the Cuban sugar industry. To ease the situation, Crowder arranged a loan of US\$50 million from the United States to Cuba, leaving the island nation with a huge foreign debt. In 1923 Crowder was appointed United States ambassador to Cuba, and in this capacity he had to refrain from further interference in the country's internal affairs. A couple of months later the "honest cabinet" was dismissed, and a whole network of nepotism and graft became the rule in Cuba. By the end of his term in office, Zayas was being publicly accused of tax fraud, nepotism, embezzlement, corruption, use of military for political pur-

poses, neglect of education and sanitation, and allowing an increase in prostitution and in indolence in general. Such a public record gave him little hope of being nominated for reelection. The Conservatives named Menocal for the presidency, and Zayas threw his support to the Liberal Gerardo Machado y Morales, whose program centered on government moralization. Machado won, and Menocal admitted defeat.

During the financial debacle, many Cuban sugar concerns were foreclosed by United States banks. These enterprises were expanded and modernized after they passed into foreign hands. By 1924 United States investments in Cuba had risen to US\$1.2 billion. They controlled half of the sugar industry and began investing in public utilities, such as telephones, electricity, and transportation. Good harvests and good sugar prices overshadowed the growing economic presence of the United States, which had become the most important market for Cuban exports in addition to supplying 75 percent of Cuba's imports. Crowder's interference, the increase in the sugar tariff, and the control of the sugar industry by United States banks contributed to development of an anti-United States feeling in the early 1920s.

### **The Machado Dictatorship**

After the death of José Miguel Gómez in 1921, Carlos Mendieta, a veteran of the War of Independence, and Machado, who in 1908-12 had served as secretary of government under Gómez, rose to become the two potential candidates for leadership of the National Liberal Party. Machado had the organizational qualities and skills of a politician, which Cuban voters realized their country desperately needed at a time when the country had to reconcile a certain degree of economic nationalism with the powerful United States interests.

Machado's inauguration on May 20, 1925, was the beginning of a new stage in the political life of Cuba. An anti-corruption campaign and strict control of the government bureaucracy soon became an instrument of tyranny. Machado realized that economic diversification had to be promoted. In 1927 he sponsored a law that gave tariff protection to Cuban industries and encouraged farmers to cultivate crops other than sugar. In spite of competition from other producers, by 1929 Cuba supplied 45 percent of the world's sugar and 50 percent of United States sugar imports. Increased revenues and better administration made possible a series of public works, including building and maintaining roads, public



*United States troops were a common sight  
in early twentieth-century Havana*  
Courtesy Organization of American States

buildings, schools, laboratories, and hospitals. Machado's successful government pleased Ambassador Crowder and the foreign interests. However, this was done at the expense of the Cuban labor movement, whose leaders were harassed and/or deported. The police also made indiscriminate use of violence and brutality in the cities and in the countryside. Under Machado Cuba was a paradise for foreigners; by 1929 United States investors had acquired US\$1.5 billion worth of property in Cuba.

In 1925 the Cuban Chamber of Representatives enacted a law—backed by members of the existing parties—preventing the organization or reorganization of political parties. Although severe restrictions existed, new parties could be assembled under extraordinary circumstances. In the first half of 1927, the Machado-dominated Chamber of Representatives passed a set of resolutions calling for constitutional amendments to extend the terms of office for the president, senators, and representatives to May 1933. In spite of these obstacles, a new opposition party entered the Cuban political arena in 1927; the Nationalist Union, led by Mendieta, became the only effective opposition to Machado's policies. The extension reform was passed on May 10, 1928. It abolished the vice presidency and established that Machado's term would not be extended but that he could run for an additional six-year term to end on May 20, 1935. As a result of Machado's control of the Cuban political machinery and the support of United States business interests, he was reelected in 1928.

Machado's grandiose plans started to be fulfilled with his 1929 inauguration. However, the Wall Street crash of that October created unfavorable economic conditions in Cuba; within a year foreign trade dropped to one-tenth of the 1929 level, and United States bankers retreated from any major undertakings. In the general populace, there was suddenly widespread misery; defaults and bankruptcies were common, leading to a rise in unemployment. When the crisis set in, Machado resorted to heavy foreign borrowing while cutting imports. The depression deeply affected Cuba and released repressed political and social forces against the regime. The opposition wanted to reassess the reasons for Cuba's social injustices and its dependence on United States business interests. By 1930 the island was ready to explode. Student protests in Havana led to widespread repression and the closing of the University of Havana and many other educational institutions. A terrorist group of Cuban intellectuals, called ABC, counterattacked the repression with bombings. Machado's gunmen became a common sight in the streets of Havana, while the countryside was abandoned to lawlessness. Several uprisings were attempted but were harshly crushed.

Hatred against Machado kept growing, and even United States support of the regime began to fade.

The United States abstained from interfering in Cuban politics despite the special powers it was provided in the Platt Amendment. However, shortly after President Franklin D. Roosevelt's inauguration in 1933, Assistant Secretary of State Sumner Welles was appointed ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to the Republic of Cuba. Welles arrived in April, and in June he offered to mediate between Machado and the growing opposition. Cuban public opinion split between pro- and anti-interventionist groups. A general strike was called to force Machado's resignation, and the military withdrew its support for the regime. The opposition grew stronger, and realizing that the battle was over, Machado fled to Nassau on August 12, 1933. Welles and the revolutionary leaders appointed Carlos Manuel de Céspedes y Quesada, the son of the leading revolutionary during the Ten Years War, provisional president. The country was in a state of chaos, mainly owing to the economic crisis, which had been compounded by bad harvests and falling sugar prices. Furthermore, Céspedes nomination had not been well received because of his good relations with both the United States and the Machado administration, in which he had served as a cabinet member and diplomat.

### **The Revolution of 1933 and Its Aftermath**

On September 4, 1933, at an army base in Havana called Camp Columbia, noncommissioned officers unexpectedly arrested their superiors and took over command of the island's military forces. The "Sergeants' Revolt" had been skillfully organized by Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar, the son of poor cane cutters from Oriente of mixed racial ancestry, who in time would become the caudillo of all Cuba. He had become acquainted with the civilian opposition during the trials held by the Machado regime. Sergeant Batista was the best stenographer in the army and had transcribed many of these trials. As soon as the students learned of the revolt, leaders of the Student Directorate (a student-faculty group from the University of Havana that was created to oppose Machado's reelection) joined the sergeants and suggested a broadening of its base of support, thus turning a military revolt into a full blown revolution. Batista invited the student leaders to nominate what was called a pentarchy, or five-man government, and the following day Céspedes was informed of the rebellion and of his deposition (see Development of the Cuban Military under Batista, ch. 5).

Ambassador Welles was surprised by this turn of events. He requested the intervention of United States troops, but to no avail. On September 10 the pentarchy was dissolved, and one of its members, Ramón Grau San Martín, became the revolutionary provisional president. Grau was popular among the students for his political stance while at the university, where he had defended nationalism, socialism, and anti-imperialism as the basic tenets of the revolutionary program. As provisional president, he abrogated the constitution of 1901 and declared that a social revolution had been launched. Grau enacted a number of labor reforms: he instituted an eight-hour workday; declared illegal the importation of workers from the Caribbean; required that all enterprises employ a work force 50 percent of which were Cuban; requested that all professionals join their professional organizations; and created a Department of Labor. He also denounced the Platt Amendment, purged Machado's followers from the government, dissolved the old political party machine, and gave autonomy to the university. In protest, the United States denied recognition to Grau's government. United States enterprises and their employees in Cuba feared for the future and, though United States warships sent to Cuban waters stayed on alert, they did not intervene. The pentarchy had given Batista the rank of colonel and the position of chief military commander of the Cuban armed forces. As such, he began promoting enlisted men into the officer corps.

Grau's government aroused discontent from several groups for different reasons. The ABC organized strikes, and even the military personnel of Camp Columbia demonstrated against the government. Batista was able to control all factions, and he finally forced Grau out of office on January 15, 1934. The revolution continued under the direct leadership of Batista, who began by nominating Carlos Hevia provisional president. Lacking support, however, Hevia resigned in two days. He was then replaced by another Batista appointee, Mendieta, a respected member of the old National Liberal Party who led the Nationalist Union and was an experienced politician of moderate views. United States recognition of his government was almost immediate.

Mendieta issued a provisional constitution and reorganized the government. However, strikes and other disturbances undermined his administration. In May 1934 Mendieta signed the Treaty of Relations, which modified the terms of the treaty of May 1903 and also abrogated the Platt Amendment, even though it allowed the United States to continue to lease its naval base at Guantanamo Bay. In August of that same year, the two countries signed the commercial Treaty of Reciprocity, which gave preferential treat-

ment to United States exports to Cuba and guaranteed Cuba 22 percent of the United States sugar market—a figure that would rise to 49 percent by 1949—at a special low duty. The sugar industry started to recover, which was demonstrated by increased production and a rise in prices. Economic conditions changed rapidly, and so did labor expectations, thus leading to a wave of strikes. In March 1935, seeing that economic recovery was at stake, Batista crushed the rebellion.

Mendieta resigned in December 1935 and was replaced by José A. Barnet. In January 1936 Miguel M. Gómez (son of former president José Miguel Gómez) won the presidential election, in which women were allowed to vote for the first time. In a maneuver engineered by Batista, the president was impeached in December 1936 for having vetoed a bill to create rural schools under army control. Vice President Federico Laredo Bru served the concluding years of Gómez' term.

Laredo Bru's government enacted a series of reforms. Under a three-year plan, he pushed through passage of the Law of Sugar Coordination in 1937, which organized small farmers into cooperatives and unionized agricultural workers. In 1938 Laredo Bru created a powerful national union, the Confederation of Cuban Workers (Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba—CTC). He also outlawed debt peonage and guaranteed tenant farmers a share of their crops and protection against seizure of their lands. Later on, social security benefits were extended to rural workers, and state lands were divided among small growers. Political groups opposing the United States, from fascist to communist, were allowed to operate in Cuba. A Constitutional Assembly was elected in 1939, and it met for the first time in February 1940, under the presidency of Grau. At the end of 1939 Batista resigned his post as commander of the armed forces and ran for the presidency, under a coalition supported by the Communist Party of Cuba (Partido Comunista de Cuba—PCC) and the Revolutionary Union Party (Partido Unión Revolucionario—PUR); the two were merged to form the Communist Revolutionary Union (Unión Revolucionario Comunista—URC). In 1944 the party's name was changed to the Popular Socialist Party (Partido Socialista Popular—PSP). Batista then defeated Grau, who ran as the candidate of the Cuban Revolutionary Party (commonly known as the *Auténticos*), in the 1940 elections. Batista was a strong president who was able both to neutralize the opposition and to promote social welfare measures, wage increases, and economic growth.

Cuba declared war on the Axis powers soon after the United States entered World War II. The climate of friendly relations with



*Fulgencio Batista*  
Courtesy Organization  
of American States

the United States was important for the country's development at the time. Cuban sugar production rose with the war effort, and from 1942 to 1947 the United States purchased all Cuban sugar at a relatively high price (almost US\$0.03 per pound) and imposed low duties (US\$0.008 per pound). Batista's presidency was marked by the support of sugar interests, and he felt confident enough to court the Cuban left. In 1943 he established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. However, Batista's longtime opponent, Grau won the 1944 presidential elections through a coalition of his own party, the Conservative Republican Party, and the communists. Acknowledging his defeat, Batista went into political retirement in the United States.



## **Prerevolutionary Cuba**

### **The Failure of Democracy**

Grau, highly regarded in Cuba, won the 1944 election against the Batista candidate, Carlos Saladrigas. He inherited a wartime economic boom and a competent bureaucracy. During his term in office, however, Cuba became a haven for corruption, graft, black marketeers, and vice. The country also became fertile ground for political activism, which was carried on mostly by the students and the communists, whose numbers had increased because of a mass exodus from Mexico following the end of Lázaro Cárdenas administration in 1940. The opposition had been schooled in the fight against the Machado regime. Their effectiveness had been further increased by the autonomy of the university, which was off-limits to police. Even though the communists had supported Grau's nomination, it was the onset of the Cold War, the shift in Soviet relations with the democratic left, and the spread of anticommunist ideology that led the president to break his ties with them in 1947 (see *The Communist Party of Cuba*, ch. 4).

Carlos Prío Socorrás won the 1948 elections as Grau's candidate from the Auténticos. A new opposition party, the Ortodoxos, had been created before the elections, however. Sometimes known as the Cuban People's Party, the Ortodoxos had been organized in 1946 by Eduardo (Eddie) Chibás. Like the Auténticos, the Ortodoxos defended the principles of progressive social and economic betterment, but they added an emphasis on administrative decency. Prió's term in office was directed against violence and the presence of communist in the administration, although excessive labor privileges provoked the flight of business and capital from Cuba. In 1949 United States sailors desecrated a monument in Havana honoring José Martí, thus creating a certain amount of friction between the two countries. The two Auténtico presidents had been a disappointment, and corruption became rampant at all levels of government. The Cuban people hoped for a change in the elections of 1952.

### **Batista's Dictatorship**

The elections of 1952 were centered on the elimination of corruption in Cuba's government, and three factions nominated candidates for the presidency. The Ortodoxos had a very good chance of carrying the electorate on a platform promising decency in govern-

ment, accompanied by a campaign against corruption. However, they lost their hero in August 1951, when Chibás shot himself at the end of one of his broadcasts. The loss of Chibás created a vacuum in the opposition, but Professor Roberto Agramonte was nominated as the new Ortodoxo candidate. The Auténticos wanted a man above suspicion to run against the Ortodoxos. They chose Carlos Hevia, who had been provisional president in 1934, because he was an honest man, though lacking in charisma. The third candidate was Batista, who had been elected in absentia to the Senate in 1948 and had recently returned to Cuba.

The contest between Hevia and Agramonte was favorable to the Auténtico candidate, and Batista realized he had no chance of changing the odds. On March 10, 1952, three months before the elections, Batista took power in a bloodless coup d'état with the help of his military friends at Camp Columbia. He suppressed the electoral process and appointed himself provisional ruler. Within a couple of hours, President Prío and his cabinet went into exile. Twenty years of political development in Cuba had suddenly come to a halt, and it was quickly evident that the next phase would be dominated by a military dictatorship. In short order Batista's men occupied the most important military posts, and Batista justified his actions by accusing Prío of having planned to establish a dictatorship in Cuba. Because of Batista's past record with international interest, he quickly gained recognition for his government by non-communist nations throughout the world. Batista suspended the constitution, dissolved all political parties, and created the Council of State to replace the Cuban Congress. Political dissidents were not immediately harassed, however, and students continued to demonstrate.

Cubans inherently did not trust Batista, however, and they expected to see him piling up more wealth through gambling payoffs. In 1952 sugar production reached 7.2 million tons, and to prevent falling prices, Batista decided to cut production by 2 million tons a year. Public works and small enterprises were favored by the dictator's policies. Overall, his six years in government were characterized by prosperity in exchange for freedom. Resistance kept growing, however, and the dictatorship applied repression even more often and cruelly. By the end of Batista's term, repression had reached unprecedented levels.

Fidel Castro was the son of Spanish sugar planters from the province of Oriente. He studied under the Jesuits and, as a law student at the university, became an Ortodoxo and a follower of Chibás. He was very active in student politics, both at home and abroad, which quite often took violent forms. In 1947 he partici-

pated in a failed expedition to assassinate the Dominican dictator Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina. As a representative of Cuban students, he attended a preliminary conference for the organization of a Latin American students' union conducted under the auspices of Argentine president Juan Domingo Perón in Bogotá in 1948. While in Colombia, Castro allegedly participated in riots known as the "Bogotazo," which followed the assassination of presidential candidate Eliécer Gaitán. Castro graduated from law school in 1950 and was invited to run as an Ortodoxo candidate to the Chamber of Representatives in the elections of 1952, which were preempted by Batista. After the coup the campaign went on for a short time, during which the daring Castro circulated a petition to depose the Batista government on the grounds of its illegitimacy. The court ruled against his motion that revolutions, in contrast, create their own legitimacy. One of the judges, Manuel Urrutia Lléo, did not comply with the majority, and Castro would not forget his independent and revolutionary stance.

On July 26, 1953, Castro led a revolt in which 165 men attacked the Moncada army barracks near Santiago de Cuba. The attack was a failure, but it planted the seed of future revolutionary fervor. Castro was arrested and sentenced to 15 years in prison. At the end of the trial, on October 16, 1953, the 26-year-old revolutionary delivered a historic statement that ended with the phrase "*la historia me absolverá*" (history will absolve me).

The Moncada attack prompted Batista to proclaim a 90-day state of siege to prevent public protests. By early 1954 the economy was booming, everything seemed to be under control, and he decided to hold the scheduled presidential elections in November. Batista nominated himself as the candidate of his newly formed Progressive Action Party to run against his former opponent, Grau. Grau withdrew his candidacy before the elections, however, on the grounds that the elections were likely to be fixed. A high rate of abstention by the opposition gave Batista the opportunity to inaugurate himself as constitutional president on February 1955.

The Moncada incident would have soon been forgotten but for the repressive measures undertaken by Batista against its participants and other Cuban dissidents. Several groups, among them lawyers, priests, lay Catholics, and students, began to defend the victims of Batista's repression. In May, in response to these pressures and as a measure of his self-confidence, Batista declared a general amnesty that allowed the return of exiled members of the opposition and freed most political prisoners, including Castro and his followers from Moncada. On July 7 Castro left Cuba for exile in Mexico.

In spite of opposition organized and funded by Prío and voiced in the press, times were good. Lower sugar production kept prices from falling, and industrial growth and tourism increased both revenues and the country's reserves of foreign currency. The way in which Cuba checked population growth and inflation was an example to the rest of Latin America. However, corruption and nepotism, which enriched some groups while allowing the rest of the population to grow poorer, were important ingredients in the island's prosperity. Several segments of society opposed Batista: the poor, the neglected labor force (whom Batista had favored in the past), the communists, and the old political and intellectual opposition. To the latter Batista was a profit seeker who had halted the development of democratic institutions.

Meanwhile, in Mexico the 26th of July Movement (Movimiento 26 de Julio—M-26-7), named after the date of the Moncada attack, was organizing Cuban exiles. Military training, fundraising activities, study groups, and clandestine politics were growing in numbers and participants. Ernesto (Che) Guevara, an Argentine doctor, joined the group. The conspirators in Mexico began to contact the Cuban opposition back home and in mid-1956 they issued the Pact of Mexico and later in the year created the Revolutionary Student Directorate (Directorio Estudiantil Revolucionario—DER), whose activities included urban terrorism and sabotage against the government. M-26-7 outfitted an expedition from Mexico, and on board the yacht *Granma* (bought with funds provided by Prío), 81 men set sail for Cuba under Castro's leadership and landed in the province of Oriente on December 2, 1956. A combination of factors preordained their initial failure. Poor communications between the expeditionaries and the Cuban underground, bad weather, and government knowledge of their arrival prompted a counterattack by Batista's forces. The revolutionaries dispersed, but the vast majority were killed or captured. The two Castro brothers, Fidel and Raúl, Guevara, and a handful of others fled to the Sierra Maestra with the help of friendly peasants.

### **Fidel Castro and the Overthrow of Batista**

Batista's regime began to crumble after the landing of the *Granma*. One factor that contributed to the steady decline of Batista's leadership capability was an interview given by Castro to *New York Times* reporter Herbert Matthews in February 1957, after two months of government claims that the revolutionary leader had been killed. After a five-year period of calm, urban terrorism once

again became common. While Batista was being publicly criticized at home and abroad, Castro became a folk hero to the underprivileged masses of Latin America.

In the Sierra Maestra, the revolutionaries were training for their next attack. On March 13, 1957, the DER stormed into the Presidential Palace in a frustrated attempt to assassinate the president. Batista's forces increased their repression, and censorship became very rigid. But the guerrilla fighters were not losing any ground either, though they were surrounded by Batista's well-armed forces in Oriente. If they could not advance outside the sierra, neither could Batista's men penetrate the island's western mountains. Supplies to the revolutionaries kept arriving, mainly from the United States. The *zafra* (sugarcane harvest) of early 1958 marked a period of great violence and police brutality. In April Castro called for a general strike, but it did not materialize because of opposition by the PSP-controlled CTC labor confederation.

Batista's apparent victory over the strikers was a boost to his regime, and he went ahead with plans for elections in November 1958. Batista's candidate, Andrés Rivero Agüero, was named victor over Grau, an Auténtico, and Carlos Márques Sterling, an Ortodoxo, in the fraudulent elections of November 3. United States support had already been withdrawn from the Cuban government in early 1958, when an arms shipment to Cuba had been cancelled. After the rigged elections, it became even more clear that Cuba was being denied a free democratic process. By the end of the year, the revolutionaries had burst out of the Sierra Maestra. With his army deserting in droves, Batista fled into exile on New Year's Day 1959. The following day Guevara took Havana with the help of 600 revolutionaries.

The breakdown of Cuba's authoritarian regime was prompted by a combination of factors, including its political illegitimacy, disrespect for the people's legitimate expectations, and indiscriminate use of repression against political dissidents. Batista's dictatorship had alienated the middle classes. Thus, by the end of the 1950s, the traditional popular forces had been neutralized, and there was no other political group capable of offering the necessary leadership to all Cubans. Coercion was the only path open to the dictatorship in dealing with the revolutionary forces of the opposition, who were able to embody popular aspirations and turn the revolution into a truly popular one. Clientelism had prevented the development of a democratic process in Cuba prior to 1959, and its breakdown created new hopes for change.

## **Revolutionary Cuba**

### **The End of Prerevolutionary Institutions, 1959–60**

The fall of Batista left a political vacuum in Cuba, even though the revolutionary elite represented by Castro and his followers acquired control of the decisionmaking process. Castro was committed to political democracy and social reforms as defended by José Martí. The first revolutionary government was a facade, with Urrutia in the presidency. Urrutia was the judge who had voted in favor of the revolutionaries in the wake of the aborted 1952 elections. On February 16, 1959, Castro became prime minister, but because of conflicts between himself and the president, Castro resigned his post on July 17. The conflict was related to Urrutia's anticommunism, but Castro was initially unable to dismiss him because Urrutia was a patriot and considered an honest man. Castro had provided the Cuban populace with enough reason for withdrawing support from the president, however, and the general clamor reached such proportions that Urrutia had to take refuge in the Venezuelan embassy. Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado, a distinguished lawyer and aristocrat from Cienfuegos who was Castro's choice to replace Urrutia, became president on July 18. A loyal friend of Castro, the brilliant Dorticós announced to a cheering crowd on July 26 that, pressed by popular demand, Castro had agreed to resume his post as prime minister.

The first stage of the Cuban Revolution was characterized by the liquidation of the old power groups (the military, political parties, labor unions, and agricultural and professional associations) and their replacement by new revolutionary bodies, such as the Rebel Army, the militia, and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (Comités de Defensa de la Revolución—CDRs). Few political organizations established during the prerevolutionary days were allowed to continue to operate, except the M-26-7, the DER, and the PSP. But their effectiveness was limited by the revolutionary elite, who controlled all aspects of the decisionmaking process. In the early days the elite's decisions were legitimized by popular acclamation at mass rallies. The confiscation of sugar lands began in mid-1960, and the collectivization of the means of production was coupled with economic management by the revolutionary elite.

Early revolutionary policies were formulated in response to the expectations of the middle sectors of Cuban society, which had backed the struggle against Batista. These included land reform, improvement of salary and benefits to workers, diversification of

agriculture—less dependence on sugar—industrialization, regulation of foreign enterprises, and administrative reform. Wealth and income were redistributed to the middle and lower sectors of society. Services improved and were extended to the whole population through social services and lower utility rates, taxes, and rents. In May 1959 the Law of Agrarian Reform created the National Institute for Agrarian Reform (Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria—INRA) to assist rural workers. In order to eliminate the traditional *minifundium* (small landholding) and *latifundium* (large landholding), it established a minimum size of agricultural properties at 27 hectares for individuals and placed upward limits of 400 hectares on holdings by agro-industries. The country was divided into 28 zones under the administration of INRA, which also had the responsibility of providing health and educational services to the population. By 1961 land reform policies had already redistributed over 1 million hectares of land, 167,000 sugar workers had joined cooperatives, and about 50,000 still worked for wages at private farms. That same year saw the creation of the National Association of Small Farmers (Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños—ANAP). The revolutionary government had kept its promises to the underprivileged masses that rallied behind the new regime, while antagonizing the traditional propertied classes.

Dependence upon a single crop was an obstacle to development, and it made the Cuban economy vulnerable to fluctuations in production and in sugar prices in the international markets (particularly in the United States). To diminish dependence on sugar, the revolutionaries felt that Cuba had to industrialize through import substitution. Industrial development, it was felt, would free Cuba from its internal dependence on sugar, create new jobs, reduce imports, and diversify exports. Agrarian reform gave the government the necessary power to restructure the agricultural sector, making sugar the most important item in the agenda. On July 5, 1960, however, the United States canceled Cuba's quota for sugar exports to the United States. Cuba then nationalized United States enterprises operating in the country, including 36 *centrales*, the Cuban Telegraph and Telephone Company, the Cuban Electric Company, and all oil refineries. Three hundred eighty-two other large enterprises, all Cuban, and most foreign banks were nationalized on October 13. Only the Canadian institutions received compensation from the revolutionary government. Finally, on October 17 the remaining United States banking institutions were nationalized. These steps enabled Cuba to quicken the pace of socialization of the means of production.

*Fidel Castro as a  
young guerrilla fighter,  
flanked by Raúl Castro and  
Camilo Cienfuegos*  
Courtesy Library of Congress



*Castro, with Ernesto (Che) Guevara and Anastas Mikoyan,  
first deputy premier of the Soviet Union, in 1963,*  
Courtesy Organization of American States



As time went on, the revolutionary process grew more radical. The CDRs became the right arm of the Revolution, reaching down into the neighborhoods in constant vigilance against possible enemies of the Revolution. Lacking a democratic electoral process, the Revolution became the sole political arbiter. Dissidents were scorned and linked to United States interests. The main opposition to the regime came from both the People's Revolutionary Movement and the Revolutionary Movement of Redemption, whose objective was to destabilize the consolidation of the leftist government. There was also marked dissension within the M-26-7 and between Castroites, whose loyalty to Castro was unconditional, and the former communists, who felt closer to Guevara and Raúl Castro. The nonradical groups lost, while greater power was shared among the Castroites (also known as *fidelistas*), *guevaristas* (followers of Guevara), and *raulistas* (followers of Raúl Castro). Above all factions stood Fidel Castro, who relied upon his charisma to justify his actions through magnificent oratory (see *The Role of Mass Organizations in the Process of Socialization*, ch. 2; *Mass Organizations*, ch. 4).

Relations between Cuba and the United States during the first period of the Revolution went from mutual uncertainty all the way to the rupture of relations and military action. In 1959 the Cuban communists from the PSP began applying pressure on Moscow in order to secure Soviet assistance and protection. The Kremlin and the White House, however, were in a process of negotiation that had begun with a meeting between President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Premier Nikita Khrushchev in September 1959. At this time Moscow's engagement in Cuba would have hampered these bilateral efforts.

In February 1960, however, First Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan of the Soviet Union visited Havana and signed an agreement for credits of US\$100 million for the purchase of industrial equipment and technical assistance. The Soviet Union also agreed to purchase almost 400,000 tons of sugar in 1960 and another 4 million tons by 1964. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established on May 8, 1960, three days after the Soviets announced the shooting down of a United States U2 reconnaissance plane over its airspace. In March, following the Cuban-Soviet economic agreement, the United States had already decided to recruit, train, and outfit a Cuban exile force. This decision would lead to the fateful events of 1961.