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editor

Socialist Cuba

Past Interpretations and Future Challenges



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EDITED BY
Sergio G. Roca

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Preface

After almost thirty years of exercising revolutionary power, Castro declared: "Now we are really going to build socialism!" What are we to make of this statement? If the start of construction of Cuban socialism still represents a future task, how is the past record to be interpreted? How are we to assess the accomplishments and the shortcomings of the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s? Why is Cuba now engaged in a "process of rectification of errors and elimination of negative tendencies"? What is Castro's new "correct path to socialism"? What are the implications of the Third Party Congress held in 1986? This volume presents detailed accounts and compelling analyses of several aspects of Cuba's socialist reality from the dual vantage points of sound research and balanced appraisal. The contributors, recognized to be in the forefront of Cuban scholarship, interpret the recent past and outline future challenges.

Ample time has now elapsed to undertake an evaluation of Cuba's socialist record as a separate domain, not unconnected to pre-revolutionary conditions but amenable to distinct inquiry. Cuba now has a socialist past subject to its own interpretation. Revolutionary power has long been secured and consolidated, hence forward projections are unavoidable. Cuba now has a socialist future subject to its own challenges.

In evaluating the past and making projections for the future, the contributors focus on political factors, economic variables, and social issues (some with deep historical roots) that continue to affect the course of events within the socialist setting, even as they are affected by revolutionary conditions (such as ideology) and idiosyncratic forces (such as the role of Fidel). This volume is not really a catalogue of pluses and minuses, of victories and defeats, of successes and failures. It is not so much about what was achieved and what remains to be done. The authors examine change within continuity and analyze stability within revolution. We are concerned with the uneven rate of development (and even retrogression) among the political, economic, and social realms of revolutionary life in socialist Cuba.

This volume is modest in scope, concentrating on the causes and implications of the key changes unleashed in political aspects, economic issues, and social relations within the context of the Third Party Congress

in 1986. The book does not attempt to be comprehensive and the presentation does not aim at uniformity. The authors alone bear responsibility for the findings, conclusions, and all other statements in this volume. The editor alone is accountable for the views expressed in the concluding chapter.

The work is divided into three parts and the summary-conclusion. In the political aspects section, Jorge I. Domínguez analyzes the major changes in party and government leadership occurring after 1984; Juan M. del Aguila pinpoints the complex forces operating to produce both equilibrium and tension in Cuban foreign relations; and Rhoda Rabkin explores the relationship between policy-making by the party elite and responses on the part of both bureaucracy and workers.

In the economic issues section, Carmelo Mesa-Lago describes the recent drastic changes in economic organization and policy; Sergio G. Roca discusses the reasons and consequences of continued international economic dependency; and Jorge Pérez-López explains the role of Soviet oil trade in Cuba's export earnings and external balance.

In the social relations section, Sergio Díaz-Briquets examines the potential implications for socioeconomic developments of Cuba's unique post-1959 demographic patterns; Carlos Moore underscores the racial confrontations permeating now as before every facet of private and public existence in the island; and Margaret E. Crahan analyzes the struggle of the Roman Catholic Church in Cuba to develop itself institutionally and otherwise within the context of a socialist revolution.

In the final chapter, the editor outlines the main arguments and evaluations presented by the authors and elaborates his own views, which attempt to link past interpretations and future challenges.

Sergio G. Roca

Acknowledgments

This volume emerged from the "Symposium on the Future of Cuba" held at Columbia University in New York City. The conference was conceived and promoted by Carlos F. Díaz Alejandro, Professor of Economics at Columbia University. After his untimely death, the symposium was held in his honor. This collection of essays about his native country is an extension of that tribute. In "Remembering Carlos," Roberto González-Echevarría draws a sketch of Carlos and his spirit for the benefit of those of us who just mimic integrity and merely aspire to generosity.

All of the conference contributors—Juan M. del Aguila, Sergio Díaz-Briquets, Carmelo Mesa-Lago, Rhoda Rabkin, and Sergio G. Roca—thoroughly revised and updated their materials for publication. To extend the topical coverage, additional essays were solicited from Margaret E. Crahan, Jorge I. Domínguez, Carlos Moore, and Jorge Pérez-López. Roberto González-Echevarría and Lisandro Pérez also participated in the conference. The commentators/discussants were Douglas A. Chalmers, Alejandro Portes, and Alfred Stepan.

The hard work of organizing and conducting the conference, after the death of Carlos in the summer of 1985, fell upon two of his most able students, Félix E. Martín González and Enrique S. Pumar. They must be recognized for their dedication to the realization of the conference and commended for its successful outcome.

At Columbia University, institutional support and academic guidance for the conference were provided by Professor Alfred Stepan, dean of the School of International and Public Affairs; Professor Jean Franco, director of the Institute of Latin American and Iberian Studies; and Professor Douglas A. Chalmers, chair of the Department of Political Science. The conference and its many amenities were made possible through a generous grant from Mrs. Helen Maguire Muller.

I wish to give many thanks to Patricia DeLucia, secretary of the Department of Economics at Adelphi University, for her untiring and proficient efforts at the word processor in the arduous task of preparing the text for publication. In a very real sense, she put this volume together. Research support from the Office of the Provost at Adelphi University

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To my wife, Eva Maria, my deepest love for her understanding and encouragement during the editing process, which coincided with a difficult period in our lives.

S.G.R.

Remembering Carlos

I never anticipated having to write these words. Carlos F. Díaz Alejandro was such a living force, and so much a part of the life of all of us, that he seemed to be immortal. He was certainly ageless. He died at the same age I had always known him. Carlos was young, and now will always be so in our memories. To my children he was the maverick uncle we all have or should have. He didn't entertain them, he played with them, never ever talking down to them. He and my son Carlos would roll laughing on the floor watching Miss Piggy on TV. Carlos loved Miss Piggy. Her affectation and pretentiousness, undermined always by her porcine appetites, reminded him of not a few of our colleagues. Yet, he was never cutting in his remarks about others in the profession. Carlos always found the good in people and would humorously disagree with me if I went too far in criticizing them. He was incapable of thinking anyone could be totally evil or totally good. Carlos carried this good-natured skepticism to his own field and to politics.

Though he liked to poke fun at my rudimentary grasp of economics, he hurried to remind me that economics was more an art than a science. He was the same when it came to politics. Cubans understand politics as a kind of religion and persecute and kill each other accordingly. Not Carlos. Politicians for him were human beings capable of, perhaps inclined to, folly, but not to evil. By the same token, he was not ready to beatify anyone. He was mildly amused at the uproar caused by his appointment to the Kissinger Commission and steadfastly refused to make any gain from it. Whereas there are many colleagues who would go to any lengths to appear on TV or in the *New York Times*, Carlos turned down invitation after invitation. He did the same when his work on the debt provoked lucrative invitations from the media. He understood, and told me many times, that the media oversimplify and he did not wish to relinquish his academic and intellectual dignity to do so. Carlos was a most tolerant man, but he was scrupulously principled in his own actions. I have never known a purer professional and a less sanctimonious one.

I know that he was a great teacher, but not because I took any of his courses (I wish I had); Carlos taught me squash. He was patient and forgiving and gave up playing with someone who would provide a

workout to teach me. When I improved, he would let me win to encourage me. Then, when a certain parity was achieved, we played mock-epic games punctuated by his parodic curses (*cookies!*), which contrasted sharply with my heavy artillery of Spanish profanity. I played a power game; he would send me sprawling all over the court with delicately placed volleys. There was never acrimony, and there was always fun. I am sure that his real students feel the same way.

Carlos enjoyed the versatility of Cubans, a trait he showed. For instance, he was a very shrewd reader of literary texts and a cultivated observer of the plastic arts. His semi-ironic motto was Martí's superb "verso sencillo":

Yo vengo de todas partes,
y hacia todas partes voy,
arte soy entre las artes,
y en los montes, montes soy.

But what he really was, and forever will be in our memories, was generous, or better, *desprendido*. Carlos did not attach too much value to things and shared them without ostentation. In my study at home, I often discover things that he just gave me (a slide projector, a table, a rug). But now he is gone and has taken himself away, a loss for which all those gifts cannot make up. They say that with time one gets used to personal losses. I disagree. I will miss Carlos for as long as I live.

Roberto González-Echevarría

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PART ONE

Political Aspects

I

Blaming Itself, Not Himself: Cuba's Political Regime After the Third Party Congress

Jorge I. Domínguez

At the end of the Cuban revolutionary regime's first decade, Fidel Castro surveyed many of the problems that had emerged and, on July 26, 1970, he blamed himself. At the First Party Congress in 1975, he surveyed the political, economic, social, and military developments of the previous half-decade which had consolidated the regime at home and spread its influence abroad; the Congress celebrated success at last. At the Second Party Congress in 1980, he surveyed the more mixed record of the preceding years, and blamed the troubles on a part of the people for sloth, indiscipline, and lack of commitment—some thousands of whom had been induced to emigrate earlier that year. At the Third Party Congress in February 1986, he surveyed the equally mixed, though different, record of the early 1980s and blamed the leadership, though not himself, for poor performance.

The Third Party Congress, therefore, marked Fidel Castro's reassertion of his political power in a manner not yet attempted since the formalization of governmental and political institutions over a decade ago. It confirmed more than revealed problems in many areas. And yet, it was also the first party congress to create a more sensible pattern of continuity and rotation at the top. In short, while this Congress opened a window on

An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the Conference on Cuba, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Washington D.C., May 20–21, 1986. Research on Cuba was funded by a grant from the Ford Foundation; general research support by Harvard's Center for International Affairs and Department of Government. The author bears sole responsibility for its contents.

the regime's weaknesses, it also pointed to a path that might strengthen the regime in the years ahead. There are, of course, no guarantees of success and the record of the past decade is not reassuring on this point.

The Third Party Congress was the culmination of a process begun in late 1984. This process was noteworthy for several "firsts" since the establishment of top party institutions in 1965. A black man not a part of the political coalition of the 1950s and early 1960s entered the Politburo (Esteban Lazo). No navy officer is a full member of the Central Committee. And also for the first time in full visibility, an officer was promoted politically to the top ranks ahead of his former military superiors (Abelardo Colomé).¹

Also for the first time, two Commanders of the Revolution left the Politburo as part of a sizeable change in the Bureau's membership. For the first time, the Interior Minister is not a Politburo member. And for the first time, a member of the Central Committee was listed as without employment. This was Humberto Pérez, Cuba's economic czar up to a year before the Congress, who months before had been dismissed as Central Planning Board president and who was dropped as an alternate Politburo member at the Congress. Along with the dismissal early in 1985 of Antonio Pérez Herrero as party secretary for ideology, the combined effect of these changes was to weaken all but one of the stronger claimants to succeed Fidel Castro. The exception was Armed Forces Minister General Raúl Castro, Fidel's brother, who was publicly and clearly recognized at the Congress as the designated successor.

For the first time, too, the pattern of membership in top party organs indicated the necessity for choice. Unlike at the two previous party congresses, the size of top party organs remained basically constant at the Third Party Congress, forcing choices in order to rejuvenate the top leadership. About 47 percent of the alternate members of the 1980 Central Committee still alive were dropped in 1986; 37 percent of the Central Committee's full members still alive were also dropped (the respective numbers for 1980 were 17 percent and 21 percent).

These facts, however, suggest more turmoil at the top than in fact occurred. Consider also the following. No one who was dropped as a member of the Politburo, or as a Politburo alternate, was also asked to leave the Central Committee. No one was dropped from a full to an alternate member of the Central Committee. The pattern of recruitment to the top organs showed also a good mix of rewards through promotion from the immediately lower rank and of a challenge to even better performance by jumping through the hierarchical ranks for appointments, with priority—appropriate from the perspective of institutionalization—for promotions from the immediately lower rank. For example, no one was promoted to alternate or full membership in the Politburo who had

not been already at least an alternate member of the Central Committee. Three of the four new members of the Politburo had been its alternate members. Six of the new eight alternate members of the Politburo had been full Central Committee members. Of the 56 full members of the Central Committee who had a new role, 57 percent acquired it through promotions from the alternate Central Committee member ranks. In short, the pattern of renewal shows a healthy mix of order and change.

Somewhat similar patterns obtain in individual promotions apart from membership in top party organs. For example, Ramiro Valdés was succeeded as Interior Minister by his own first deputy, Division General José Abrantes. Sergio del Valle was succeeded as Public Health Minister also by his first deputy, Julio Teja. Comparably sensible changes occurred in other ways. For example, the first party secretary of Villa Clara province was replaced by the president of that province's legislative-administrative assembly. Upon Central Bank President Raúl León Torras' death, he was replaced by the former Minister-President of the State Committee for Economic Collaboration, who knew about some of the international economic issues that had come to absorb so much of the bank president's time.

Other changes are subtler but they may indicate the winds of the future: the predominance of civilian party and government officials over the military in the conduct of the regime's affairs. The share of military officers on active duty in the Central Committee has been falling steadily since 1965. However, though the military share fell between 1975 and 1980, the number remained the same thanks to the expansion of the Central Committee's size. In 1986 both the share and the number fell (18 percent and 26, respectively). More interestingly, only one of the 21 full members continuing to the 1986 Central Committee had been shifted to a civilian post. Therefore, the military drop out rate of 42 percent (compared to the civilian drop out rate of 32 percent) came almost entirely through political demotion rather than lateral transfer.

These demotions affected the Revolutionary Navy and the Interior Ministry much more than the other branches. All four navy full or alternate Central Committee members were dismissed and the navy's representation was reduced to one new alternate Central Committee member. This and other evidence suggests some serious organizational problems within the Cuban Navy.

The Interior Ministry lost four of its full Central Committee members and all but one of its six alternate Central Committee members; its net representation on the Central Committee fell from seven to five full members and from six to three alternates. In contrast, Army and Air Force officers, combined, showed a drop out rate of only 37 percent. The political weakness of the Interior Ministry can also be seen in the

manner in which Ramiro Valdés was replaced. The announcements of the replacements as ministers of Valdés and Sergio del Valle occurred within two weeks of each other. The Politburo statement in the Interior Minister's case was terse. In contrast, del Valle received fulsome praise.² At the Central Committee meeting when Fidel Castro noted Valdés's departure from the Political Bureau, Castro's only references to Valdés's good service predated 1959. Moreover, the departure from the Central Committee and other top responsibilities of José Joaquín Méndez Cominches, who had headed foreign intelligence activities for the Interior Ministry, seems to have been connected to the malperformance of those services in gathering information about the decomposition of the New Jewel Movement and its government in Grenada. Some Interior Ministry personnel were also thought to have become corrupt; others may have agreed with former party ideology secretary, Antonio Pérez Herrero, who opposed the new political opening toward the Roman Catholic church.

The standing of members of the Council of Ministers did not change much. As in the past, many of the more technical ministers do not belong to the Central Committee, although most of the key ministers do. Of course, the most significant change was the removal of Humberto Pérez as Central Planning Board president and his replacement by a new ad hoc structure under the leadership of Osmany Cienfuegos. The policies associated with the new procedures emphasize centralization and discipline rather than the earlier trend toward enterprise autonomy under market socialism. Beginning in April 1986, Castro's severe critique of the use of monetary incentives to promote economic growth and efficiency weakened further the policies Humberto Pérez once advocated.³

On the other hand, the standing of the party's first secretaries in the provinces—the key position at the regional level—improved markedly. In 1980, there were only three first secretaries as Politburo members or alternates; in 1986, there were five. In 1980, only 9 of the 14 first secretaries were full Central Committee members; in 1986, all of them were. The team of first secretaries in office at the Third Party Congress, therefore, commanded a greater confidence from top leaders than had been the case at the previous congress. The rise of the party's own elite, and the decline of military representation and especially of technocratic civilian power, signals a shift in the direction of party authority.

Symbolic politics have mattered in Cuba for quite some time, and the Third Party Congress was no exception. For the first time, President Castro told the Party Congress that "in order for the party's leadership to duly reflect the ethnic composition of our people, it must include those compatriots of proven revolutionary merit and talents who in the past had been discriminated against because of their skin color."⁴ Although the non-white share of the Politburo and Secretariat remained basically