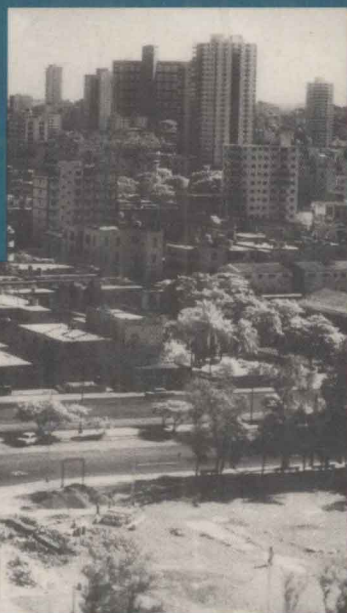
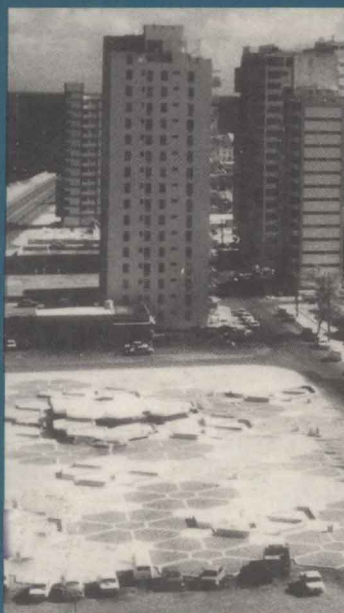
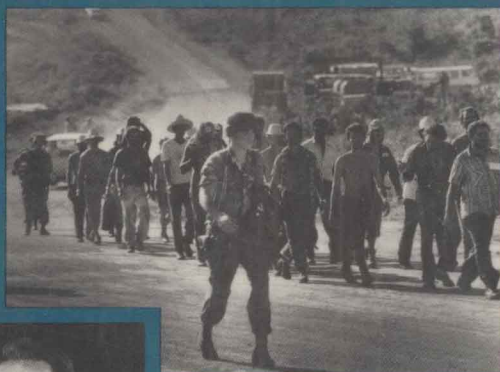


REVISED AND UPDATED EDITION

CUBA

Dilemmas of a Revolution

Juan M. del Aguila



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Foreword

A relatively small island just southeast of Florida, Cuba ranks only in the third tier of Latin American nations in population, with 10 million compared to fourteen times that figure for Brazil. But its importance to today's world is certainly far more than its size, population, and limited resources would indicate. Until a generation ago a near protectorate of the United States and a playground for North Americans seeking diversion at a low cost, Cuba has come to represent both the road to and the costs of breaking such dependency. U.S. domination is by now history, but the dilemma of marginal viability has been resolved not by economic diversification but rather by incorporation into the Soviet-led socialist bloc. In return for massive economic subsidization by the USSR, Cuba has assumed a role as the foothold of the Communist world in the western hemisphere—sort of a West Berlin in reverse on a much greater scale. As such, its future remains insecure, partially mortgaged to the uncertain tides of the East-West confrontation.

In this context Cuba presents an almost impossible challenge to the scholar who would describe what exists there, explain how this has come about, and analyze why Cuba has turned out to be only the second Latin American nation to experience a complete revolution (after Mexico's 1910 upheaval and subsequent civil war). Indeed, the subject of contemporary Cuba arouses passions in authors and readers alike. Reasoned middle-of-the-road interpretations are not only rare, but usually attacked by both sympathizers and critics of the present regime. Yet a balanced approach, difficult as it is to achieve, is the only valid one. Nearly three decades of the Castro regime have undoubtedly left Cuba permanently changed in many important ways, but in the process a number of the 1959 revolution's goals have gone unfulfilled or have been pushed aside to make way for new imperatives.

Clearly the Castro regime's stability contrasts dramatically with the turmoil that preceded it. Indeed, to find a regime as long-lived as Castro's, one would have to search back through the Batista dictatorship (1952–1958), the corrupt “democratic” governments (1944–1952), Batista's con-

stitutional rule (1940–1944), the era of puppet presidents (1934–1940), and the aborted 1933 revolution—back all the way into the late stages of the Machado dictatorship. Put another way, the United States has had seven presidents since Castro came to power, and the only contemporary Latin American chief executive with a longer tenure in office is Paraguay's General Alfredo Stroessner. Castro has been in power nearly as long as the Trujillo regime in the Dominican Republic (1930–1961) and longer than the former hemispheric runner-up, Venezuela's Juan Vicente Gómez (1909–1936). In fact, in comparison to leaders in the rest of the world, only Jordan's King Hussein (crowned in 1952) has been in power longer than the Cuban leader, and the Castro era—still very much in full swing—already surpasses that of the legendary Otto von Bismarck in Prussia and Germany (1862–1890). Compared to leaders of Communist regimes, Castro has already been in power longer than Mao (1950–1976) and Stalin (1925–1953) and is closing in on Tito (1945–1980).

Cuba's active role in the international arena, so apparent on both sides of the African continent as well as in Central America, and the substantial reshaping of Cuban society since 1959 augment the foregoing considerations in underscoring the central place of Professor Juan del Aguila's volume in our series *Nations of Contemporary Latin America*. The author, Cuban by birth but with his higher education obtained in the United States, is part of a new generation of scholarship on Cuba. Drawing on the vast, albeit often qualitatively deficient, body of literature that has grown up around Castro's Cuba, he cuts through myths and misconceptions to provide a coherent account of the society, the economy, and the political system as it has emerged in the process of the ongoing, if by now largely institutionalized, revolution. Although certainly not underplaying the key role of Fidel Castro—either in the original revolution or in the structured Communist regime that this charismatic leader did so much to bring into existence—the author avoids the common error of equating Castro and the realities of the Cuban nation after nearly three decades of his rule.

Del Aguila takes a well-defined position on both the accomplishments and shortcomings of the Cuban Revolution some twenty-nine years after it dislodged Batista and his corrupt authoritarian cohorts from power. Moreover, he weaves together the internal and external factors to portray how and why Cuba under Castro has become an important part of the Communist world. The most remarkable facet of the Cuban story in the 1959 to 1965 period is just how Castro managed to attain the position of recognized head of a fully accredited Communist regime in the face of initial and deeply rooted reluctance on the part of the Soviet leadership to accept his almost total conquest of the orthodox Communists of the popular Socialist party—long entrenched as Kremlin favorites.

In sum, within the best tradition of this series' scholarship, Prof. del Aguila's book covers a great deal of ground thoughtfully and in an

impressively coherent manner. Politics is at the heart of the treatment, but there is also sensitive exploration of the social, economic, and international aspects of Cuban reality. Clarity is achieved without oversimplification, and the final result is a work that not only presents a wealth of information but even more importantly provides a deep understanding of what has taken place, the dynamic factors in the present situation, and the crucial questions for the years immediately ahead. What more could be asked of an author?

Ronald Schneider

Preface to the Revised Edition

Changes and trends in Cuba's political evolution forced me to evaluate the premises of the first edition of *Cuba* and to incorporate new evidence into the established framework. Much has happened that demanded sober analysis and scholarly explanation because political passions and historical revisionism still cloud our understanding of the Cuban revolutionary process. The scholarly community itself is divided on the Cuban issue, between those who judge the intentions of the Cuban regime to be essentially benign and socially conscious and others such as myself who focus on regime behavior and actual policy choices. The "right" political attitudes may bring access and professional flattery, but neither advocacy nor inquisitorial postures should define what is ultimately written.

It is demonstrably clear that revolutionary utopianism has produced social disaffection, economic stagnation, and political inertia in Cuba, and that much of the work of a generation is being intensely scrutinized by its own protagonists. Scathing criticisms of the manner in which socialism is practiced are heard from the very leaders who define what is the "correct path" and what is not permissible, but the conduct of the top political elite is still beyond question. In effect, the Cuban leadership looks back to what had already failed—ideological purity and consciousness raising—and refuses to admit that the very ideas on which the system is based are themselves in disrepute. Prospects for greater freedoms and cultural renewal are thus not likely, because these would inevitably produce calls for effective accountability, and that is indeed radical. □

Cuba's roles in the region and in parts of the Third World are subject to pressures that the regime is able to manage, but continued involvement in civil and tribal wars in Africa takes a considerable toll. New leadership in the Kremlin, apparently unwilling to finance wars of national liberation but willing to force Cuba into efficient management of resources, presents Havana with some unpalatable choices. Finally,

time presses on President Castro, and he must wonder if his legacy will end up like that of Stalin, Mao Tse-tung, Franco, or Perón.

A new editorial staff at Westview Press is very committed to the continued study of Cuba and Latin America, and I am most appreciative of their decision to publish this revised edition. In particular, Miriam Gilbert, Barbara Ellington, and their colleagues deserve my recognition.

Juan M. del Aguila

Preface to the First Edition

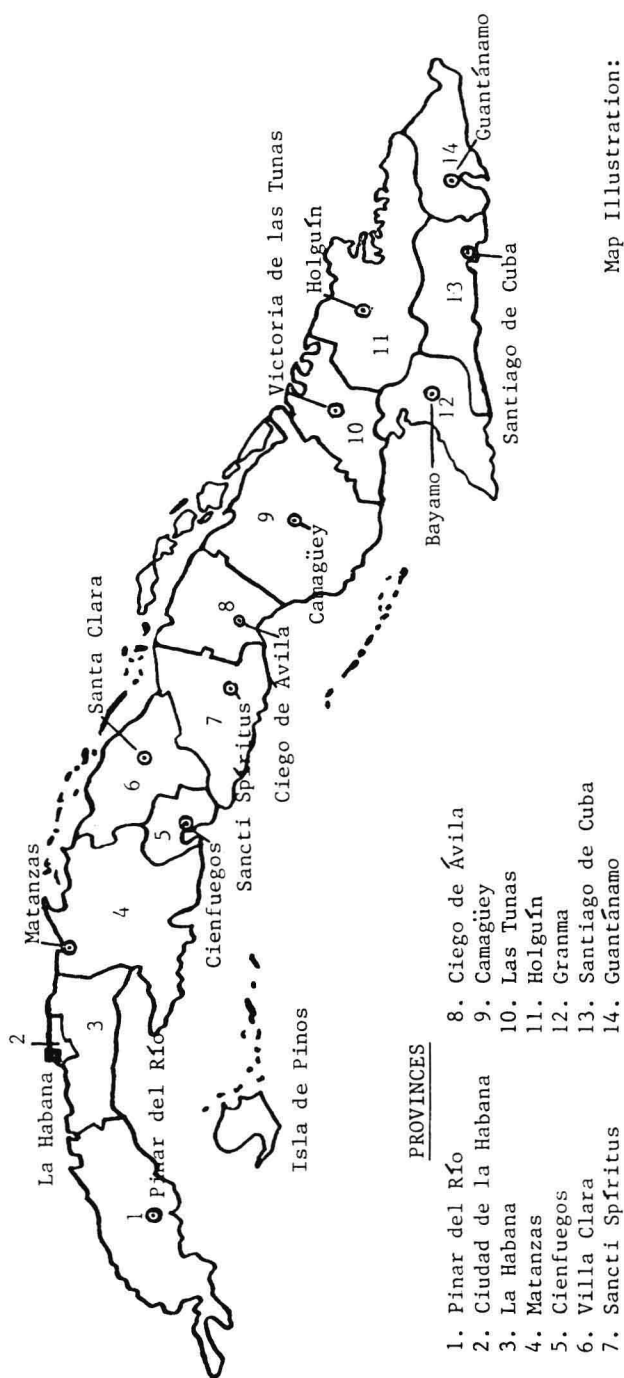
The Cuban revolutionary process continues to excite intellectual passions twenty-five years after its beginning, due to its profound domestic, regional, and geopolitical consequences. Though in a more restrained fashion than in the 1960s and 1970s, debate on Cuba still rages in the classroom, in the media, in government, and in thousands of households. It is an issue that will not disappear from the public or private agenda, and how one stands on the "Cuban question" is often taken to reflect not only personal beliefs, but ultimately one's own political cosmology. And yet, in the interests of scholarship and simple honesty, the accumulated evidence from a generation of struggle, confrontation, and hope has to be judged in a manner that fathoms the complexity of the revolutionary experience and its documented excesses and abuses. Thus, it is in a framework of critical inquiry that I approached the subject, in an effort to strip away the romanticism and hackneyed commentary that passes as analysis of those dilemmas that Cuba faced and continues to confront.

As I have argued, the need for social and economic development and the desire for cultural emancipation hardly justify the conscious maintenance of totalitarianism, insofar as human freedoms are suppressed by forces that have little to do with the structure of property. In that sense, Cuba ought not to serve as a model for societies struggling to achieve a greater degree of social justice or for those that are committed to a realistic sense of political autonomy. If there is a lesson to be learned, it is that dictatorship is not a solution for the problems of development, because that is self-defeating even for small nations. In short, in order to achieve maturity, a nation, through its leaders, must move beyond railing against the pernicious influences of its neocolonial past.

Several individuals deserve thanks, if not praise, for their disinterested assistance. Enrique Baloyra of the University of Miami and Daniel Levy of the State University of New York at Albany—who are friends as well as scholars deeply committed to the study of Cuba and

Latin America—made numerous suggestions that invariably improved the work, but they should be (and are) absolved from any of its flaws. Their comments tempered my judgments and assessments. In addition, the corrections made by the editorial staff at Westview Press reinforced my belief that authors should not have fragile egos, and I can now appreciate why that staff has earned a solid professional reputation. In particular, Lynne Rienner deserves to be commended for her encouragement of younger scholars and Jeanne Remington for her commitment to this project. Finally, my colleagues at Emory, especially Eleanor Main and Ken Stein, have been graciously supportive, and our department staff, Linda Boyte and Karen Bussell, have been generous with their time and efforts.

Juan M. del Aguila



PROVINCES

1. Pinar del Río
2. Ciudad de la Habana
3. La Habana
4. Matanzas
5. Cienfuegos
6. Villa Clara
7. Sancti Spiritus
8. Ciego de Ávila
9. Camagüey
10. Las Tunas
11. Holguín
12. Granma
13. Santiago de Cuba
14. Guantánamo

Cuba

Map Illustration:
Carmella Johns
Atlanta, Georgia

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1

Introduction

Cuba's position in the world arena; its standing in regional affairs; the nature of its economic, cultural, social, and political systems; and its unfinished struggle for nationhood are directly affected by the nature of its government, the character of its people, and the will and vision of its current political leadership. Thirty years after the January 1959 victory of revolutionary forces, the Cuban regime can point with considerable pride to achievements such as a life expectancy of seventy-five years, an infant mortality rate of 14 per 1,000 live births, a literacy rate of more than 96 percent, per capita income of \$1,600 (according to the 1985 estimate), mass education, and the eradication of abject poverty. A well-integrated polity has emerged since the revolutionary period, partly based on militant nationalism, limited political participation, and impressive mobilization capabilities. But, as will be argued here, one cannot estimate either the viability of a society or the success of a revolutionary order exclusively through its material accomplishments. Nation building involves reconciling structural needs with popular aspirations, insofar as these crave for more than minimal material satisfaction.

As will be shown, the Cuban model, featuring economic austerity and political immobility, is beset by dilemmas and contradictions generated by internal pressures, outside forces, and Cuba's unnatural political isolation. In some respects, Cuba suffers from strains typical of developing nations; in other areas, its problems are unique. The outcome of any effort to forge a nation out of disparate elements rests on the availability of resources, the interaction between the few and the many, and the establishment of mechanisms for accountability and the effective expression of the popular will. How historical as well as new dilemmas are confronted and coped with, and what the human and physical costs of transformation add up to, will ultimately decide the outcome of the venture.

This work will focus on the contradictory processes involved in the shaping of Cuba's struggle for nationhood and viability in its postindependence period. Briefly, these are its efforts to create viable political processes in an economically dependent, socially weak society;