NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMITTEES AND POPULAR COURTS

IN THE SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF CUBA

by David K. Booth, B.A. (Essex)

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SUMMARY

This dissertation is a study of the role in the political and social transformation of Cuba of two of the most distinctive institutional products of the Castroist regime's pursuit of mass-participation in the construction of socialism: the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs) and the Popular Courts (Tribunales Populares). Based upon field-work conducted during the author's fifteen month stay in Cuba in 1968-69, the dissertation documents the genesis, development and day-to-day functioning of these formations up to mid-1973, employing for this purpose the findings of an intensive investigation of organisational life in a selected working class neighbourhood of Havana, as well as printed sources. The role of the institutional framework of the revolutionary regime in fostering or inhibiting significant social change is further probed in an analysis of the problems of change corresponding to the trilogy sex, religion and colour.

Whilst three phases are distinguished in the evolution of the CDRs since 1960, it is found that this organisation has always functioned more effectively as an agency of political 'integration' than as a counter-weight to bureaucratic forms of rule. Both positive and negative features are ascribed to the Popular Court experiment, which is expected to have a permanent influence on the development of the judicial system following the latter's impending "unification". Adopting an interpretation of the legacy of the pre-revolutionary society which conflicts at certain points with previous treatments, the analysis of contemporary social trends concludes that progress in this area since 1959 has been uneven. This is attributed to overall deficiencies in the institutional framework of the regime, especially to the absence of organisations of the soviet type and to the continued weakness of the Cuban Communist Party.
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Of the numerous individuals who, knowingly or otherwise, helped to shape my thoughts into a presentable form, I should like to make particular mention of my supervisor, Professor Asher Tropp, for his sympathetic and helpful suggestions over a number of years. My colleague and fellow-Caribbeanist Ivar Oxaal was a constant source of support and provocative intellectual diversions during moments of crisis in the writing-up. In Cuba, the staff of the National Directorate of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, in addition to offering official sponsorship for the project, spared me more hours of their valuable time than I had a right to expect. For their generosity and helpfulness I am especially grateful to cederistas Humberto Perera, Paulino Martínez and Esteban Escudero. For her patience and for permitting me to tap her own considerable knowledge of the life and lore of Havana, I should like to thank my wife, Migdalia Santa Cruz. Pat Wilkinson, finally, typed the manuscript under what most people would regard as impossible conditions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes to Chapter 1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. THE CDRs AND THE POLITICS OF PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formation of the System, 1960-66</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Politics of Participation, 1966-70</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CDRs and the New Mass Line, 1970-73</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes to Chapter 2</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. THE COMING OF THE POPULAR COURTS, I</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revolutionary Offensive</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghosts from the Past</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The City as Setting</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes to Chapter 3</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. THE COMING OF THE POPULAR COURTS, II</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Popular Courts: The Idea</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Popular Courts: A Case</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice, Participation and the Law: An Epilogue</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes to Chapter 4</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. PARTICIPATION AND SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGE: SOME PROBLEMS</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex, Machismo and the Socialist Frontier</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cults, Carnivals and 'Consciousness'</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Question of Colour</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes to Chapter 5</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes to Chapter 6</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX 1. Emulation Targets for Urban CDRs, May-September 1969</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX 2. Selected Indices of National CDR Activity, 1961-72</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLOSSARY</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>CDR MEMBERSHIP 1961-72</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>COMPARISON OF CDR ORGANISATION, SEPTEMBER 1964 AND MAY 1969</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>SAN RAMON SECTION CDRs, SPRING 1969</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>MEMBERS OF NUMBER 12 ZONE COMMITTEE, SAN RAMON SECTION, SPRING 1969</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>&quot;LA CORONA&quot;: MONTHLY MONEY WAGES OF WORKING POPULATION, MALE AND FEMALE</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>POPULAR COURT, LOCALITY 2, SAN RAMON: ACCUSATIONS, CONVICTIONS AND ACQUITALS BY MONTH, MAY 1968-APRIL 1969</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>POPULAR COURT, LOCALITY 2, SAN RAMON: ACCUSATIONS, CONVICTIONS AND ACQUITALS, MAY 1968-APRIL 1969 INCLUSIVE, BY PRINCIPAL OFFENCE OR MISDEMEANOUR</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>ACCUSATIONS AND CONVICTIONS: SELECTED SUBTOTALS</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>POPULAR COURT, LOCALITY 2, SAN RAMON: PRINCIPAL SANCTIONS IMPOSED IN CASES DATED MAY 1968-APRIL 1969</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

We are not masters of history but the pupils of history. We learn from the revolutionary process; and the revolutionary process itself, with its infinite variety of new experiences, with its infinite number of possibilities, must always be the great teacher of all people, the great teacher of all revolutionaries. The best book, our true textbook in matters of revolution, will always be the revolutionary process itself.


The eradication of bureaucratic and authoritarian modes of political, economic and social organisation is a task which presents itself in today's socialist world without regard to national or doctrinal frontiers. The institutionalisation of a system permitting to the mass of the working class a permanent and controlling voice in decision-making at all levels of state and society remains a precondition of advance towards socialism in every one of those countries which have up to the present taken their first hesitant steps along this road. This statement is intended not merely as a conceptual proposition or as one which is true by definition. It is often repeated that the classless society is inconceivable without both economic abundance and the fullest democracy. Less often is it admitted that the practical interconnectedness of the goals which socialism represents may well be such that even the short-term aims of today's Communist regimes - the provision of a measure of social justice and the attainment of acceptable levels of economic efficiency - are unrealisable without a radical reform of their political systems. It is the belief that this is generally the case which motivates and underpins the present study.
 Whilst the task of democratisation is an ubiquitous one, however, the form in which it presents itself is obviously subject to considerable variation from country to country, depending upon a multitude of historical and structural factors. For a combination of two reasons, the manner in which the problem is posed in the case of Cuba is peculiar and indeed with few parallels in the experience to date of any other post-capitalist state. Firstly, the problem of organisation in Cuba cannot be regarded in any rigorous sense as the product of the 'degeneration' of a regime founded at the outset upon a broadly-based workers' democracy and falling prey little by little to authoritarian or bureaucratic practices. On the contrary, the source of the problem is in a straightforward and uncomplicated sense the nature of the revolution of January 1959 and the character of the political process which led to the overthrow of the capitalist order in Cuba in years immediately following. Alongside the other great socialist revolutions of the twentieth century, the Cuban experience is an anomaly not least because it occurred without the creation of substantial revolutionary institutions of any type. The Cuban revolutionaries had recourse, neither in 1956-58, nor in 1959-60, to mass organs of struggle either in the tradition of the soviets of 1917 or in that of the great Asian wars of our time; they achieved their ends moreover on the basis of a loosely-constituted alliance of exceedingly diverse political forces, beginning the job of building a revolutionary party more than two years after their seizure of state power. The Rebel Army, with probably fewer than 2,000 men under arms at the end of the revolutionary war, was not only the principal agency bringing about the collapse of the Batista dictatorship, but also the single organised political
formation guaranteeing the continued radicalism of the Revolutionary Government during the crucial years 1959-60 and even perhaps for some time after that.

The peculiar ease with which Fidel Castro and his comrades were able not only to topple Batista but also to lay the foundations of a planned economy in the space of a few short years is explicable only in the light of the unusual fragility of the political regime and underlying social order of pre-revolutionary Cuba, as Robin Blackburn first argued in a classic essay. Summarising what are today well-known features of the Cuban experience, Blackburn wrote:

The unprecedented hallmarks of the revolution — its lack of party or an ideology — were the logical product of a pre-revolutionary society which itself lacked any decisive institutional or ideological structures. There were no institutions in Cuba of a kind to force the revolution, over decades of testing struggle, to create iron counter-institutions of its own, as happened in Russia and China. There was no enveloping, pervasive reactionary ideology to combat either. The enemy was a starkly corrupt and a-social machine. Its character determined the condition of its overthrow.¹

This observation serves to draw attention to a second distinctive property of the problem of organisation as posed in Cuba which, in combination with the first, gives it its unique properties. Made almost exclusively by non-Communists, the Cuban revolution was led through every decisive phase by political forces organisationally and ideologically independent of the parties of the Third International. A thorough assessment of the implications of this fact remains to be made, but one consequence of it is clearly to set the Cuban regime apart from all those Communist states established in Europe and Asia in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, adding a distinctive dimension to the question of the forms
of post-revolutionary rule. Without wishing to imply thereby that the problem of bureaucratic rule is necessarily more easily overcome, we may say that the Cuban revolution has not been subject to the species of 'inherited degeneration' which affected all these other regimes in various ways and to a greater or lesser extent.

This is not to suggest that orthodox Communists of Stalinist or post-Stalinist persuasion have played no role in determining the course of the "institutionalisation of the revolution" in Cuba. At times the combined forces of the 'old' Cuban Communists of the Partido Socialista Popular (PSP) and their co-thinkers in the CPSU have severely constrained the development of Castroist-policies in this and other respects, whilst in every period since 1961 at the latest the political positions of Moscow-line Communism have provided the necessary dramatic counterpoint to the major themes of the Cuban symphony. Neither the content nor the style of Fidel Castro's politics can be explained satisfactorily except in the context of this fact. A distinctively Fidelista approach to questions of political organisation - an ill-defined but nonetheless persistent collection of precepts whose affinity with the theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism among orthodox Communists is slight - is nevertheless clearly identifiable. Two elements run like a thread through Fidelista pronouncements on problems of organisation in socialist Cuba and are expressed consistently in the political practice of Castro and his closest associates. The first, the prominence of which has unquestionably increased over the years as little by little the Cuban leadership has come to recognise the dimensions of the task before it, is a concern to
provide for the "participation" of the mass of the working class, and to a lesser extent of the small peasantry, in the construction of the new society and of a developed economy. This pre-occupation has often been expressed in the form of an insistence upon the use by revolutionary cadres of "political" styles of leadership, which, by definition, help to foster the involvement of the population in the central questions of the day, and a corresponding condemnation of "administrative" methods which, it is held, promote the passivity of the masses. The second consistent element in the Fidelista approach is an extreme and unrepentant pragmatism with regard to the means, institutional and otherwise, by which "participation" is to be achieved and through which the advance of "administrative" procedures is to be prevented. 'Che' Guevara, then a leading member of the Fidelista leadership, dwelt upon this latter theme in a well-known passage of his "Socialism and Man in Cuba" (1965). Observing that the "institutionalisation of the Revolution" had not yet been achieved, Guevara went on to explain:

We are seeking something new that will permit a perfect identification between the government and the community as a whole, adapted to the special conditions of the building of socialism and avoiding to the utmost the commonplace of bourgeois democracy transplanted to the society in formation (such as legislative houses, for example). Some experiments have been carried out with the aim of gradually creating the institutionalisation of the revolution, but without too much hurry. We have been greatly restrained by the fear that any formal aspect might make us lose sight of the ultimate and most important revolutionary aspiration: to see man freed from alienation.\(^2\)

The view that Guevara advanced in his essay was not a personal one. Speaking a few months after these lines were written, on the occasion of the inauguration of the new Communist Party of Cuba
(PCC) in October 1965, Fidel Castro voiced the hope and the expectation that through this organisation it would be possible to elaborate "a different form of Government", one which would prove "a thousand times more democratic than bourgeois democracy" because it would call forth "the constant participation of the masses". At the same time he insisted that new political institutions would make their appearance through a slow process of experimentation and not by the blind imitation of models derived from the experience of other countries:

We will develop our own paths, our ideas, our methods, our system. We'll make use of all the experience that may be valuable to us, and we'll develop our own experiences.  

Fidel Castro's elevation of pragmatism to the status of a revolutionary virtue - an attitude summed-up in the quotation which heads this chapter - is clearly in part a 'cover' which has permitted the Fidelistas room to manoeuvre in relation to the allegedly more orthodox theory and practice of their critics at home and abroad. (Thus it was in the speech of 1965 just cited that Castro insisted "it is impossible to conceive of Marxism as something like a church, like a religious doctrine, like a Rome with its Pope and Ecumenical Council".  

It would appear, all the same, that an empirical approach towards questions of organisation recommends itself to the Castroist leaders for reasons which transcend the exigencies of factional infighting and inter-party diplomacy, rooted rather in the anomalous history of the revolution itself.  

A speech made by Castro in 1967 contains his longest public discussion of the question to date and is worth quoting liberally in this context. The Cuban revolution, he observed, had not begun its history by framing "abstract institutions", and
he added:

The truth is, the few times the Revolution has created abstract institutions, it has found in the long-run that this is a mistaken method for creating social institutions. Historically, many social movements have been distinguished above all by their creation of a Law of Laws, that is a Constitution. In the long term the result has been that this constitution has become taboo and inviolable; in the long term it has turned into an intellectual creation which is ineffective and incapable of responding to realities.

It was not the inclination of our Revolution, for example, to begin by making one abstract creation, in order, starting from that abstract creation, to establish a bombastic so-called Socialist Constitution. And what a good thing that was! What a good thing!

In the light of experience, looking back from the here and now into the unfathomable obscurity of our past ignorance, we realise very clearly how many mistaken notions, how many incomprehensibilities, and how many unrealistic and crazy ideas ... such a constitution would have implied.

Fidelista organisational pragmatism and the faith that "the revolutionary process itself" is an adequate guide to the construction of a socialist society is not without objective roots in the nature of the Cuban revolutionary order. On the other hand, to the extent that concealed within it is a refusal to come to grips politically with the accumulated theoretical and practical heritage of "the revolutionary process" in other lands and other epochs, this attitude must be treated as a part of the problem as much as a part of the solution to the problem of workers' democracy on the island. The concept of "participation" itself contains both the strengths and the weaknesses inherent in this approach: expressing a vague aspiration of a certain type, the ambiguity and open-endedness of this concept as employed by the Fidelistas permits them considerable creative flexibility in coming to terms with the
peculiar history and problems of the Cuban revolution; at the same time the notion has the decisive property of obscuring rather than clarifying the analytical distinction between bureaucratic and democratic forms of rule and decision-making. By itself therefore the Castroist 'theory' of political organisation offers little or no guarantee against the advance, and, more important, the consolidation, of "administrative methods". For the observer of Cuban affairs, one effect of this consideration is to place a premium upon the analysis of the actual practice of organisational innovation and change. There is, in other words, no substitute for careful scrutiny and documentation of the practical forms through which the aspirations of the Cuban leadership are expressed, together with an alertness towards subtle and sometimes unheralded developments in the implementation of policy in this area.

The aim of this dissertation is to document and analyse two of the most important institutional products of the pursuit of mass participation in revolutionary Cuba, with particular reference to the contribution of these formations to significant political and social change. The Committees for the Defence of the Revolution - the first object of our enquiry - are a mass political organisation. Organised on a residential basis at the level of the urban block or street and rural hamlet, the CDRs, as they are most often known, possess their own national system of coordination and control and comprise by a substantial margin the most inclusive of Cuba's mass organisations. In September 1972, the committees had a national membership of over four and a quarter million or seventy per cent of the eligible population (men and women aged fifteen and above). The trade unions, by comparison, had little
more than two million members in May 1973 and the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), an organisation dedicated principally to the recruitment of women into the labour force, had an enrolment of 1,600,000 - sixty-three per cent of women aged between fourteen and sixty-five - at the end of 1972. The only other mass organisation for adults, the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP), reportedly organised 225,000 members from 180,000 small peasant families in 1970. The relative size of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution is not, however, the only factor responsible for their considerable importance within the total organisational framework of the revolutionary regime. Owing to the peculiarities of the process of mass mobilisation in the making of the first socialist revolution in the Western Hemisphere - the conspicuous passivity of the labour movement before 1959 and the urgent priority given to national defence in the years which immediately followed - the relative political weight of the committees is greater than that of their structural equivalents in other post-capitalist states. For much of the time since their origins in September 1960 the CDRs have functioned as the single most effective mechanism mediating between the Castroist leadership and its mass following, and the organisation has come to occupy a strategic place in the thinking of Cuban revolutionaries on questions relating to the "institutionalisation of the Revolution".

The Popular Courts [Tribunales Populares], the second focus of this study, are the product of Cuban efforts to bring "participation" into the judicial sphere. Introduced at the local level throughout the country in 1967-68, these new institutions for the administration of justice rely entirely upon a non-vocational judiciary elected in
the first instance from among the inhabitants of the localities in which they have jurisdiction. The aim of the Revolutionary Government in creating the Popular Courts was both to overcome a shortage of qualified legal personnel and to draw the moral weight of the local communities into the dispensing of petty justice. Unlike the CDRs, the courts belong to a particular period in the development of the revolutionary regime and, like similar experiments in China and the USSR, they appear destined to disappear in their present form. As of August 1971 plans were at an advanced stage for a reform of the judicial system designed to provide it with greater uniformity and whose result is likely to be that the administration of justice in Cuba will in future parallel more closely recent Soviet practice. Nevertheless it is to be expected that the influence of the Popular Court experience will have some permanence.

The existing secondary literature on the role of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution in Cuban politics scarcely extends beyond one title and is therefore best commented upon at an appropriate point below. The Popular Courts have been subjected to even greater neglect at the hands both of legal scholars and of social scientists, and at the time of writing the student is obliged to rely entirely upon primary sources. The general literature on Cuban affairs since 1959, which is of course relatively abundant, bears upon the theme of this dissertation in as much as it illuminates either the general or the particular features of the problem of organisation as it has come to be posed in Cuba. First of all, a
number of economists who made studies, of widely varying quality and character, on the growing difficulties encountered in the implementation of Cuba's development plans in the late 'sixties have been led to draw conclusions which stress the interdependence of economic and political problems. Whilst without exception these authors recommend democratisation, criticising with greater or lesser acrimony the paternalist attitudes of the Castroist leaders, little agreement is to be found among them as to the precise characteristics of the remedy required. Despite differences on other aspects of the matter, Boorstein, Huberman and Sweezy, Karol, Valier and Maitan\textsuperscript{12} appear to favour a devolution of power within the framework of central planning and a system tending to curtail the effects of market forces. Dumont and Mesa-Lago\textsuperscript{13} on the other hand emphasise what are alleged to be intrinsic weaknesses of the centralisation of economic decision-making, advising the adoption by Cuba of features of the 'Yugoslav' model of democratisation and decentralisation at plant-level.

As was suggested above, and as we shall see in specific connections in the pages which follow, the content and timing of institutional innovations in the context of the Cuban revolution are not independent of the relation of forces obtaining at a given moment between the Fidelistas and orthodox Communists at home and abroad. The literature devoted to advancing one or other of the several competing explanations of Castro's initial conversion to Marxism and Leninism is now substantial.\textsuperscript{14} Relating more directly to our subject, Suárez provides the most useful study of the relations between Castroists and Communists from 1959 to 1966, whilst Tutino, Karol, Thomas, and Aguilar\textsuperscript{15} illuminate some of the relevant historical background. The international aspects of
this relationship in various phases of Cuba's post-revolutionary
history are examined in a large literature which continues to grow
annually.\textsuperscript{16}

Studies of specific problems in the political institutionalisa-
tion of the Cuban revolution are still scarce. Fidel Castro's
role and the fate of successive efforts on the part of the Cuban
leadership to construct a vanguard party of a recognisably Leninist
type have been the subject of commentaries by Fagen, Angell,
Enzensberger, Suárez and Horowitz.\textsuperscript{17} The role of the army and
its relation to the Party leadership remains a topic for speculation,
whilst the development of the trade unions until their reform in
1970 probably merits the neglect which it has suffered.\textsuperscript{18} Fagen
has some interesting ideas regarding the general phenomenon of
mass mobilisation in Cuba.\textsuperscript{19}

This study is written in the belief that it is neither possible
nor desirable to discuss forms of political or judicial organisation
in abstraction from the political or social changes which they are
designed to facilitate or bring about. Thorough sociological
studies of particular aspects of Cuba's changing social patterns
are few indeed, partly because of the obstacles, both external and
internal, to the conduct of research based on other than documentary
sources. Useful surveys have been published by MacGaffey and
Barnet, Amaro and Mesa-Lago, and Moreno.\textsuperscript{20} Studies which, within
the limitations imposed by the availability of statistical information,
permit a balanced assessment of the changing 'quality of life' in
Cuba have been made by Petras, Valdés, Leyva, Paulston and Nelson.\textsuperscript{21}
Elizabeth Sutherland's intelligent \textit{reportage} on life in Cuba in 1967
deserves special mention, along with José Yglesias' study of a
village in Oriente province, as an outstanding exemplar of the
strengths of this genre.  

The research upon which this study is based was conducted
during a stay in Cuba for fieldwork purposes beginning in August
1968 and ending in November 1969. The design and orientation
of the investigation reflects the circumstances of its conception
as well as the author's particular predilections and failings.
The study of two organisational forms - the CDRs and the Popular
Courts - recommended itself not only because of the intrinsic
interest of these formations and their salience within any global
discussion of the problem of organisation in Cuba but also because
of the relative ease with which official sanction could be obtained
for such a project. The main advantage of proceeding in this way -
with the blessing, notably, of the National Directorate of the CDRs -
was that it permitted documentary research to be combined with
direct observation of a sustained and, by the standards of foreign
visitors in Cuba, comparatively unobtrusive sort. The degree to
which this combination has been successfully achieved here is
entirely the author's responsibility.

The drawbacks, on the other hand, of a research project whose
boundaries are defined as those of a formal institution are several
and undoubtedly some or all of these manifest themselves from time
to time in subsequent chapters. Firstly, because the Committees
for the Defence of the Revolution and the Popular Courts constitute
more segments respectively of Cuba's political and judicial systems,
the effect of observing and describing their history or functioning
is often to raise a good many questions of a particular or general order which, within the framework of the research and on the basis of available information, it is quite impossible to answer. Crucially important issues concerning the interface between different organisational spheres - the CDRs and the Party, the courts and the police - remain clouded and confused.

The problem of boundaries also arises in a second way, in connection with an assessment of the contribution of specific formal organisations within an ongoing process of social and political change. In reality there are few aspects of the social transformation of Cuba since 1959 which are not relevant to an understanding of the role and significance of the CDRs and Popular Courts, and which are not affected in some fashion by the existence of these structures. At the same time, to narrow the investigation of these processes to the specific issue of their relevance to the development of the organisational forms with which we are concerned is to run the risk of producing a fatally one-sided account of them. To the extent that this difficulty has been overcome here, this has been achieved by means of a strict and partly arbitrary selection of topics for discussion, together with an effort to maintain the integrity of the subject in hand at the expense, where necessary, of the major themes of the dissertation. These remarks apply specifically to Chapter 3 below, whose purpose is to provide some elements of contemporary background as a preface to the discussion on the Popular Courts in the following chapter; and to Chapter 5, which deals with selected problems of cultural change in relation to the theme of "participation".

A third and final source of difficulty for the student of the
CDRs and Popular Courts qua organisations is the fact that those institutions had independent origins and have developed in accord with their own particular rhythms. For this reason the chapters of this dissertation do not observe a historical sequence: whereas Chapter 2, which deals with the committees, spans the whole period 1960-73, Chapters 3 and 4, because they are concerned with the courts, focus more narrowly upon the phase 1966-70. To avoid disorientation, the reader is recommended to treat each chapter as a relatively self-contained unit.

The parts of the dissertation directly concerned with the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution and the Popular Courts draw upon notes made by the author on the basis of direct observation and informal interviews in Cuba during 1968-69. The contents of the files of the Popular Court in one locality of Havana which was selected for intensive observation have been made use of in Chapter 4. Elsewhere primary documentary sources have been relied on for the most part. In addition to occasional sources including books, pamphlets and leaflets, the following regular Cuban publications have been consulted: the two remaining daily newspapers, Granma and Juventud Rebelde, as well as the English language weekly summary of the former, Granma Weekly Review (GWR), whose coverage of politically important topics is adequate for general purposes; the Party theoretical journal, Cuba Socialista, until its cessation of publication in February 1967; a monthly magazine for rank and file Party members compiled by the Commission for Revolutionary Orientation (COR) of the PCC, El Militante Comunista, and the monthly journal of the National Directorate of the CDRs Con la Guardia en Alto; Bohemia, a fortnightly news magazine aimed at the general public; and two publications of ethnographic interest
There is a general lack of reliable statistics in Cuba and published information is scarce in many fields particularly since the termination of Cuba Socialista. In future the new journal Economía y Desarrollo published as a bi-monthly by the Institute of Economics at the University of Havana since 1970 may help to fill this gap. However for some years now the principal source of information regarding government policy and its effects has been the speeches of Fidel Castro and, to a lesser degree, other Cuban leaders. No apology needs to be made therefore for frequent citations of sources of this type in the chapters which follow. Quotations accompanied by references in Spanish have been translated by the author; otherwise, official Cuban government translations have been used in spite of their occasional lapses in style.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. Robin Blackburn, "Prologue to the Cuban Revolution", New Left Review, No. 21, October 1963, p. 82 (emphasis in the original). Fidel Castro himself summed the matter up with a certain flair in his conversations with students at the University of Concepción, Chile, in November 1971:

   ....What happened was that when the Revolution took power the bourgeois state didn't exist any more....

   Once our revolutionary government was established, the laws were enacted by decree. And, in this situation, some vestiges of the bourgeois state - such as the administrative apparatus - still remained. "Remained?" Some vestiges of the bourgeois state remain even now in Cuba. I only wish we could say there weren't any.

   It is quite possible that some of the organisations we created were even more bourgeois than the old bourgeois state.


4. Ibid., p. 25.


6. For details on CDR membership, see Chapter 2 below.


10. I have translated the Spanish term as 'court' rather than 'tribunal' since the latter term has a connotation of extraordinary judicial powers inappropriate in this context.

11. José Gabriel Guma, "Unification of the Judicial System", GMR, 5 September 1971, p. 8. For further discussion, see Chapter 4 below.


Whilst most students of contemporary Cuban affairs are prepared to recognise the importance of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution in the organisational framework of the revolutionary regime, few have devoted more than two or three lines to specifying their political role.\(^1\) Only one study has attempted to deal with the subject in any detail, arguing that, along with the literacy campaign of 1961 and the Schools of Revolutionary Instruction (EIR), the committees may be regarded from the point of view of their contribution to "the transformation of political culture" in Cuba.\(^2\) In grappling with the problem of the political significance of the CDRs, this chapter traces the growth and development of the organisation, paying particular attention to discontinuities in its history and to the relationship between leadership policy and CDR practice since 1966.

Table 1 below presents statistics indicating the trajectory of the total membership of the committees since their beginnings in September 1960, together with nominal annual growth rates. On the view which I shall advance in this chapter, the three phases of growth perceptible in the table (if we ignore for the time being the significance of the decline in membership registered for 1967) correspond to, and are the reflection of, the same number of relatively distinct periods in leadership policy regarding the committees. The major turning points, it will be argued, are 1966, when increased assertiveness and independence on the part of the Fidelista tendency in the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) made itself felt in the National Directorate of the CDRs, and 1970,
## Table 1

**CDR Membership 1961-72**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Members</th>
<th>Growth over Previous Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>798,703</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>1,199,835</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>1,656,195</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>1,954,546</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>2,011,276</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>2,237,652</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>1,704,689</td>
<td>-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>2,216,400</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>3,222,147</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>3,222,147</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>3,500,125</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>4,236,342</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** Bohemia, 24 September 1971, pp. 46-53; "Committees for the Defence of the Revolution: 12 Months, 12 years Check-up and Summary", Granma Weekly Review, 8 October 1972, p. 10. See also note 3.
when Fidel Castro led the Party into a fundamental reorientation of its line on organisational questions generally. To point to changes in policy is not to deny the existence of fundamental continuities in the structure and style of the organisation from its beginnings to the present day. On the contrary it is by investigating the twists and turns of its history in the short run that I hope best to assess the continuous, long-term contribution of the CDRs to the progress of the revolution.

FORMATION OF THE SYSTEM, 1960-66

The CDRs were born and assumed many of their distinctive features during the critical months between the cuttings of the Cuban sugar quota by the United States in July 1960 and the defeat of the counter-revolutionary invasion at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961. The major parameters of mass mobilisation during this phase need to be borne in mind in what follows. In the first place, although it was in October 1960 that the process of expropriation of non-agricultural properties began in earnest, bringing 85 per cent of industrial production into the state sector by the following autumn, the revolutionary authorities had yet to declare themselves Marxist-Leninists, or even socialists. On the level of political leadership, the need to create a revolutionary party, albeit 'after the event', had still not been posed by Castro or any of the other leaders of the erstwhile 26th July Movement. To the extent that organised political interventions on the part of the mass of the revolution's supporters had already occurred, these had remained both quantitatively and qualitatively weak, the de facto destruction of the bases of the
capitalist state having been assured more by the character and leadership of the victorious Rebel Army than by the creation of organs of independent working class power in the tradition of the soviets of 1917. The characteristic forms of mass mobilisation developed to date - notably the militia - had responded to a very particular need: that of defending militarily and politically a series of popular measures, reformist in content if revolutionary in form, and the, as yet undefined, future programme of a government already firmly established in power. Whilst representing a qualitatively new departure for the Castroist masses, the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution sprang from this same soil.

In their original form the committees were loosely-constituted bodies established at street-, neighbourhood- or village-level, and on occasion in workplaces, to combat the campaigns of counter-revolutionary sabotage and terror which continued throughout the Revolutionary Government's second year of office. The idea of mobilising the government's supporters in the particular fashion which led to the creation of Defence Committees is attributable to Fidel Castro and his closest associates. Castro launched the proposal during a lengthy speech on 28 September 1960 in an atmosphere highly charged as a result of bombings in public places and rumours of imminent invasion:  

..... Let us establish a system of collective vigilance; let us establish a system of revolutionary collective vigilance. And let's see how the lackeys of imperialism manage to operate here. Because, when all's said and done, we represent the whole city; there is not a street, nor a block, nor a neighbourhood which is not fully represented here. In the
face of imperialism's campaigns of aggression, let us set up a system of collective revolutionary vigilance - so that everyone may know who lives on his own block, what he does, what connections he had with the tyranny, what he does now, with whom he associates, and what he gets up to. Because if they think they can lock horns with the people they are in for a tremendous disappointment! Because we are going to organise a Revolutionary Vigilance Committee on every block.... They are playing games with the people, but they don't realise what they have taken on. They are playing games with the people but they don't realise the tremendous revolutionary force which there is in the people.6

In the days and weeks which followed, "vigilance committees" were founded in every neighbourhood of Havana and, in quick succession, in the towns, villages and hamlets of the interior, as groups of private citizens set up shop as guardians of the security of the young regime. By April it was claimed there were 8,000 of them, with a total membership of about 70,000 throughout the country.7 The energy with which masses of Cubans responded to Castro's call is what partially justifies the proposition often voiced in later years that the CDRs sprang from a "living dialogue between Fidel and the people".8

The purpose of the first CDRs was, as Castro intimated, to observe and report to the police the activities of known or suspected counter-revolutionaries.9 When the threatened invasion materialised on 17 April 1961 in the form of a CIA-organised landing at Playa Giron on the south coast of Cuba, they fulfilled this purpose to the extent of providing most of the information leading to the internment of an estimated 20,000 people in Havana - and in the region of 100,000 nationally - for the duration of the crisis.10 On the view later popularised by Castro himself, CDR
"Vigilance" in this phase was the main cause of the shift in counter-revolutionary activity away from the cities and towns of Cuba, into less populous areas of the interior during the remainder of 1961. But with the new tactics and later decline of violent internal opposition the development of the organisation did not come to an end. On the contrary, immediately following the Bay of Pigs the decision was taken to mount a membership campaign with the target of 500,000 members and 100,000 committees. As a result, five months after the invasion a total of nearly 800,000 cederistas had been recruited and 107,000 CDRs formed in a country whose total population was still under the seven million mark. As the tide of sabotage and armed opposition subsided from 1962 onwards moreover the expansion of the CDR system continued, bringing total membership over one million during 1962, over one and a half million in 1963 and close to two million in 1964.

There is no shortage of plausible explanations of the decision to expand the CDRs. Even before April 1961 it is clear that the revolutionary leaders saw in the organisation potentialities which went well beyond "vigilance" proper, and leaflets describing their purposes and responsibilities which were in circulation early in 1961 included references to the need to aid production, the literacy campaign and the holding of public political meetings. To limit ourselves for the time being to the simplest aspect of the matter, the socialist transformation of the Cuban economy, which began to assume a general character from October 1960, created for the revolutionary authorities an administrative problem of gigantic proportions. In general the
need for some measure of governmental control over newly nationalised sectors was met by the creation of new ministries or state agencies endowed with awe-inspiring titles and impressive, if entirely comprehensible, records of inefficiency. In the CDRs on the other hand government leaders quickly recognised a ready-made structure which might be entrusted with, among other things, the rapid and effective implementation of a variety of measures in the spheres of adult education, health, welfare and distribution, on a national scale but at a minimal cost to the state budget. Thus, starting in 1961, a series of new demands were made of the committees. In the summer the Revolutionary Government took a decision of outstanding political and economic significance: to respond to growing shortages of essential foodstuffs with price-controls and an egalitarian system of rationing. The CDRs were charged with the necessary census of consumers and, in 1962 when ration-cards were first distributed, it was the CDRs that assured their distribution and exercised "vigilance" over the operation of the new system, thus dealing "a heavy blow to the speculators, counter-revolutionaries and class-enemies". During the Missile Crisis of 1962 and afterwards the committees took responsibility for the mobilisation of voluntary blood donors, who came forward for the first time in large numbers in Cuba's history, and the country's first national campaign of polio vaccinations was completed in five days in 1963, thanks to CDR health posts established for the purpose.

Each year which passed saw the introduction of new duties into the ambit of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, or the elevation of existing activities to the level of a national
campaign. Generally stress was laid on the latest priorities set out by Fidel Castro or other revolutionary leaders. Thus it was in 1964, the "Year of the Economy", that the organisation was asked to add to its tasks responsibility for the mobilisation of voluntary weekend labour, to help rescue Cuban agriculture from its critical state. Salvage-collections, park-construction, school-painting and even street repairs began to be undertaken by CDR squads before the middle of the decade and, characteristically, since all these activities were seen as part of a war against underdevelopment and imperialism, each sphere of work was spoken of as a "front". The Education Front of the committees achieved its first major "victory" in the "Battle for the Sixth Grade", with the enrolment of about 700,000 workers and peasants in free-time adult education courses during 1965.\textsuperscript{18}

The organisational form of the CDRs however underwent a number of major changes in the course of the period under consideration. The first vigilance committees created late in 1960 or early in 1961 enjoyed considerable independence and were permitted, if only because there was no way in which this could be effectively prevented, a good deal of leeway to interpret the scope and character of their responsibilities according to the inclinations of their members. Although from the outset they were formally required to register with the local government authorities, the ruling was most often honoured in the breach.\textsuperscript{19} It was not until some months after the Bay of Pigs that serious attempts were made to organise the street-level CDRs within a national system of coordination and control, and the creation of the type of hierarchy of national, provincial and intermediate CDR organs characteristic
of the system in later years took until early in 1962. The history of the interim period is littered with evidence of excessive, arbitrary and even corrupt actions on the part of CDR representatives. Emigrés who left Cuba in the period up to October 1962 frequently cited the CDRs in evidence of the iniquities of the regime, complaining both of active harassment by committee members and of the intolerable psychological burden of being "spied upon" by their neighbours and labelled as gusanos by longstanding acquaintances. But, although it is impossible to gauge precisely the incidence of acts in excess of, or in contradiction with, the requirements of revolutionary vigilance, it is clear that the CDRs earned the animosity not just of anti-Communists. On at least two occasions Castro himself was obliged to refer in a public speech to the damage done to the revolutionary cause by over-zealous or unscrupulous cederistas. The first was in July 1961, coinciding with the announcement of the new measures for food distribution. "It is necessary ....... to discuss complaints", he urged,

Because we know there are complaints against some people in some committees. We must discuss complaints and criticisms regarding the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, irregularities committed by persons who infiltrate the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution for what they can get out of it and, perhaps, to create disorganisation.

The creation of the higher organs of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution occurred in a phase in which organisational questions came to the fore on every level of the political life of the revolution. Beginning with the decision of the early summer of 1961 to commence the construction of a new "integrated"
party (ORI), and ending with Fidel Castro's denunciation of the "sectarianism" of the organising secretary of the ORI, Aníbal Escalante, on 26 March 1962, this was also a period in which the organisational skills and political dexterity of the leading cadres from the "old" Communist Partido Socialista Popular (PSP) assured them a prominent place and dominant voice in more than one sphere. The first National Coordinator of the CDRs, José Matar Franye, had been close to the PSP and, if he had not been a member of it, this was probably due to his relatively recent entry into politics. It is probable that other members of the CDR National Directorate, which was formed at some point before March 1961, shared this background. In all events during their reconstruction the CDRs were politically subordinate to the ORI, as the head of the propaganda commission (COR) of the new party made a point of emphasising in its journal in September, and the ORI was currently being staffed under the direction of Aníbal Escalante.

The procedure adopted consisted in the creation, from the top down, of a hierarchy of Provincial, District and Sectional offices, each headed by a Coordinator and where possible manned by a responsable in charge of each of the "fronts" of CDR activity. Sectional Coordinators and their aides were elected at mass meetings of local cederistas and worked on a part-time and unpaid basis, whilst officials at the higher levels were full-time cadres appointed from the National Directorate. Finally, at the base of the pyramid, each CDR was expected to select from its number an activist to be responsible for each front as well as its own chairman [presidente]. The house of the chairman, or as was often
the case in the cities chairwoman, became the natural focus of
the life of the committee and bore a plaque inscribed with its
number and dedication. By September 1962, six provincial
offices, 150 district offices and some 1,360 coordinaciones
seccionales had come into existence and were responsible for
providing directives [orientaciones] to about 100,000 base CDRs.

There are indications that Fidel Castro, for one, was
unhappy about the manner in which the restructuring of the
organisation was conducted. The second occasion on which he
publicly criticised the CDRs was ten days before his attack on
Aníbal Escalante, for the latter's bureaucratic approach to party-
building, when the process was already at an advanced stage:

Mistakes have to be fought against in every
field - in every Defence Committee for
example.

Who denies that the Committees for the
Defence of the Revolution are necessary?
Who denies that they provide a great
service to the Revolution? Who denies that
there are many good citizens in them? And
yet, a few days ago we were talking to a group
of comrades in a day-care centre ..... and many
of them had complaints about the Committees for
the Defence of the Revolution .....  

And why? Because they make mistakes, because
they commit errors, because there is no vigilance,
because jobs are botched, because sometimes they
create privileges for themselves and grant them-
selves privileges, having something kept aside
for someone in the grocery store. And when the
people see this sort of thing, naturally, they
are distressed; because our people have a great
sensitivity to anything which is not done
properly. And, because a revolution needs the
whole people to be active, the whole people
working, the whole people defending it, it is
pitiful when there are also many who make mistakes;
because then thousands and thousands of people
suffer the consequences of the mistakes of
thousands and thousands of others.

It is for this reason that a revolution has such
a need to struggle against those mistakes, so as not to weaken the Revolution, so as not to do damage, so as not to hurt anyone or offend anyone without reason and without justification.  

Following this speech and coinciding with the efforts directed by Raúl Castro and 'Che' Guevara to undo the work of Escalante and his associates in the Party, the CDRs held 'assemblies' up and down the country devoted to "criticism and self-criticism". Both cederistas and non-members were invited and the aim of the campaign, like that being conducted in the local units of the ORI, was both to purge opportunists and careerists and to recruit anew from the mass of the population. By September 1962, 73,697 committees had held assemblies of this type involving 1,444,977 people and serving, in the words of the official journal of the CDRs, "to eradicate bad methods of work, to overcome weaknesses and errors in the work of the organisation, and to strengthen the links, and the bond, between the CDRs and the people". No changes however appear to have taken place in the National Directorate of the CDRs at this point and otherwise the development of the organisation proceeded as planned.

One of the prerequisites for the successful operation of the system which had been set up, it was argued, was the provision of some elementary political education for the cadres of the organisation at all levels. For this purpose, base-CDRs were directed in 1962 to organise "Study Circles", which were led by a local cederista and met initially about once a week. At Sectional level, a more sophisticated type of political education was provided in evening classes run by "Circles of Revolutionary Instruction". Finally, by October 1962 215 CDR militants from
provincial, district and sectional organisations had passed through a national CDR cadre school, where intensive three month courses on "political economy and philosophy" were combined with talks by prominent members of the ORI in a farmhouse twenty miles outside Havana. The texts employed at this level, and hence the original source of course-materials published for use at the lower levels, were the Soviet manuals sponsored by the Schools of Revolutionary Instruction (EIR) of the Party until the demise of the latter in February 1968.29

Two further organisational innovations were made following the second anniversary of the committees in September 1962, both of them designed to formalise and increase the effectiveness of what was now a national mass organisation not without some superficial similarities to some of the Eastern European "Front" organisations.30 Printed membership cards were first distributed towards the end of 1962 and thereafter were issued more or less regularly. In 1963, coinciding with a national campaign to foster "socialist emulation" in agriculture and industry, the work of the committees began to be organised as it has been since around emulation campaigns lasting three to five months each, in the course of which base CDRs, sections and districts throughout the country were invited to distinguish themselves and earn honorific rewards by fulfilling or over-fulfilling targets on the various "fronts" set by national or provincial organs.31 After these developments however, although, as we have seen, the practical content of the work of the committees continued to extend and diversify itself, the structure and style of the organisation was set in a mould which it was to retain until 1966,
and in many respects beyond that.

On the third anniversary of the CDRs, when relatively detailed statistics were released on the composition and location of the cederista population, the organisation could claim to have in its ranks more than a million and a half men and women, or about one-third of the eligible population (aged 15 and above). Of the total, it was announced, about one in three was aged between 15 and 25 years and forty-four per cent of the members were women, somewhat surprisingly in view of the figure of sixty per cent given for the previous year. Finally, the CDRs appeared to have made more progress in urban areas, where thirty-four per cent were organised, than in rural areas, where only thirty per cent of adults were members. 32

THE POLITICS OF PARTICIPATION, 1966-70

It has been suggested that the transformation of the CDRs into a national mass organisation occurred if not under the exclusive control of the "old" Communists in the Cuban leadership at least under the influence of this tendency and in the period of its early ascendancy. In and after 1966, events took place which can only be interpreted as moves by the Fidelistas to rectify this situation. Following the inauguration late in 1965 of the Central Committee and other leading organs of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC), discussions were initiated between the new party's Secretariat for Organisation, headed by Armando Hart, and the National Coordinator of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, José Matar. These discussions concerned the future of the CDRs and specifically, it was later reported, "the structure
that organisation should have, its functions and other organisational questions intended to strengthen its work".\textsuperscript{33} Differences of opinion on these subjects soon came to light and in 1966 Matar was dismissed by the Political Bureau of the PCC, the most powerful organ of the Party and an exclusively Fidelista body, later to be appointed Cuban ambassador in Budapest.\textsuperscript{34} His replacement was a young and unknown Fidelista, Luis González Naturellos.

Conclusions as to the nature of the disagreements which led to the removal of José Matar from the CDR National Directorate have to be arrived at mainly by inference from the subsequent development of the organisation. Nevertheless one pointer emerged two years later when Matar was implicated in the so-called "microfaction" affair and dishonourably removed from the Party Central Committee. According to the testimony of the man at the centre of the affair, the tireless Aníbal Escalante, the document prepared by the CDR National Coordinator for submission to the Party leadership in December 1965 had been drawn up in consultation with him. Since Escalante was no longer a member of any of the Party's leading bodies, this action allegedly constituted a breach of discipline.\textsuperscript{35} For our purposes it serves as a reasonably reliable indication as to the character of the document.

Changes in the organisation and practice of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution in the years immediately following the dismissal of Matar allow us to be more specific on this point, as well as to identify some elements of a specifically Fidelista approach towards mass organisations. The table
presented at the beginning of this chapter indicates, first of all, that between 1963 and 1965 CDR membership grew at a declining annual rate. If we ignore the figure for 1967, which will be explained presently, the rate of growth of the organisation would appear to have been progressively restored between 1966 and 1969, when it reached almost the level achieved in 1962 when, of course, the CDRs organised a much smaller proportion of the total population. From independent sources, we know that recruitment was placed on a high priority in 1967. Figures provided to the author indicate moreover that the membership campaign of summer 1969, which brought total enrolment to over fifty per cent of the adult population of Cuba, achieved in the space of only five months a thirty-six per cent growth in the organisation nationally, and as much as forty per cent in Havana province. A likely hypothesis, therefore, is that Castro and his comrades were becoming dissatisfied with the growth of the organisation during the later years of Matar's incumbency, and possibly suspected unduly restrictive recruitment policies. If so, this would not be hard to explain in relation to the new tasks entrusted to the committees in 1967-69.

We may now turn to the significance of the twenty-four per cent decline in CDR membership registered in 1967, the year after the appointment of González Maturelos to the National Directorate. The drop is explained simply as the product of the dissolution during this year of the workplace Committees for the Defence of the Revolution which, it would appear, had not only continued to exist but had grown on a par with the rest of the organisation since 1960-61. The officially-stated reasons for this measure would seem plausible enough: workplace CDRs often duplicated the
membership of residence-based committees, and they duplicated the functions of the trade union organisations. The evidence for duplicate membership is in the figures themselves, which show a marked overall decline in CDR enrolment in spite of the fact that all workplace cederistas were automatically transferred to the committee at their place of residence. If this is the case, however, why were the workplace committees retained for so long? As possible answers to this question, neither sheer inertia - always a factor in such matters - nor conscious efforts on the part of the Escalante faction to obtain a "proletarian" base for itself can be absolutely excluded.

The dissolution of the workplace committees also has to be seen in the context of other developments under the new dispensation. In 1966 the intermediate-level organs of the CDRs were reorganised to bring them into line with the new geographical divisions introduced in local government during that year and providing for the first time a uniform division of the country to be observed by all state agencies and political organisations. Although the new pattern of CDR organs is important only in the context of the political content which it was to be given, this may be the most convenient point at which to describe it. Once again the framework of intermediate structures linking the National Directorate with "base" CDRs throughout the country consisted of a pyramid of geographically-based directorates and committees, but new divisions were introduced, referred to respectively as "Regions", "Sections" and "Zones". The implications of this change are best inferred from Table 2 but it is worth drawing attention to the fact
TABLE 2
COMPARISON OF CDR ORGANISATION, SEPTEMBER 1964 AND MAY 1969

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Base CDRs</th>
<th>Number of Zone Committees</th>
<th>Number of Sectional Committees (old system)</th>
<th>Number of Sectional Committees or Municipal Committees (new system)</th>
<th>Number of District Offices</th>
<th>Number of Regional Directorates</th>
<th>Number of Provincial Directorates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 1964</td>
<td>102,787</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,285</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1969</td>
<td>65,943</td>
<td>5,609</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>7a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: a. The Isle of Pines had its own 'provincial' office in 1969, although for other purposes it remained part of Havana Province.
that advantage appears to have been taken of the general re-
structure of the CDR system to consolidate street- or village-
committees into somewhat larger units. Under the new system,
urban "sections" corresponded to "municipalities" in rural areas,
each being responsible for coordinating the work of a number of
constituent "zones". In 1969 the average urban zone committee
had authority over 16.4 CDRs, whilst in rural areas zones included
7.5 CDRs on average. The base CDRs themselves had an average
of thirty-nine members in urban localities and thirty members in
rural areas. As before, the higher organs in the system were
staffed mainly or exclusively by full-time cadres whilst the lower
levels were run entirely by volunteers (now zone-level and below).

The advantage of the new system was that it permitted CDR
organs to establish direct liaison with equivalent units of
government ministries, mass organisations and the PCC. Relations
between CDR offices and local Party committees became, as a result,
particularly close during the last years of the 'sixties. In
accordance with the theory that the leading role of the Party
requires it to retain its integrity as an organisation and to
preserve its cadres, it was not usual for members of the PCC to be
appointed to CDR posts (although this theory appears to have been
flouted a good deal in other spheres during the period in question).
One Section Coordinator in Havana summed up his relations with
the local Party committee thus:

We [i.e. the section of the CDRs] work very
closely with the Party, though we are
separate organisations. We always discuss
important questions with them, and this is
natural, because we are their fundamental
base.
The role of these discussions in forming the policy and priorities of the CDRs was slight, however. The directives which determined targets for the various "fronts" during a given emulation period were received through the organisation's own national hierarchy. The actual content of local Party 'leadership' is brought out in the following remarks, evoked by the visit of a PCC delegate to one Zone Committee in Havana:

These Party people are very demanding with us. You see, sometimes it's difficult to get cederistas moving. We Cubans are very alegre; we like very much to sit around and keep cool. But on the other hand Cubans do respect a debt, and we feel we have a debt to the martyrs of our national history and of the revolution. That's really what makes us get up off our backsides. The role of the Party is to constantly remind us of our debt, and of our duties.

Whilst relations between the PCC and the CDRs at the local level were close, then, the task assumed by the former was an exhortative one, intended to improve the quality of CDR activity rather than to determine its direction. A more significant consequence of the restructuring of the national framework of the CDRs was, it will be argued presently, the new relationship created thereby between the committees and local government.

Not the least of the changes which took place after 1966 was the transformation of Fidel Castro's attitude towards the organisation as displayed in his CDR anniversary speeches. Before this date Castro seldom spoke at great length about the role of the committees as such. A partial exception was his speech on 28 September 1961 when he congratulated them on their part in the defence effort of the previous April, stressing the decisiveness to that effort of "the struggle in the rearguard" and the
immobilisation of the "Fifth Column" within the country during the invasion. On this occasion Castro went on to spell out his view of the value of the CDRs: they were, he said, the organisation which permitted all those citizens who were unable to participate in other organisations to nonetheless make their contribution to the Revolution. By 1967 his attitude had changed perceptibly:

Few social creations have gone so far, in just seven years of life, as this genuine mass institution created by our Revolution. The tasks of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution which came to the fore in the most arduous moments of the struggle against the counter-revolution have become broader and broader, to the point where, today, they embrace a great many activities of all sorts. Not only do the Defence Committees have their specific tasks, but also, whenever it is necessary to make some effort in any direction and if there is nobody who can take on this job immediately, the immediate solution is: call in the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, in the certainty that they will do the job.

Our Revolution and our Party have a legitimate right to feel satisfied with this institution and proud of it. And we know, because the experience of these years has taught us this, that every day it will go on excelling itself further, and every day the revolutionary process itself will show us how far it is possible to go with this new form of mass organisation.

In the light of the foregoing discussion, this much was to be expected, but Castro did not stop here. "In recent days", he went on to observe, the CDRs had been proving that they constituted "a magnificent form of link [enlace] between the masses and the institutions of revolutionary power". Moreover, if ever the regime were to order the promulgation of a new Constitution for the Republic, it would be impossible to disregard the existence of "this reality, this formidable mass institution which the revolution has created". The CDRs, Castro concluded:
... march on towards new forms of social development, towards new forms of social institution, towards new mechanisms for linking the masses with the institutions of power, towards the development of genuinely new and efficient forms of democracy.50

Fidel Castro's remarks about the CDRs in 1967 were distinguished both by their length and by their content. In no previous speech since September 1961 had he reserved so much eloquence for the merits of the organisation,51 although, as we have seen, he had on occasion severely criticised its abuses. It now appeared, furthermore, that something other than a merely supportive political role was being anticipated for the committees. Whilst it was not spelt out what was entailed by "genuinely new and efficient forms of democracy", the use of the phrase indicated that a good deal more importance was being attached to the CDRs as political institutions than had previously been the case. What exactly was the new political role of the organisation?

Participation as Localisation

From the beginning, the aims of the Cuban leadership in fostering the growth and bringing about the systematisation of the Defence Committees were many-stranded and not reducible either to the destruction of the counter-revolution or to the creation of an effective means of administering new measures of social improvement or economic stringency. In a much-quoted passage of his speech on the very first anniversary of the CDRs, Fidel Castro emphasised that to be a member of a committee entailed having a "spirit of sacrifice", since upon the dedication and honesty of
Cederistas would depend their ability to "integrate into the revolution" the broad mass of lukewarm revolutionaries and waverers.

Because one of the things you must always keep in mind is that to be a member of the Defence Committee means ...... being an example for the rest of the citizenry, working, observing the counter-revolutionaries; and in addition working to gain support, proselytising.52

Members of the organisation were thus expected to engaged in a constant process involving at one and the same time their own education and the "education" of the population at large by means of example. The committees were open to "all who are in favour of the Revolution and prepared to defend it", in the words of the new membership booklet issued in 1968, but the same publication went on to state, under the heading "Duties of a CDR Member":

- It is the duty of CDR members to work and struggle for the unity of the people around their Government, their Party and their supreme leader, Major Fidel Castro.

- It is the duty of cederistas to propagate the revolutionary ideology, to be firm defenders of revolutionary principles and to educate themselves in the principles of proletarian internationalism.

- Every cederista has the duty of keeping up his guard, vigilance being our historic task and one of the fundamental tasks of our organisation.

- Every member of the CDRs is duty-bound to combat each and every manifestation of the counter-revolution.

- A duty of every member of the CDRs is to feel himself responsible for the advance and strengthening of the Revolution, and to be prepared to work for this end to the limit of his capabilities.

- A duty of CDR members is to ensure, by means of proselytism and hard work, and by his example, that little by little our people comes to discard the ideas of the old exploitative society, and starts to acquire the awareness that we can only enjoy what we are able to produce and create.
through our own labour.

- It is the duty of every cederista to combat egoism, all manifestations of the ideology of individualism and shallow attitudes, conducting a struggle without quarter against parasitism, against those who want to live without working.

- The duty of every cederista is to develop that spirit which is expressed in the name given to the year 1968: "Year of the Heroic Guerilla".

These injunctions preceded a somewhat longer list of duties connected specifically with one or other of the regular "fronts" of struggle. However, the political role of the committees was not considered to be in contradiction with the eminently practical activities of the fronts. On the contrary it was primarily through the latter that the goal of "integrating" the masses into the revolution was to be achieved. An editorial of 1967 in the official monthly magazine of the CDRs contained the point:

In addition to their daily tasks, and indeed through them, in the tumult and labour of daily struggle, the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution have played an important political and ideological role. They have achieved this by creating in the masses a revolutionary awareness of the part that they are playing, by showing the masses that they are working for themselves, for their own future, and that only in conjunction with their Revolutionary Government and their Communist Party can they build a socialist society, and a communist society. They committees are a school of patriots and a forge of revolutionaries.

Differently expressed, insofar as the CDRs provided what has been referred to as "a form of social participation by the masses in the solution of their own problems", and to the extent that the measures with whose implementation they were entrusted often brought manifest and tangible benefits to the population at large, the organisation was equipped with the means to "integrate" and
educate persons who, from a strictly ideological point of view, might be indifferent towards Marxism-Leninism and even anti-Communist.

This, then, was one sense in which the CDRs served to "link" the masses with the centres of power in Cuba. There was another. By the end of the 1960s it would not have been inappropriate to say that the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution had come to function as a kind of central nervous system of the revolutionary regime. The same features of the CDR system which led Castro to regard it as the most flexible and efficient means for carrying out a variety of types of administrative measures, rendered it an effective channel for 'messages' of a more strictly political sort. There were two aspects to this. In the first place, it has to be held in mind that in the conditions of the late 'sixties the restricted flow of information provided by the national press, and - a consideration which must not be neglected - the continued prevalence in some layers of the population of beliefs in the validity of omens, made Cuba fertile ground for rumours of all types. In a society, moreover, where such an elementary factor as labour commitment and discipline depended to a large extent upon the morale of the population and its confidence in the future, rumours about the government's intentions or unforeseen catastrophes could have disastrous consequences. Fidel Castro frequently stressed this point in his speeches. On the eighth anniversary of the CDRs he observed:

"The imperialist enemy, the reactionary enemy, the counter-revolutionary enemy, gives battle on many fields and uses many weapons, among others - and let us never forget it! - on the field of ideology, by creating illusions, by
creating above all the illusion that you can have wealth without work, that a people can have something without struggling for it and working hard for it".

Castro went on to condemn malicious rumour-mongers who, he alleged, had been spreading stories regarding child-kidnappings and "vampirism." The previous March, however, he had made an interesting self-criticism in the same connection:

It is a known fact that, through the Party, the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, the Women's Federation, the unions and the youth organisations, the Revolution can, in a matter of hours, rally the whole nation, it can mobilise the whole country, it can take the starch out of any rumour, it can cut the ground out from under all the rumour mongers and all the spreaders of pessimism and defeatism.

Let us say that we are at fault when we don't keep up an adequate flow of information to the revolutionary ranks because we don't make the most effective use of the communications media and organisation channels at our disposal.

Whether or not the facility was used as much as it might have been, a word in the ear of the National Coordinator of the CDRs could be sufficient to quell an ugly rumour or dispel a minor crisis of confidence. In fact in 1969 rank and file cederistas received on occasion relatively detailed "orientations" about the government's plans through the formal structure of the organisation and as a result of visits to the local level by full-time cadres.

By this time however the flow of information through the CDR system was not by any means unidirectional. Indeed one of the most important functions which the committees performed for the revolutionary leadership during these years was that they supplied it with an invaluable source of "feedback". In 1969 it was the
custom of the National Directorate to circulate questionnaires
to volunteer workers at Zone level which required respondents to
list "those problems of most urgent concern to the people at the
present time". Less formal soundings of this sort relying
upon the full-time cadres of the organisation were a more regular
feature of the system. Although it might be expected that the
bureaucratic hierarchy standing between the revolutionary leader­
ship and the base of the CDR structure would prove an insuperable
obstacle to the communication to the former of the genuine
grievances of "the people", one important feature of the CDRs
counteracted this tendency: the heavy reliance of the day-to-day
functioning of the organisation upon voluntary effort. The
strictly voluntary character of the work of the committees at the
base placed a ceiling on the manipulability of cederistas. By
itself, this factor helped to assure the use of what were termed
"political" rather than purely "administrative" methods of leader­
ship in day-to-day dealings between CDR officials and their base.
In other words, the ability of the lower organs of the CDR
structure to limit their voluntary work and otherwise 'go slow'
meant that in practice, full-timers had to spend substantial
proportions of their time speaking to meetings, agitating, arguing
with their 'subordinates' about the importance of a given project,
or providing 'pep-talks' to activists. The limited character of
these discussions from a political point of view should not obscure
the difference between the consequences of "political" leadership
of this type and those of a purely bureaucratic approach. Unlike
the latter, the style of leadership developed by force of circum­
stances in the CDRs served to mitigate the generation of apathy.
by constantly playing upon the political sensibilities of ordinary
workers. It also helped to ensure that problems of burning concern to rank-and-file committee members were not neglected for long without good reason.

So far I have attempted to specify two senses in which the CDR system in the period after 1966 provided a means of "linking" the mass of the Cuban population with its leaders. None of the mechanisms described, it is clear, amount to what might be called a system of democracy, nor were they particularly new features of the organisation. An interesting development occurred in December 1968 when for the first time the office of the President of the Republic decided to "consult the people" on a specific question, employing for this purpose the CDR system. The issue, a relatively trivial one by most standards but hotly debated by cederistas at the time, concerned the policy to be adopted in regard to the bars and nightclubs of Havana, which had been closed since the official mourning of 'Che' Guevara the previous year and brought under state control in the Revolutionary Offensive of the spring. Should they be re-opened for Christmas or remain closed for good? Assemblies of CDR chairmen were called at Zone-level throughout Havana to decide the question. A debate took place in each locality, votes were recorded and aggregated, and the President issued his decree the following week. Although on this occasion only the chairmen of CDRs were called upon to give their opinion, the case is important as a precedent. Already in the spring of 1969 the proposal was being discussed in Party circles to submit new legislation (against the practice of "loafing") to public debate and amendment by the CDRs. After 1970 this became a standard practice for certain types of new legislation.
The "genuinely new and efficient forms of democracy" whose germs Fidel Castro perceived in the practice of the CDRs did not, however, hinge upon developments of this type. As has been suggested, the 'educational' impact of the committees upon members and non-members alike sprang from the fact that they permitted ordinary Cubans to participate directly in the solution of the immediate, localised and tangible problems which faced them. "Participation" was likewise the cornerstone of the Castroist conception of proletarian democracy as formulated after 1966. It is therefore to the growth of new forms of participation, and specifically the expansion of CDR activity at the local level, that we must now give some attention.

In 1969 a total of fourteen regular "fronts" of CDR activity were recognised and incorporated into the emulation contests of the organisation at provincial level. Two - Organisation and Finance - were concerned with the internal life of the committees, whilst each of the others - Vigilance, Propaganda, Voluntary Labour, Education, Public Health, Economy [Ahorro], Civil Defence, Salvage, Sports, Culture, Services and Local Administration [Poder Local] - represented a sphere of work in which cederistas were involved in cooperation with other agencies or in an independent role. The last two mentioned were 'new' fronts, created in the period since 1966. A number of fronts which had previously existed were now defunct or of marginal importance, enjoying a precarious existence in most street committees and CDR Zones in Havana. Such was the case, for instance, with the Front for Peace, established in the CDRs during the brief period of Cuban accommodation to the Soviet version of "peaceful
coexistence" after the Missile Crisis of October 1962. The place of this front was taken in 1966 by a Solidarity Front, whose task was to publicise the anti-imperialist struggles underway in Vietnam and other Third World countries and to hold solidarity meetings at the local level. CDRs held "thousands" of such meetings in 1966 following the Tricontinental Conference in Havana and once again in 1967 at the time of the OLAS conference. The Solidarity Front was still active in 1969 and held occasional meetings but it too had ceased to appear in the regular emulation-leaflets distributed by the organisation, an indication of the changing priorities of the revolutionary leadership. In a different field, the 60,000 CDR Study Circles and 2,000 Circles for Revolutionary Instruction which had existed in 1965 had now ceased to function. Although most CDRs and Zone Committees still included a responsible for Political Education, it was now seldom that formal meetings were held for this purpose and the study materials recommended were of a non-theoretical type. In the absence of specific directives to the contrary (and in March 1968, Castro had launched a bitter attack upon the abuse of manuals on Marxism-Leninism by the Schools of Revolutionary Instruction) cederistas had succumbed to a natural dislike of reading and abstract discussion.

In a number of spheres, the work of the CDRs in 1969 assumed the character of a community-action project. Members of the Education Front of the organisation, for example, were often the mainstay of the School Councils - parent-teacher bodies whose purpose was to watch over the attendance record of the children of the neighbourhood, organise outings and provide other forms of
voluntary assistance to the institutions to which they were attached. But it was above all with the coming of two new "fronts" after 1966 that community-action came to the fore as a feature of the activity of the committees. These fronts had their origins respectively in the local government reform of 1966 and the Revolutionary Offensive of 1968.

Before 1966, local government in the sense in which this phrase is understood in most advanced capitalist countries can scarcely be said to have existed. In pre-revolutionary Cuba "decades of systematic rigging of local elections, of overly centralised government (the central government took well over ninety per cent of total tax revenues) and the corresponding 'Havana mentality', and of foreign domination or control of internal affairs, all reduced local government to the status of a poor orphan". Since 1959, the central ministries and agencies of the Revolutionary Government had created their own local administrations which often overlapped with regard to both territory and function, and the Local Boards of Coordination, Execution and Inspection (JUCEI), which sought to combine local government functions with a quasi-economic supervisory role, served to increase rather than to reduce the overall centralisation of the system. In 1965 therefore meetings were held between the chairmen of the provincial JUCEI and regional Party secretaries with a view to a thoroughgoing reform of local government. The result was Poder Local, a new system of local administrations based at the level of the urban Section or rural Municipality and directed by committees of delegates from local units of government ministries, the Party and the CDRs. In 1966 Poder Local was inaugurated and
in 1967 the first CDR delegates, elected on the basis of two delegates per zone, took their seats at Sectional level. One aim of the reform was to permit the coordination of supplies to building materials from the central ministries with voluntary labour to be mobilised by the CDRs for such purposes as the laying of drains, construction of parks and building of recreational facilities, and from 1966 most committees became involved in projects of this kind.

As was suggested above, one of the earliest functions adopted by the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution in addition to "vigilance" was that of servicing and overseeing the consumer distribution sector. The CDRs retained this function until 1968 in the imprecise sense that CDR vigilance was expected to be universal as well as eternal. As a result of the "Revolutionary Offensive" of that year, however, their role as consumer-watchdogs was given institutional form. Some 58,000 small private businesses were brought into the state sector during the Offensive, accounting for the bulk of retail food distribution throughout the island. Following the expropriation measure, the CDRs were directed to hold assemblies at Zone level to select managers for the shops now under state control and thereafter to establish 'Zone Councils' composed of local consumers and interested official parties to discuss the merits and shortcomings of the new distribution system. Although upon appointment the new managers became formally responsible to the Ministry of Internal Commerce (MINCIN), they were briefed to maintain "close contact and consultation" with the CDRs in the vicinity, "to avoid the danger of bureaucratisation and to assure the best possible service". In one neighbourhood in
Havana the Services Front of the CDRs held Zone Council meetings as often as once in two or three months and, although it was stressed that criticisms of MINCIN employees should be made "in a revolutionary manner, and not in the manner of people who create disturbances in grocery-shops and in queues", attendance was good and the debate lively.

Despite these innovations, most of the CDR members interviewed by the author in 1969 still regarded Vigilance as the most important "front" of activity, as did the organisation's National Directorate. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, enemies of the revolution in the strict sense of saboteurs and anti-communist guerrilla contingents still made their appearance from time to time during the late 'sixties, as they have continued to do since, though nearly always from abroad. Secondly and more significantly, the focus of CDR "vigilance" proper had broadened and shifted decisively, being now concerned almost exclusively with combating common crime. The principal forms taken by CDR vigilance in 1969 consisted in the posting of watchmen in pairs at strategic points - near warehouses and dry-cleaning establishments, and on street-corners - and the organisation of mobile patrols, sometimes but not always in cooperation with the ordinary police (DOE). Its object was the prevention and detection of burglary. The CDR magazine established the continuity between this and the earlier activities of the organisation in the following terms in an article published in 1968:

When at Girón our armed forces and militia were fighting the mercenaries, the forces of the people, recently organized in the CDRs, gave battle in the rearguard.................

Today, we must face a similar encounter. The battlefield of today is not at Girón but in
agriculture. But the activity of the masses in the cities and villages must be directed once again towards paralysing the activities of those who attempt to take advantage of the mobilisation to destroy the people's property, or to plunder it ...."  

The function, too, of Castro's pointed discussion in his CDR anniversary speech in 1968 of a case of vandalism with apparently political undertones was to teach cederistas to see crime prevention in political terms.

It is logical that, in keeping with the rate at which the revolutionary wave advances, the hatred of its enemies should increase ... and that they should do everything possible to damage the work of the Revolution.

Whatever the future held in store the CDRs would remain "in the front line ....... permanently vigilant".  

The role of the committees in regard to common crime was not restricted to its deterrence and detection by means of the patrols. There was a need, it was argued at the National Forum on Internal Order held in 1969, to educate cederistas in the causes of various types of crime since their work "should also involve educational work, social work and prevention in cases where it is seen that a young person, or any person, is going wrong". This concern, combined with the type of conditions faced by CDR members in some neighbourhoods in Havana, placed the committees in a situation where they were forced to operate as informal social-work agencies. Formal social work in Cuba in 1969 was the responsibility of the Comisión Nacional de Prevención Social, a body composed of all the interested government ministries, state agencies, and political organisations, and the work of the Commission on the ground was
handled by Provincial, Regional and Municipal or Sectional organs of the same composition. The bulk of the total staff of the commission, though not of its central bodies, was composed however of non-vocational social workers recruited largely from the ranks of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC).\textsuperscript{82} Candidate-social workers completed a short part-time course of training and an aptitude test before taking up their duties, which included visiting the homes, schools, and street-CDRs of potential juvenile offenders (as identified by previous convictions, or habitual absence from school) and of the inmates of reformatories, and visiting female offenders.\textsuperscript{83} Some social workers selected in this way argued that non-vocational staff were more effective than professionals in the kind of situations they encountered in the course of their work. Being themselves of humble origin, they argued, the shock-troops of the FMC were able to distinguish real social or psychiatric problems from sheer brazenness [descaro], and to offer sympathy without gullibility. The official reason for relying upon non-vocational staff, however, was the disjunction existing between the need for professional social workers and their availability, and it was this situation which also called for the mobilisation of the efforts of ordinary CDR members wherever possible. A factor which helped to confirm and extend this trend towards an orientation of the CDRs towards 'social work' was, as we shall see, the coming of the Popular Courts during 1967-68. Not only were cederistas encouraged to attend the hearings of the new courts but CDR chairmen were required to submit written reports on the situation of accused parties and were often called upon to testify in open court.\textsuperscript{84}
The evolution of the CDR Vigilance front during the second half of the 'sixties, taken in conjunction with the reform of local government and the creation of neighbourhood consumers' assemblies, completed the conversion of the committees into multi-functional community organisations whose structure and purposes had little in common with those of the "vigilance committees" of autumn 1960. The result was something less than a new and effective system of proletarian democracy: whilst certain gains had been made with respect to the localisation of control over questions of exclusively local concern and restricted geographically in their ramifications, these developments manifestly failed to present an alternative to the regulation of society in general by means of hierarchically-ordered structures. The CDRs had nibbled at bureaucracy around the edges, showing neither the inclination nor the possibility of reaching its core. A number of the innovations about which cederistas were most proud differed little in substance from what became normal practice in many cities of the advanced capitalist world during World War II. But prerevolutionary Cuba had not been an advanced capitalist society (nor had the country experienced the impact of a modern war). Traditionally, secondary institutions operating at the level of the urban neighbourhood had been few and weak, and they had been fewer still in the hamlets and sugar-centrales of the interior. Such voluntary associations and cooperative ventures as had thrived in the cities had been mainly imitative and exclusively restricted to the middle classes, and, where the citizenry at large was concerned, the absence of a strong social-democratic tradition and the corruption of the trade unions had meant that the idea of cooperation itself had made little headway. The
modest achievements of the committees had to be assessed in this light.

The very growth of CDR enrolment during the 'sixties helped to assure the transformation of the character of the organisation. At the beginning of the decade street-CDRs had been 'committees' in a literal sense, even though they were self-appointed and responsible to no one. By 1969 the size of the typical CDR was such that it often consisted of the entire active adult population of the street or block. Whilst some of its members might be assigned specific responsibilities and duties in connection with the various "fronts", thereby becoming a part of an 'inner circle' of cederistas, many others would have no such position, so that in effect many CDRs came to have the form of residents' councils rather than of committees in any meaningful sense. This transformation did not occur without friction or without creating new problems alongside new opportunities but discussion along these lines is best reserved until I have identified a new phase in the development of the organisation, corresponding to its period of renewed growth since 1970.

THE CDRs AND THE NEW MASS LINE, 1970-73

As we noticed at the beginning, CDR enrolment has grown most rapidly in three periods since 1960. The first influx of new members into the organisation was the product of a decision on the part of the top leadership of the revolutionary regime in the period in which it first came to grapple with the problems not merely of consolidating the revolution politically and defending it against external and internal attack but of converting
it into a viable social and economic enterprise. The second phase of rapid growth, we may conclude from the foregoing, stemmed from the renewed self-confidence and energy of those elements in the Cuban leadership which identify closely with Fidel Castro and his distinctive conception of the nature of revolutionary politics. It is not possible to specify except in a negative sense what strategy for the building of the CDRs might have emerged from the continued association of the organisation's National Directorate with pro-Soviet tendencies in the PCC. The Fidelista strategy however clearly incorporated the following three elements: (a) an out-going approach towards recruitment, (b) a rationalisation of structures and membership designed to permit a close coordination between the CDRs and the new Party on the one hand and local government on the other, and (c) encouragement of mass "participation" in every sphere of local neighbourhood life.

Since 1970, none of these elements has ceased to play a part in the development of the CDRs. During the first part of 1970 the committees were subject to a neglect - reflected in the zero growth of their membership - which affected not only the CDRs, and not only political organisations, due to the single-mindedness with which Cubans participated in the sugar-harvest "of the Ten Million Tons". In 1971 and 1972 however the growth rate of the organisation may be judged to have been restored to very respectable levels, particularly in view of the fact that by the latter date about seventy per cent of the adult population of Cuba belonged to it. Two additional points are worth noting about this recent expansion. First in 1972 women comprised forty-nine per cent of CDR members, as compared with only forty-four per cent in 1963,
thus restoring the sex-balance of the total membership of the organisation.\textsuperscript{87} Second, enrolment in rural areas appears to have been catching up: whereas in 1969 seventy-two per cent of the members were resident in zones officially classified as urban, by 1972 this figure had fallen to sixty-five per cent.\textsuperscript{88} The range of the activities for which the organisation is responsible has never been greater and its practical accomplishments never on so great a scale. Fidel Castro talked at length about the committees and their role in each of his CDR anniversary speeches between 1970 and 1972. On 28 September 1971 he announced that in the fields of education, health, salvage and voluntary labour the pertinent indices of CDR achievement had multiplied several times since the early 'sixties, and even since the latter part of the decade,\textsuperscript{89} going on to conclude that "..... there is no problem, no difficulty, no task that cannot be tackled by the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution".

Could it be said that this mass organisation has exhausted all its possibilities? Could it be said that the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution have done all they could possibly do? No! Life is a teacher. Life reveals new and often unsuspected possibilities.\textsuperscript{90}

A notable development starting in 1971 has been the mobilisation of voluntary labour brigades on a large scale for work on construction projects varying in scale from the rebuilding of the main sports stadium in Havana, through the building of houses and schools, to street-repairs.\textsuperscript{91} In this connection, Castro returned to a familiar theme:

The thing we regret is the fact that we hadn't thought about these things before, that these new ways that are coming up now hadn't been discovered before. But also in this case, as
Marx said, no society changes until it realises the need to change, and this realisation of the need to change does not appear until such time as the conditions that make that change possible are given. Also, many of the things which have appeared in the course of the Cuban Revolution—some of them original—are basically the result of the struggle for life, of the struggle to overcome obstacles and meet needs. It is precisely the struggle that inspires the intelligence and engenders the best solutions.

Have we by any chance reached the limit of our possibilities for mobilising the masses and finding solutions through the masses? Not at all! Far from it. This is what the Revolution has taught us. There is no difficulty, obstacle or problem that cannot be overcome and solved by the tenacity and will of the people: by the tenacity, the courage and the will of the masses.

In the context of the Defence Committees, neither the elevation of pragmatism to the status of a revolutionary virtue nor the importance attributed to "mobilising the masses" was a new departure for Fidel Castro. In what sense, then, is it correct to say that a new phase in the evolution of the CDR system was initiated in 1970? The answer to this question belongs to the wider history of the problem of organisation in Cuba since 1970 and calls for a short digression from our central theme.

In the late summer and early autumn of 1970, in the aftermath of the failure to achieve the important and heavily publicised target of ten million metric tons of refined sugar in the zafra of that year, Castro initiated a new turn in Cuban policy with regard to mass organisations in general and the trade unions in particular. The major stimulus of the new course, which was outlined in a rapid sequence of public speeches by Castro on 23 August, 3 September and 28 September, was the longstanding problem
of poor labour discipline and managerial inefficiency in state-owned agriculture and industry. The critical character of the economic situation of summer 1970 as described by Castro in his 26 July speech served to underline the need for innovations of a drastic sort but both the existence of the problem and the necessity of finding solutions for it on the level of political organisation were clearly recognised in a speech by the then Organising Secretary of the PCC, Armando Hart, as early as September 1969. The problem of absenteeism, Hart then argued, was related to "problems which are basically of a political, organisational or leadership nature". There was a fundamental need to "involve the people and the workers even more in the tasks of the Revolution" because, whilst capitalism could function well enough without mass support for management, "under socialism, an administration not based on mass participation and support cannot function as such and is not efficient as an administration". The need for worker-participation in management did not arise as a concession to bourgeois-liberal concepts of democracy; on the contrary, it was "an objective need for the development of the Revolution". The Party secretary concluded by sketching a reform of the trade union movement which, by reconstituting it on an industry-by-industry basis, would permit it to play a greater part than it had done to date in raising productivity.

It was along these lines that Fidel Castro set out, hesitantly at first, in July 1970. After absolving the Cuban proletariat of responsibility for the failure of the harvest and praising it as "the truly revolutionary class, the most potentially revolutionary class", he went on to mention the possibility of "introducing a
number of new ideas*, including the idea that in industry the
problems of managing a plant should not fall exclusively to the
manager and that the time had come to "begin to establish a
collective body in the management of each plant". But by what
means was this to be done? Castro first spelt this out,
deepening at the same time his analysis of the causes of the
economic difficulties of the revolutionary regime, at a rally in
late August celebrating the 10th anniversary of the founding of
the Federation of Cuban Women. The problem, he argued, was
that the Cuban revolution had been satisfied for too long with
purely administrative ways of getting things done, and that as a
result a certain elitist mentality and even "manifestations of
privilege" had begun to creep in:

Sometimes we speak of developing the awareness
of our workers, but the fact is that our
workers' awareness has developed greatly. And
often we must ask ourselves if it wouldn't be
more correct to say that it is we who must
drink from that fount, from that revolutionary
awareness that has developed among our workers.

We no longer have to look at things from
the standpoint that it is a minority that will
do the job of developing awareness. No! We
must also see it from the standpoint that a
minority charged with specific tasks and
functions, must get its awareness from the
people.

It was necessary both to eliminate privilege and to "give the
people ever greater participation in the solution of their own
problems", Castro insisted. The main way this would be done
at first would be through the labour movement, not because the
other mass organisations - like the Women's Federation and the
CDRs - were unimportant, but on the contrary because in many
respects these organisations were models of what needed to be
achieved; the immediate task was to "place special emphasis ....
on the question of the workers' movement so as to raise it to the
level of the Federation of Women and the Committees for the
Defence of the Revolution". 98

In his CDR anniversary speech, Castro explained what he meant by this:

At this moment we are engaged in a great effort
to develop our workers' organisations as much as possible. Why? Because, unfortunately, for
the last two years our workers' organisations had taken a back seat - not through the fault
of either the workers' organisations or the workers themselves but through our fault, the
Party's fault, the fault of the country's political leadership.

Was this done consciously? No! It happened somewhat unconsciously, spontaneously; it
happened as a result of certain idealisms. 99

As Castro indicated, work had already begun in the late summer
and early autumn of 1970 upon the task of "raising the trade unions
to the level of the FMC and CDRs." On 2-3 September a plenary
meeting attended by 100 trade union delegates from Havana province
and the national labour federation (CTC) discussed two new
proposals affecting the labour sector: firstly, the calling of
public meetings up and down the country to debate the draft of a
new law making habitual absenteeism, or "loafing", a punishable
offence; and, secondly but not less importantly, the holding of
"absolutely free elections" to select the trade union officials
of a restructured labour movement. 100

The proposal to make "loafing" an offence101 was already
under semi-public discussion early in 1969. 102 The attitude of
revolutionaries towards persons who refused to take a job or who
were permanently absent from their place of work was graphically expressed by Sergio del Valle, the Interior Minister and a member of the Politbureau of the PCC in March of that year: "In a society such as ours", asserted del Valle, "idleness is a shameful crime."

Loafers and parasites carry on a base form of exploitation because they try to live, like members of the bourgeoisie, off the sweat of others...... In a society in which he who will not work shall not eat, the idle, the vagrants, the thieves and the lumpen - all those who refuse to be rehabilitated - attempt to live like parasites clinging to a healthy tree to live off its sap. The Revolution is not going to be overindulgent. This has never been its policy.103

Measures against non-workers would also have been popular in 1969. By this time, cederistas had already modified an anti-American slogan of an older vintage for the purpose of demanding action against loafers, from the walls of Havana or at mass meetings in the Plaza de la Revolución.104 It would appear however that the government and Party leaders decided against hasty administrative measures, judging them liable to prove ineffective. Instead they opted for a carefully-prepared and "political" approach.

As Minister of Labour Jorge Risquet explained at the CTC meeting in September 1970, the effectiveness of the new law depended upon the prior completion of three measures designed to permit the centralisation of information and control over the country's manpower. First was the elimination of the non-agricultural private sector as a user of manpower, which had occurred during the "revolutionary offensive" of 1968. Second was the introduction, announced in August 1969, of "labour merit cards" which provided both a personal record of each worker's past
performance and a means of keeping track of labour released from any workplace for any reason. Finally, the Census of 1970 was indispensable, as the only absolutely reliable basis for estimating the total national labour force and hence the incidence of "loafing". But political preparation was important too. Maximum publicity should be given to the workers' opinions on the new law. "This way", Castro explained, "the popular, non-administrative nature of the law will be clear to all ....". "In large measure, the battle will be won in the discussion of the law itself. Law enforcement will be minimal".

In the event, a draft law was published in January 1971 and in March it was announced that over three million workers, students, soldiers and peasants had discussed it, approving or amending it, in 115,000 assemblies held by their respective mass political organisations. The final version of the law - three times as long as the draft, though similar in substance - went into effect on 1 April, but by this time no less than 101,000 men had registered for jobs at the offices of the Ministry of Labour.

It was this, as a Granma editorial explained, that made the law a success "because the Revolution, seeking to obtain the understanding and a change in the conduct of those who maintained a mistaken position, is glad to have to apply the law to only an insignificant minority of recalcitrant elements .....". On 1 May 1971, Fidel Castro attributed this result to the moral authority acquired by the law by the mere fact of its public discussion and approval, predicting that a similar procedure would be pursued in future for "fundamental laws".

During the nineteen-sixties the Cuban trade unions of the
CTC-R acquired a reputation, which they may well have deserved, as the least vital and most moribund of all the revolutionary mass organisations. As Castro himself has recognised, this was not only not due to any particular failings on the part of their membership, but resulted from the accumulated effects of events in the late 'fifties and the policy of the Revolutionary Government since the early 'sixties. Under the control of Batistiano union officials for most of the pre-revolutionary decade the labour movement as such could claim little credit for the revolution of January 1959. During the first year of Revolutionary Government, moreover, the CTC, and the Labour Front of the 26 July Movement within it, was split apart by Castro's policy of co-operating with the Communists of the PSP. Although at the end of the day the CTC was won for the 'revolutionary' position, the means by which this result was achieved did little to enhance its internal democracy and independence. Thereafter, the trade unions were consciously transformed into quasi-administrative or narrowly exhortative machines without real independence vis-à-vis government ministries and plant managers in accordance with the theory - reminiscent of the position defended briefly by Trotsky in the Soviet debate of 1920 - that the raison d'être of union independence had disappeared with the U.S. monopolies. As James O'Connor has pointed out, "the concept of unions as independent instruments of the working class and the means of workers' control of industry never received serious consideration". The Twelfth National Congress of the CTC in 1966 was an event of some importance, marking the passage of the "old" Communist leadership of the organisation and the adoption by a new leadership of the then Fidelista line on labour incentives, but it is possible that one
effect of this turn was to reduce still further the autonomy and internal vigour of the unions.\textsuperscript{115}

In no sense did the trade unions reform of 1970 and after reflect a rejection of the view that the primary aim of organs of labour representation in a transitional society is to aid production and raise productivity. On the contrary, the argument ran, the unions needed to be restructured and to have internal democracy precisely to permit them to fulfil this role adequately.\textsuperscript{116}

The procedure followed from November 1970, when the National Committee of the CTC called the election of Executive Committees of new trade union 'locals' \textit{[secciones sindicales]} in work centres throughout the country,\textsuperscript{117} reflected this pattern of concerns. Elections at this level, as at higher levels later, were by direct and secret ballot, a leaflet giving "Instructions for the Electoral Process in the Trade Union Locales" being distributed beforehand to every worker in the country.\textsuperscript{118} The attitude of the Party leadership towards the possibility that the workers might choose as their leaders "absentees, liars, hacks or corrupt leaders from the past" or people who would "take advantage" of their "real grievances" was that this was unlikely but also that "if the leader is not true to the spirit of the Revolution, the masses can remove him at any time".\textsuperscript{119} The meaning to be attached to this was clarified by Jorge Risquet a year later. By this time 35,000 locals had been established and nearly 163,000 local executive members elected to lead the workers "into the fulfilment of their revolutionary duties and in the defence of their revolutionary rights" for a period of one year. According to Risquet, "the broadly based nature of the elections necessarily
produced a certain quality of leader in keeping with the characteristics, level of political awareness and average ideological development of the workers in the place where he was elected.\textsuperscript{120} The "great majority" had proved to be of a high quality, but where this was not the case the revolutionary leadership had treated it as a valuable indication as to where further political work was required:

Each of these "warning lights" constitutes a challenge to our political strength; to the power of the ideas of the Revolution; to our duty to make these ideas take root and consolidate them everywhere, man by man and place by place. This is why we should never turn off any of these "warning lights", which serve to keep us on our toes, unless we do so by taking action against whatever it is that turned these "lights" on.\textsuperscript{121}

Local union elections were followed in late autumn 1970, during 1971 and in the early part of 1972 by a series of national production plenaries, each attended by workers' delegates from a major sector of industry. After every meeting a new national trade union was established for the sector in question, with its own executive body elected by the delegates present. By 26 July 1971, nine national unions had been established in this way, and a full Workers' Congress was promised for the second half of 1972.\textsuperscript{122} By 1 May 1972, following new local union elections,\textsuperscript{123} a total of eighteen national organisations had been created, completing the formation of what Fidel Castro called "a powerful trade union movement with an absolutely democratic foundation". Intermediate bodies had been established within each union, totalling 116 provincial councils, 561 regional committees and 1,319 municipal or sectional committees, and again it was stated
that the 13th Congress of the CTC, the first to be held under the new system, was scheduled for the end of 1972.\textsuperscript{124}

On May Day 1973 Castro indicated that the Congress, which had failed to take place in 1972, was now due to be held the following November.\textsuperscript{125} Whatever the nature of the difficulties which necessitated the postponement of this crowning event of the post-1970 trade union reform, however, it is clear that important progress has been made within the new framework in the decisive area of labour discipline and productivity. A notable feature of the 'turn' of 1970 was the re-adoption by the Cuban leaders, following their period of extreme heterodoxy on such matters during 1966-69, of widely-accepted views on the importance of the establishment of output standards, the organisation of emulation campaigns and the controlled deployment of 'material incentives'. In explicit recognition of the one-sidedness of the policy pursued after 1966,\textsuperscript{126} Fidel Castro explained in May 1971:

We must never do anything that may go against the development of ....... collectivist consciousness, communist consciousness. On the contrary we must continue to develop this consciousness more and even more. ............ However the way to communism is not a question of consciousness alone. It also has to do with the development of both the forces of production and the material base. ............

We cannot fall into the idealism of thinking that because we want communism and struggle to obtain it and because consciousness is the most important factor that must be developed, that consciousness has been developed and that we already have the necessary material foundation and the communist society where all men act exactly the same as a result of the dictates of their consciousness. This really is not the case. It is a process; an ever-upward process. ........

If in the pursuit of communism we idealistically go farther ahead than is possible - and we should
always try to move ahead as fast as is possible - if we go farther ahead than is possible, we will have to retreat sooner or later.127

The "retreat" had been begun on several fronts. By May 1971, output standards [normas de trabajo] had been established or re-established in 584 work centres throughout Cuba. The significance of this modest step may be judged from Castro's own admission that the true labour requirements of these plants were revealed in the process of normación to be a mere sixteen per cent of management estimates. A target was therefore set to complete the setting of output standards in 1,500 work centres by the end of 1971, and a national meeting on work norms and organisation fixed for January 1972.128 By May of the latter year, over 3,000 work centres, accounting for approximately one-third of the country's trade union membership, had been included in the programme.129 1972 was declared the "Year of Socialist Emulation", in recognition of the "basic" character of this method of improving productivity.130 Although the use of patriotic and other 'moral' themes in emulation programmes was still recommended and the superiority of collective work-incentives still stressed, material incentives were reintroduced in this context, together with the selection of individual "Heroes of Labour".131 By May 1973, two million electrical appliances - the type of goods chosen as most suitable for the purpose - had been sold to workers selected on the basis of labour merit by their trade union locals.132 Efforts were made to reduce the quantity of money in circulation in the economy, with a view to mitigating some of the effects of the atrophy of regular economic incentives during the 'sixties, by increasing the price of 'non-essential' goods such as cigarettes and plastic sandals.133
Finally but not least importantly, a general campaign was mounted to increase the sensitivity of managers and workers with respect to production costs as well as to output targets.  

The above sketch of the new "mass policy", as applied to the trade unions will serve to place in the correct perspective our discussion, to which I now wish to return, of the evolution since 1970 of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution. Regarded as a set of general organisational principles, the Cuban version of the mass line consists of two major elements which have their origin in classical Leninist theory. The first is a rule to the effect that an "organic separation" is to be maintained between 'vanguard' organisations (including most importantly the Party) on the one hand and both state agencies and mass organisations on the other. Non-observance of this rule in the case of the trade unions, Cuban officials began to argue in 1970, was a major factor contributing to their poor performance in the second half of the previous decade. The Advance Workers' Movement, a selective organisation of aspirants to Party membership created in 1966 with the aim of assuring the PCC a tried and trusted proletarian cadre, had tended to supplant the regular trade union organisations at workplace level, with deleterious consequences for the overall consciousness of the working class. At the same time "a certain identification" had sometimes occurred between the managements of economic enterprise and the local Party, exacerbating the problem of the unions and also preventing party cadres from performing their role as the political vanguard of the working class. But this tendency had not been restricted to the economy. In July 1971, Fidel Castro announced the impending
"organic separation" of the Young Communist League (UJC) - the Party's youth section and a 'vanguard' formation - from the Federation of University Students (FEU). During the period leading up to the Second Congress of the UJC in March/April 1972, base units of the organisation carried out an evaluation of each of their members in a spirit of "thoughtful and far-reaching analysis, real criticism and self-criticism, and internal democracy". As a result, its National Committee reported, "the prestige and leading role of the UJC in relation to the mass of young people was boosted, and the exercise of Leninist organisational norms was revitalised". Among the criticisms made of the work of the UJC in the recent past, particular emphasis was placed upon its members' lack of good study habits and an acceptable level of political education, a failure to reach the mass of young people with its influence, and "the application of mechanical and extremist concepts in conferring militancy".

In relation to the CDRs, as we noticed earlier, the role of the Party in the late 'sixties was typified by interventions of a purely exhortative type, but nevertheless the general tendency towards a blurring of organisational boundaries was not observable. More important in this context therefore is the second major component of the mass policy of 1970, best described as a concession to the principle set out classically in Lenin's The State and Revolution that state functions are the province of democratic organs of the mass of the working class. Fidel Castro explicitly located himself within this tradition of Leninist theory in his words to the FMC in August 1970:
... we have scores of problems at every level, in the neighbourhoods, in the cities and in the countryside. We must create the institutions which give the masses decision-making power on many of these problems .... so that it will not be simply a matter of the people having confidence in their political organisations and leaders and their willingness to carry out tasks, but that the revolutionary process be at the same time - as Lenin wished - a great school of Government in which millions of people learn to solve problems and carry out the responsibilities of government. .... We have been able to unleash the energy, interest and will to move ahead of millions. .... Now we must know how to channel that energy .... toward the possibility of ever greater participation in the decisions that affect their lives.

This implies the development of a new society and of genuinely democratic principles - really democratic - replacing the administrative work habits of the first years of the Revolution. We must begin to substitute democratic methods for the administrative methods that run the risk of becoming bureaucratic methods.141

Castro spoke in a similar vein, but more concretely, in his first CDR anniversary speech after the 'turn'. "The revolutionary process itself", he explained, "has gradually revealed the inconvenience of bureaucratic and administrative methods". After the reform of the trade unions, the next steps to be taken would involve "a more direct participation by the masses in decision making and in the solution of problems and a many-sided participation everywhere, territory-wise, in those problems directly under their jurisdiction", and he added:

We are trying to find a way how, starting with our mass organisations, to create other organisations in which the workers, as workers; the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution; the women; the young people - in fact, everybody - will be represented, so that they can carry out close supervision of all [neighbourhood service and retail] activities on a territorial level. This, in addition to
supervision, control and participation in those production centres that already have some development, that have a workers' nucleus. Therefore, nothing will escape supervision and control by the masses.142

The CDRs, Castro argued in the same speech, were basic to any developments of the sort mentioned. Firstly the accumulated "weight and strength" of the organisation had to be considered. Secondly, its territorial character meant that it could perform functions which "could never be discharged by other organisations". And thirdly "the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution bring together the revolutionaries of all our people, be they young or old, adults, men or women".143 The idea was not, as Castro stressed some months later, to turn the CDRs, as such, into organs of state. Rather, he said, "in contrast to the classical bourgeois liberal forms of representation, we are headed toward multiple forms of representation, so that our citizens will be represented in many ways". Nevertheless "the state, the concept of the state, must be established more precisely - and this is especially so of the functions of the state". The revolutionary leadership had asked themselves

why, in a district or city ....... everything has to be administered directly by the state. ....... In some cities we are working on the principle of district organisation with the representation of the mass organisations: the workers' organisations, the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, the women's organisation or the students' organisations, as the case may be, so as to be able to organise the districts and begin to turn over to them a number of functions that do not have to be handled by the state.144

Castro cited by way of example the possibility that neighbourhood organs constituted in this way might be given control over small
hotels, grocery stores and perhaps even supermarkets. The leadership of the CDRs was already holding discussions with the Party with a view to reforming the government of the city of Havana, but account had to be taken of practical priorities and the availability of economic resources. These considerations led to the conclusion that, for the time being, the bulk of the organisational efforts made in the cities of Cuba in the coming period should be directed towards finding a solution to "the terrible problem of housing". 145

I indicated above that since 1970 the activities in which cederistas are involved appear to have undergone no qualitative change, even though the scale on which they are undertaken - notably in the sphere of voluntary labour in construction - has unquestionably increased. It is now possible to add some important qualifications to this statement. Firstly, although in practice developments in the CDRs to date146 have remained broadly within the framework established in the late 'sixties, the revolutionary leadership has gone on record as proposing changes which, as we have seen, entail a partial revision of Cuban attitudes towards organisation in the light of the Leninist theory of the post-capitalist state. Secondly, although for the reasons explained above a certain time elapsed before attention was given to the organisation of the committees, an effort has been made to "strengthen" their internal functioning under the direct supervision of the PCC's Secretariat for Organisation. New elections were held between September 1971 and September 1972 to select responsables to lead Zone and Base Committees, and, whilst it appears to have been judged inappropriate to reconstitute higher organs on an elective basis,
municipal, regional and provincial appointments were "submitted to the masses for their approval". 147

The new practice has been introduced of holding annual "check-up assemblies" at the national level. The second such conference attended by up to 900 delegates and lasting for six days in November 1972 may have marked the inauguration of a new policy for the selection of the national leadership of the organisation. Proposals for the election of a new Bureau, Secretariat, National Directorate and Work Commissions of the CDRs were outlined to the delegates by Jesús Montañé, Organising Secretary of the PCC since 1970, and unanimously approved. The meeting was also attended by Fidel Castro himself, an indication that unusual importance was attributed to it by the Party leadership. 148

Communists without Cards? - The CDRs and the Future

To conclude this chapter on the evolution of the CDR system it will be most appropriate to take up an issue which arises less from any particular phase of its development than from the process which began in September 1960 considered as a whole. Throughout the preceding pages we have been concerned with the ways in which the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution have participated with greater or lesser intensity and success in various programmes and institutional innovations initiated by the Cuban leadership since the early 'sixties. One of the most controversial questions bearing upon CDR "participation", however, has so far been neglected: precisely how significant is CDR membership itself in the eyes of the ordinary Cubans who belong to the organisation, and how seriously do they view this commitment? The problem
arises concretely from any attempt to interpret the committees' soaring membership statistics. One view of the matter is well expressed in a recent CDR anniversary speech by Fidel Castro. Announcing the expansion of the organisation's enrolment to the level of seventy per cent of the eligible population, Castro asserted:

This growth, these results, are no accident. They are the result of twelve years of enthusiastic struggle: twelve years of experience, twelve years of the development of revolutionary spirit among our people.

This mass of millions, this militancy, this firmness, this strength, reflects the fact that revolutionary ideas have taken root in the heart of the people. At first - and even now, to some degree - the enemies of the Revolution abroad, the hacks, described the CDRs as an espionage organisation. They imagined a small group of fanatics devoted to the defence of the Revolution. They can't get it into their heads - because this is too big for them - that it is the entire organised people on guard.

It is the counter-revolutionaries, not the revolutionaries, who represent a tiny minority.149

Typifying the contrary and opposite view commonly advanced by foreign observers of Cuban affairs, the French agronomist René Dumont has implied that the growth of the CDRs is due preponderantly to the spread of merely instrumental conformism on the part of the mass of the population, owing little or nothing to the advance of "consciousness".150

It is perhaps in the nature of such questions to elicit a variety of extreme propositions none of which is amenable to proof or refutation in practice beyond narrowly drawn limits. Nevertheless, I wish to suggest, even a tentative effort to probe these limits is worth undertaking, if only in order to shift the
argument on to other, more promising terrain. Of the two positions just outlined, neither may be sustained easily as it stands. CDR enrolment unquestionably does confer upon the Cuban worker, housewife or student definite benefits, mostly of an intangible nature but no less real for being that. Without pretending to be exhaustive, we may confidently state that to be "integrated into the Revolution" is to gain an advantage over other members of society in obtaining various types of employment and promotion, on being sentenced by courts of law,151 and in the treatment accorded by state agencies and official bodies of all sorts. The same may be said, though with more qualification, of active participation in the work of the CDRs or the possession of a recognised part-time post in the organisation. It would therefore be illegitimate to conclude on the basis of CDR membership statistics alone that the Cuban masses have been conquered by "revolutionary ideas". The existence of conditions which permit a plausible account of the expansion of the committees in terms of instrumental conformity does not, on the other hand, exclude on logical grounds the possibility that its major cause may in reality be a long-run change in the political attitudes of ordinary Cubans. Casual empirical evidence can of course be discovered which appears to support either view of CDR participation but even the most experienced Cuban observers would hesitate before attributing specific weights to the two simple types of motive mentioned here, less still to their complex combinations.

There is however an additional obstacle to the satisfactory conclusion of a discussion along these lines, which is as follows. The assumption is commonly made from the outset that the criteria
applied by the committees in conferring membership - and hence the 'objective' status of enrolment - are invariable factors, permitting the debate to centre upon the changing motives and values of individuals who join the organisation. Is this assumption realistic? In order to answer this question we need once again to make reference to the orthodox Marxist-Leninist distinction as between mass organisations and vanguard organisations.

From their earliest days, the "vigilance committees" were regarded by the revolutionary leadership as organisations of the masses, being open, as we have seen, to all adults "in agreement with the Revolution and prepared to defend it". Neither active involvement in the work of the CDRs nor more than a verbal commitment to their aims was a prerequisite for membership, and this was intentional. In 1969, the present author's observations suggested that the expulsion of a member could be produced in practice only by either repeated public denunciations by the person in question of the policies or leadership of the revolutionary regime, or his or her conviction by a court in a relatively serious criminal case. On the other hand it is clear that, although minimal, the criteria applied in deciding questions of membership were of a political or ideological rather than sociological or demographic character, in contrast to the policy of other 'mass' organisations such as the trade unions, the ANAP or the FEU. It is for this reason that the growth statistics of the CDRs, but not those of the unions or the student federation, may plausibly be cited as evidence of the progress of the revolution and the decline of the counter-revolution. Moreover, as will be apparent from the foregoing account of the political role of the committees,
The concept of a mass organisation rapidly incorporating into its ranks as many citizens as possible clearly conflicts with the concept of an exemplary organisation, one in which every member behaves with devotion, restraint, self-sacrifice, and creativity. In their drive for mass participation, and the necessary but rapid elevation of persons of little skill and experience to positions of organizational importance, the committees have sacrificed a great deal of popular support.\textsuperscript{153}

As we saw earlier, it was partly in response to cases of opportunistic or misguided behaviour among the first cederistas that a more
systematic, though in reality not more exclusive, approach was adopted towards recruitment. In the late 'sixties pressures from the base of the CDR system in favour of greater exclusiveness in the enrolment or retention of members were by no means absent and it was sometimes complained that the growth of the organisation had resulted in a certain undesirable dilution of its political content. At this time the National Directorate resisted with some force any attempt to narrow the base of the committees. In response to the allegation that "non-revolutionaries" were being admitted to the organisation today, a spokesman of that body insisted in the course of a televised 'talk-in' that the matter had to be viewed "dialectically":

In our organisation there are comrades who are more conscientious and outstanding than others, comrades who participate more actively in the tasks of the CDRs than others. ....... It seems to us that our revolutionary work in respect of those who are less active should be directed towards turning them into activists; by our own example we have to make the people who do not work very hard into activists. It is a dialectical process. ....... The fact is, the CDRs are not the Party, which is a vanguard organisation; ....... the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution are a broad mass organisation. And if we don't educate people inside the CDRs, if we don't make room for them in an organisation of the Revolution, what can they belong to? What education will they get?154

The logic of this position, it seems to this observer, was already leading in the late 'sixties towards a progressive weakening of the vanguard principle as the basis of the CDRs. Attacks were frequently made upon "extremists" who "see enemies of the Revolution everywhere" and who exploit the open-endedness of the concept of 'support for the Revolution' - its failure to
distinguish the revolution as a process from its current programme or leadership - in an exclusivist sense. Extremismo, it was stressed, did a good deal of damage to the revolutionary cause, much more than the occasional admission of a person of dubious revolutionary credentials. The intensification since 1970 of the tendency on the part of the revolutionary leadership to regard the committees as, in one sense or another, representative of the Cuban masses has doubtless served to further weaken the concept of the CDRs as a popular vanguard.

To the extent that such a trend exists - incidentally complicating beyond possibility the task of interpreting membership statistics - it is to be welcomed. Cuba does not have a system of soviet democracy. The revolution has however created in the CDRs an organisation of mass proportions which bestows upon its members a sense of 'belonging' within the post-revolutionary state and even, in a limited way, the right to be consulted. The direction of Cuban policy upon such matters cannot be predicted with any certainty. What is incontestable nevertheless is that the future of the revolution, and of the committees within it, lies with the simultaneous extension and universalisation of this right on every level.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. The general literature on Cuban politics since 1959 is replete with brief references to the Defence Committees and their activities. Some of the most widely-read works contain remarks whose brevity is matched only by their tendentiousness. Thus, Andrés Suárez has it that the CDRs were created "to spy on the rest of the population and to report to the authorities any symptoms of discontent with the regime" (Cuba: Castroism and Communism, 1959-1966 (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1967, p. 109), whilst Horowitz without further explanation cites "the steady rise of police informants and the street-by-street spy system" in support of the thesis that the Cuban revolution underwent a process of "Stalinisation" starting in 1966. I.I. Horowitz, "The Political Sociology of Cuban Communism", in C. Mesa-Lago (ed.) Revolutionary Change in Cuba (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971) p. 131. Dumont asserts that the "inquisition" organised by the CDRs has had the effect of taking back from the ordinary worker "that precious dignity" won for him by the first phase of the revolution. René Dumont, Cuba: est-il socialiste? (Paris: Seuil, 1970), p. 179 (emphasis in the original).


José Yglesias, In the Fist of the Revolution (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968) contains an eye-witness account of a CDR meeting. Consciously putting aside his prejudices in favour of a life of privacy and personal independence, the author was led to conclude that CDR members in the village of Mayarí had "inadvertently .... taken the first steps toward a new cultural attitude .... an insistence that the open life - open to the view of one's neighbors - is the natural life of man". Ibid., p. 307.

3. Figures released recently have been used here for preference because of their completeness. Although more precise dates are not specified, it is to be inferred that the statistics for 1962-66 give CDR membership as it stood on 1 May or thereabouts (on this see the graphic representation in Granma Weekly Review (GWR) 8 October 1972, p. 10) whereas since 1967 an annual 'check-up' has taken place in September. The following sources claimed September figures which are higher than those given for the corresponding year in Table 1: José Matar, "Dos anos de experiencia de los Comités de Defense de la Revolucion", Cuba Socialista, ano 2, No. 15 (November 1962), p. 36; Revolución, 29 September 1964 and 22 September 1965, cited by Fagen, The Transformation of Political Culture, op.cit., p. 77; Bohemia, 26 September 1969, p. 52.

5. Fagen plausibly argues that the plan had been in gestation for several months and that it lacked the spontaneity often attributed to it by Cuban journalists. See op.cit., pp. 69-70, and for an example of a retrospective account of this type see *Con la Guardia en Alto*, September 1967, p. 5.


8. See for instance Omelio Valdés (Secretary for Education, Sports and Culture, National Directorate of the CDRs) in *El Pueblo Pregunta sobre los CDR* (Havana: Instituto del Libro, 1969) p. 5; and "Cuestiones vitales planteadas por Fidel en los aniversarios de los CDR", *Con la Guardia en Alto*, September 1968, p. 34.

9. What was at issue was a specific and real threat to the existence of the regime and the continuation of the revolution; hence the misleading character of Suárez' account cited above of the purpose of the organisation.


13. For the number of committees, *Revolución*, 30 September 1961, pp. 12-14, cited by Fagen op.cit., p. 75. As regards membership, however, Fagen's estimate, based on Castro's remarks about the number of members in each CDR, appears ill-founded. Fagen has it that "well over a million" belonged to the committees by this time, but no figure in excess of 798,703 has been given subsequently by the Cuban press. Cf. Castro's speech of 28 September 1971, GHR, 10 October 1971, p. 2; and *Bohemia*, 24 September 1971, pp. 46-53.

14. For sources, see Table 1.


17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
22. Hugh Thomas, Cuba: Or the Pursuit of Freedom (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1971), p. 1322 describes Matar as "a young Communist of the old guard". Suárez, op. cit., p. 128 doubts his membership of the PSP, whilst K.S. Karol suggests that he only became a Communist after the Revolution. Guerrillas in Power: The course of the Cuban Revolution (London: Cape, 1971) p. 468n. I was unable to confirm these details one way or the other but Matar's sympathy for the PSP was well known.
23. According to Fagen, "some members of a National Directorate of the CDR had probably been appointed" at the time of Castro's speech of 28 September 1960. Its first public manifestation however appears to have been a call for the formation of CDRs in workplaces in March 1961. Fagen, op. cit., p. 70, p. 72.
24. The article also stressed that, whilst the committees had an important role to play in the sphere of vigilance, they were not expected to usurp the functions either of the security organs or of the judiciary. César Escalante, "Los Comités de Defensa de la Revolución", Cuba Socialista, año 1, No. 1 (September 1961).
25. Each CDR adopted the name of one of the martyrs of Cuba's Wars of Independence, the political conflicts of the '20s and '30s or the recent struggles against Batista, the CIA, etc. For a collection of reports by Cuban journalists on this phase of the CDRs, see Pueblo Organizado (Havana: Ediciones Con la Guardia en Alto, 1965).
26. Revolución, 28 September 1962, p. 4 cited by Fagen, op. cit., p. 76. The disappearance of about 7,000 committees since the previous September in spite of a fifty per cent increase in total membership indicates that the reorganisation included some consolidation of base units.
29. See Gil Rías Sergio, "La Escuela de cuadros de los CDR", in Pueblo Organizado, op. cit., pp. 29-39; Los CDR en Granjas y Zonas Rurales (Havana: Ediciones Con la Guardia en Alto, 1965), p. 10ff. For the content of the CDR courses at Sectional Level, see Material de Estudio para los CIR, Nos. 1-5 (Havana: Ediciones Con la Guardia en Alto, 1962-65), and on the EIR see Fagen, op. cit., Chapter 5.
30. Most members who discussed the question with the author in 1969 believed the CDRs to be sui generis and Castro himself once referred to them as "a Cuban invention". Along similar lines, a spokesman of the National Directorate described the committees in 1969 as "a contribution by the Cuban revolution to the ever richer experience of humanity" and a creation which "other peoples, when they liberate themselves, will be able to imitate". However he added that the organisation maintains fraternal relations with the Popular Patriotic Front of Hungary, with the National Fronts in Czechoslovakia and the CDR, and with the Bulgarian Patriotic Front; the Cuban organisation felt a particular affinity with the last mentioned "because, whereas the CDRs were created by Fidel, the Patriotic Front was created by George Dimitrov, the great leader of the Bulgarian people". Omelio Valdés in El Pueblo Pregunta, op.cit., p. 12.


32. For the 1962 figure on women, José Matar, "Dos años de experiencia de los Comités de Defensa de la Revolución", Cuba Socialista, año 2, No. 15 (November 1962). For 1963 figures, Revolución, 27 September 1963, p. 2, cited by Fagen, op.cit., p. 83. This source contains the only available statistics showing the socio-economic status of CDR members and activists, on the basis of which Fagen (ibid.) has constructed the following table.

### Occupational Composition of the CDR Membership and Cadres in September 1963

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Percent of total membership</th>
<th>Percent of all cadres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workers (industrial and agricultural wage earners)</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>49.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewives</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White-collar employees (empleados)</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peasants (small landowners)</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed persons</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed persons</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired persons</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small businessmen</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.5%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cadres are defined here as those who hold positions in the Provincial, District and Sectional Directorates, and therefore include both full-time and part-time officials. The most notable features of the table are the relatively low participation of the peasantry as regards membership, and the contribution of "housewives" in both columns.


34. According to a member of the staff of the National Directorate of the CDRs (author's interview, Departamento de Divulgación, Dirección Nacional de los CDR, 30 July 1969) Matar was "sacked by Fidel", which is probably accurate in substance. The National Directorate is formally responsible to the Central Committee of the Party. The latter body however seldom meets and then only for the purpose of ratifying decisions already taken by the Political Bureau, which has been comprised since 1955 by the same group of loyal Fidelistas: Osvaldo Dorticós, Raúl Castro, Juan Almeida, Armando Hart, Guillermo García, Sergio del Valle and Ramiro Valdés, in addition to Fidel himself. For the names, see Cuba Socialista, November 1965 and reports on public events in GNR up to the time of writing. On Matar's appointment in Hungary, Thomas, op.cit., p. 1466.

35. "Conclusions of the Central Committee", loc.cit. Matar was not stripped of his Party membership, as were others of those involved, because of "extenuating circumstances" presumably including his long and otherwise satisfactory service at the CDR National Directorate.


37. As of 1 May 1969, total CDR membership was 2,370,600, but by 28 September it had reached 3,222,147. Sources: Dirección Nacional CDR, "Control de Organismos y Miembros, etapa 2 de enero al 1ro de Mayo" (mimeo), 15 May 1969; Bohemia, 24 September 1971, pp. 46-53. In Havana province the committees' membership grew by as much as forty per cent in little more than four months. Calculated from Dirección Nacional, op.cit. and Gramma, 4 September 1969. There are other indications that this was a particularly impressive period of CDR expansion in urban centres (Havana being the most urbanised province). As we saw above, in 1963 the CDRs organised thirty per cent of the adult population in rural areas and thirty-four per cent in urban areas; if, for the sake of a rough comparison, we take the May 1969 membership figures and the 1970 Census results on the distribution of the population aged 15 and above between rural and urban areas, we get corresponding proportions of thirty-four per cent and fifty per cent. Calculated from Dirección Nacional, op.cit. and "Preliminary Data, Census on Housing and Population", GNR, 10 January 1971, pp. 8-9.

38. See Bohemia, 24 September 1971, pp. 46-53; and GNR, 8 October 1972 diagram p. 10.

40. The complaints against the Castro leadership allegedly harboured by the "microfaction" included the promotion of Party cadres "of petty bourgeois rather than proletarian extraction" and "the gradual replacement of long-time Communists, because their position is considered pro-Soviet". Speech by Raúl Castro to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, 29 and 30 January 1966, in S. Clissold (ed.), Soviet Relations with Latin America, 1918-1968 (London: Oxford University Press and RIIA, 1970), p. 296.


42. Calculated from Dirección Nacional, op.cit.

43. A national average of just under thirty-six. By 1972, there were 4,236,342 cederistas distributed between about 70,000 base CDRs, which raised the average overall to around sixty members per committee. GMR, 8 October 1972, p. 10.

44. Dirección Nacional, op.cit. Sectional Committees in Havana consisted of three appointed full-time staff ('Coordinator', 'Organiser' and 'Vigilance Officer') together with about a dozen part-time responsables.

45. See the discussion later in this chapter on the 'turn' of 1970.

46. To the author.

47. To the author.


49. "Discurso pronunciado el 28 de Septiembre de 1967", Discursos de Fidel, op.cit., p. 221. Castro went on to cite the CDRs as "living proof" of the value of learning from experience and of desisting from devising "abstract institutions":

Who ever imagined an institutions like this one? Which classic work of revolutionary theory ever spoke of such an institution? Which programme, which manifesto, which declaration ever mentioned on any occasion anything remotely similar to this? It wasn't in the books!

(Ibid., p. 225)

50. Ibid., pp. 225-6, p. 227.

51. See Discursos de Fidel, op.cit. Castro's 1961 CDR Anniversary speech contained an extended discussion of social parasitism and the need for a radical change; those of 1962 and 1963 were taken up with international matters arising from the Missile Crisis and its aftermath; in 1964 Castro employed his CDR speech to launch the first of his campaigns against "bureaucratism" (elephantiasis of the administrative system); in 1965 he concerned himself with two impending events - the creation of the PCC and the opening of the port of Camarioca for purposes of emigration; and his 1966 CDR speech was one of a series in which he broached
at length the disputed question of moral incentives. See also "Cuestiones Vitales Planteadas por Fidel en los Aniversarios de los CDR", Con la Guardia en Alto, September 1968, pp. 34-39.

52. "Discurso pronunciado el 28 de Septiembre de 1961", op.cit., p. 68.


54. Maintenance of work-discipline, co-operation with the managers of retail establishments, assuring the implementation of government measures, self-education in the tasks of the revolution and of development, technical education for adults, upholding the spirit of sacrifice and of honesty, agricultural voluntary labour, salvage, blood donations, local government, militia training, the duties of parenthood in the home and in regard to the school, sports, culture, civil defence and solidarity with other peoples in struggle.

55. Con la Guardia en Alto, September 1967, p. 3.

56. The phrase was widely used, but see for instance Omelio Valdés in El Pueblo Pregunta, op.cit., p. 26.


59. CDR members completed their forms in the author's presence were probably typical in Havana at that time in citing the housing shortage and the sparseness of the adults' clothing ration.

60. This phrase had previously been used to characterise the kind of informal interchange between speaker and audience which often occurred in the course of Fidel Castro's public speeches.

61. The decision was to re-open the night-clubs but not the regular bars which were regarded as the haunts of "loafers", apathetics and other social undesirables. Author's interview, Departamento de Divulgación, CDR National Directorate, 3 January 1969.

62. Targets established by the Provincial Bureau of the CDRs in Havana for the emulation period 1 May to 28 September 1969 are listed in Appendix I below.

63. The Peace Front is cited by Gil Blas Sergio "Un Comité Constructor", and by Baltazar Enero, "Un Inventario Cubano", both in Pueblo Organizado, op.cit., p. 72, p. 13. The articles are dated September 1963 and October 1964 respectively. See also Nuestra Lucha por la Paz, which Preface by Juan Marinello (Havana: Ediciones Con la Guardia en Alto, 1963).

65. For 1965 figures, "Siete Años con la Guardia en Alto", op.cit., p. 13. The reading most often and most highly recommended in 1969 was Fidel Castro's speeches. An official of the Matanzas Provincial Bureau of the CDRs explained that "there is little doubt that a speech by our Commander-in-Chief is a lesson for the people", also suggesting as material for discussion at Zone level pamphlets entitled "This is Our History", "Let's get to Know Vietnam" and "Vietnam and the Cuban Family", and 'Che' Guevara's Bolivian diary, which had been distributed free to CDR activists. Carlos Rivero in El Pueblo Pregunta, op.cit., pp. 16-18. The CDR National Directorate published Castro's speeches together with an Introduction in special pamphlet form. See for example, Los CDR y la Ofensiva Revolucionaria (Havana: Dirección Nacional CDR, 1968).


71. Ibid., p. 7; Bohemia, 26 September 1969, p. 52.


74. Chairman's remarks at meeting attended by the author.

75. See for example "Vigilancia Revolucionaria: Tarea No. 1 de los CDR", Con la Guardia en Alto, December 1968, pp. 8-9; and "Dos Frentes", Con la Guardia en Alto, March 1969, p. 20. Other contenders in the eyes of CDR chairmen were voluntary labour and consumer-distribution.

76. Thus Granma has reported the following incidents between 1967 and 1971:
1967: Arrest of a number of CIA infiltrators; light plane shot down after dropping arms and espionage equipment.

1968: Bomb explodes in a mailbag originating in the United States; acts of sabotage including arson in warehouses storing sugar, hides, fertilizer and feed; a group of counter-revolutionaries captured on landing in Cuba from Miami.

1969: Another group of infiltrators captured; one agent captured with war matériel and espionage equipment.

1970: Armed landing at Baracoa, Oriente province; two Cuban fishing boats sunk and their crew kidnapped; armed landing east of the village of Boca de Samá, Oriente.


See GWR, 26 December 1971, pp. 10-12.

77. According to "Vigilancia Revolucionaria", op.cit., p. 9, CDR aid to the ordinary police for crime prevention purposes was organised on a regular basis in 1965.

78. "Dos Frentes", op.cit., p. 20. See also "Lucha a Muerte contra la delincuencia", Granma, 21 April 1969, p. 2; and report in GWR, 5 October 1969, p. 8.


81. Viz. The Ministries of the Interior, Education, Labour and Public Health; the National Culture Council (CNC) and the Sports and Recreation Institute (INDER); the PCC, UJC, FMC, trade unions (CTC) and peasant association (ANAP); Local Administration (Poder Local) and the Courts. The Secretariat of the Commission was composed of PCC, Ministry of the Interior, FMC, UJC and Ministry of Education. See "Las Trabajadoras Sociales", El Militante Comunista, February 1969, pp. 85-87; and Comisión Nacional de Prevención Social, Material de Estudio para las Trabajadoras Sociales (Havana: Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, 1968), pp. 9-11.

82. The Commissions were established in 1967 following a two year test project run jointly by the FMC and the Ministry of the Interior. By mid-1971 there were over 10,100 trained female social workers selected from the ranks of the FMC, and at the end of 1972 it was reported that 96% of social work cases involving misbehaviour by minors were handled by FMC workers. "Social Workers: Working for the Future against the Past", GWR, 29 August 1971, p. 8; "Activities in relation to 2nd Congress of the Federation of Cuban Women announced at that Organisation’s 10th National Plenary Meeting", GWR, 24 December 1972, p. 14.

83. The following qualifications were required of candidates for training: Integration into the Revolution (i.e. CDR or FMC membership, or both), an aptitude for crime-
prevention work, no religious beliefs, at least 5th grade education, and no problems in the home similar to those with which the social worker will be called upon to deal.


84. The author was able to examine the files of a Popular Court in Havana corresponding to one year's cases and including some 217 individual accusations (see Chapter 4 below). A majority of files contained CDR reports signed either by the committee's chairman or by its responsible for vigilance. Almost all of these were brief and contained only essential information; a few however extended over several handwritten pages betraying a full and often intimate knowledge of the subject's life-style and domestic problems.


86. Total membership was 4,236,000. Fidel Castro, Speech of 28 September 1972, GHR, 8 October 1972, p. 2. Castro did not give the estimate of Cuban population aged 15 and above upon which this percentage was based. However, in view of the Census finding that this total was 5,412,683 at the end of 1970 (calculated from "Preliminary Data, Census on Housing and Population", GHR, 10 January 1971, pp. 8-9) seventy per cent would appear conservative.

87. "Committees for the Defence of the Revolution: 12 years, 12 months Check-up and Summary", GHR, 8 October 1972, p. 10. For 1963 figure, see note 32 above. According to the first results of the 1970 Census, 48.9% of the national population were women. Calculated from "Preliminary Data", loc.cit.


89. Data on this subject are summarised in Appendix 2 below.


91. See ibid.; and Fidel Castro, Speech of 28 September 1972, GHR, 8 October 1972. Also, Jose Gabriel Guma, "Committees for the Defence of the Revolution Give Vigorous Support to Construction Work", GHR, 24 September 1972, pp. 4-5. At the time of the 1970 census, the CDRs did the necessary door-knocking to persuade local residents to stay at home to await the census-takers. See report in GHR, 13 September 1970, p. 5.


93. Armando Hart, "Speech at the graduation ceremony for the 1963-69 course of the Department of Political Science in the University of Havana's School of Humanities", GHR, 5 October 1969. Cf. Karol, op.cit., p. 518ff, who reads a different significance into this speech.


97. Ibid., p. 4.

98. Ibid., p. 4, p. 5.


101. As of 1969, a loafer (vago) was defined in law only by the provisions of the Código de Defensa Social of 1936, which cited "Habitual Loafing" in its Chapter 10 as one of the "Indices of Social Dangerousness". According to the Código, an Habitual Loafer was "he who, having the ability to perform remunerated labour, whether physical or mental, remains habitually unemployed ..... living from the labour of others or at the expense of the public welfare authorities". Quoted by Leonor Saavedra y Gómez, La Delincuencia Infantil en Cuba: sus causas (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1945), p. 21.

102. Author's discussions with UJC members. See also Granma, 21 April 1969, p. 2 editorial. In September 1970 the Minister of Labour, Captain Jorge Risquet, said that the preamble of the loafing law had been written over a year previously. Jorge Risquet, "Speech at the provincial meeting of the CTC for Havana", GHR, 20 September 1970, p. 11.


104. Fidel, seguro! A los vagos dales duro!

105. See Jorge Risquet, "Speech at the closing session of the National Plenary on Labour Justice", GHR, 17 August 1969, p. 2. In October 1970 a Ministry of Labour resolution discussed in 28,000 workers' assemblies established that workplace meetings should take place twice-yearly in future to decide collectively what should be entered on each employee's card. Report in GHR, 25 October 1970, p. 5.

106. Jorge Risquet, "Speech at the provincial meeting of the CTC", op.cit., p. 11.


108. According to the COR, 76% of the assemblies held by the CTC and the CDRs in Havana province had unanimously approved the draft law without alteration; 24% had proposed amendments, but only one per cent of the total had suggested that the law be more lenient. GHR, 17 January 1971, p. 7; GHR, 28 March 1971, p. 1.

110. GWR, 11 April 1971, p. 3 editorial. At the National Plenary on Labour Justice the following year it was announced that forty-three per cent of the new workers had been allocated to agriculture, fifteen per cent to industry, thirteen per cent to construction and a total of twenty-nine per cent to transport and communications, commerce, and public services. Of those persons who had to be brought before the courts under the new law, the majority had simply been ordered to a workplace and put under the supervision of the workers' collective there; the number of cases necessitating the application of the most severe penalties was "relatively low", and there had been only a small number of subsequent breaches. Jesús Montané, Organising Secretary of the FOC, "Speech at the National Plenary Meeting on Labour Justice", GWR, 23 January 1972, p. 10.


113. For an account of this process, see O'Connor, op.cit., Chapter 7.


116. As Castro put it, "if the workers' movement isn't democratic, then it is good for nothing". ("Closing speech at the provincial meeting of the CTC", op.cit., p. 5). Nor was any rejection implied of the principle of 'one-man management' or adoption of workers' self-management on the Yugoslav pattern. Castro explained the rationale of the Cuban position in December 1970. The factory administrator was "the indirect representative of the workers. He represents the workers of the nation in the factory. His position isn't elective, as he has a very specific role. The trade union there is the representation of the workers in the factory, a direct representative of the workers in that factory". ("Speech of 7 December 1970 at the closing session of the National Plenary Meeting of Basic Industry", GWR, 20 December 1970, p. 3.) In Chile in 1971, he reaffirmed Cuba's rejection of the Yugoslav approach, describing it, without naming it specifically, as "criminal demagoguery". "Answers to questions by students at the State Technological University, Santiago, 29 November 1971", in Fidel in Chile (New York: International Publishers, 1972), pp. 197-198
117. See report of GNR, 6 November 1970, p. 3. All work centres were to hold elections between 9 November and 9 December, with the exception of the sugar industry, in view of the impending start of the 1971 zafra.

118. Ibid.

119. Castro, "Closing speech at the provincial meeting of the CTC", op.cit., p. 5.


121. Ibid.

122. Fidel Castro, Speech of 26 July 1971, GNR, 1 August 1971, p. 2. The first time the Workers' Congress was mentioned was the previous May Day. See Castro, Speech of 1 May 1971, GNR, 16 May 1971, p. 2.

123. In November 1971, Granma published a summary of the rules to be observed in the elections for the Executive Committees to serve in trade union locals during the second year after the reform. The points insisted upon were the following: there should be a full discussion before nominations are accepted, of the work of the union over the previous year, including its national plenary production meeting and its efforts to raise productivity; next, there should be sufficient nominations to produce two or three candidates for each post, so that a real margin of choice exists; there must be a full discussion of each nominee before voting begins; and the voting, which should be supervised by an elections commission elected from the workers' assembly, must be by direct and secret ballot. "Establece la CTC Normas para celebración de elecciones en todas las secciones sindicales", Granma, 16 November 1971, p. 6.


125. In this speech, Castro announced that there were now 80,847 trade union locals throughout the country and twenty-one national unions incorporating over two million workers (79% men, 12% women). Speech of 1 May 1973, GNR, 13 May 1973, p. 2.

126. This phase of Cuban policy is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 below.


128. Ibid., p. 3; "Celebrarán en enero primer encuentro nacional de normación y organización del trabajo", Granma, 23 November 1971, p. 4. See also report on the meeting in GNR, 30 January 1972, p. 1; and Osvaldo Dorticós, "Control económico y normación: tareas de primer orden" (two speeches of January and February 1972), Economia y Desarrollo, No. 11, May-June 1972, pp. 6-49.


131. On the last point, see report in GMR, 13 May 1973, p. 5.


133. Castro, Speech of 1 May 1971, op.cit., p. 6, p. 8; and Speech of 1 May 1972, op.cit., p. 3. In the first quarter of 1972, it was reported here, the quantity of money in circulation actually fell, in spite of an increase in government spending, probably for the first time since 1959.


135. Castro used this phrase on 26 July 1971 (GNR, 1 August 1971, p. 5 and p. 6). Since then the Cuban press has talked variously about the "mass line" of the Revolution and of applying "mass criteria" in the solution of problems.


In 1969, while the fieldwork for the present study was underway, a marked tendency was observed for discussion on the role of the Party increasingly to revolve around the axis of its co-ordination of the economic life of the country, and more particularly of the sugar harvest. To this end Party "command-posts" were set up across the island during the zafra of 1969 in dress-rehearsal for the harvest of the "Ten Millions" in 1970. Two types of negative consequence of this development were clearly perceptible. Firstly the work of Party members became increasingly administrative in content, to the neglect of what remained theoretically their proper task: overall political orientation and leadership. Secondly, because of the PCC's policy of recruiting from elected "advanced workers" in work centres, the argument was able to gain ground and have the appearance of plausibility that direct involvement of the Party in the management of the economy represented a net gain for workers' democracy. Taking this confusion to its extreme, Fidel Castro told Lee Lockwood in 1965:

> There will be a continuous election, a continuous participation of the masses in the formation of the political apparatus. The representatives of the working masses will be the members of the party. The party will be something like a combined parliament of the workers and interpreter of their will. And again:

> Our party is the representative of the workers and peasants, of the working class, in the same way that the Congress of the United States is representative of the capitalists.

In November 1967 the FEU had been merged with the UJC in the universities after the leadership of the two organisations decided that they both had the same objectives in mind for the same students. *Granma*, 2 December 1967, cited in William E. Ratliff (ed.) Yearbook on Latin American Communist Affairs, 1971 (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1971), p. 61.


"Final Declaration of the 2nd National Congress of the UJC", GHR, 23 April 1972, pp. 7-8. Similar complaints were made at the First National Stocktaking Session on Internal Education of the Party, held in November 1971. See Osvaldo Dorticós, "La Teoría: instrumento indispensable de la práctica revolucionaria", Economía y Desarrollo, No. 11, May-June 1972, pp. 50-66. The origin of these moves to tighten-up the internal organisation of the UJC and the Party may be traced to the Second Meeting of Party Organisation in the Revolutionary Armed Forces which was opened by Fidel Castro on 25 September 1970. The working commissions of the meeting discussed the regulations of the UJC and the FCC, drawing upon "the experience of the party in the army of the USSR". GHR, 4 October 1970, p. 9.


Ibid.


Ibid., pp. 2-3.

Castro mentioned the "setting up of the districts" once again in his 1971 CDR anniversary speech but stressed the need to proceed slowly and "with a firm foundation". (Speech of 28 September 1971, op.cit., p. 3.) Little more has been said on this up to the time of writing.


See report in GHR, 3 December 1972, p. 1. The other mass organisations have not been neglected. The peasants association, ANAP, which is important as the means by which the Revolutionary Government applies its policies for the agricultural private sector, held its 4th National Congress in December 1971, electing a new Executive Committee of thirty-one. At the closing session of the Congress, Fidel Castro made a major speech, which restated the government's policy of collectivisation by "moral" attrition. See report in GHR, 9 January 1972, p. 1; and Fidel Castro, "Speech
at the closing session of the 4th Congress of ANAP, 31 December 1971", ibid., pp. 2-4. For the earlier history of ANAP, see Antero Regalado, "Cinco años de vida de la ANAP", Cuba Socialista, No. 57, (May 1966); and on the formation of Cuban revolutionary policy in this area, Michel Cutelman, L'agriculture socialisée à Cuba: enseignements et perspectives (Paris: Vaspero, 1967).

The FMCS, which held a National Plenary attended by over 300 delegates in December 1972, is scheduled to hold its 2nd Congress in 1974. "Activities in Relation to 2nd Congress", op.cit., p. 14.


150. Thus Dumont writes: "Les CDR c'est tout le monde, car on doit bien s'y inscrire, si on ne veut pas être écarté de nombreux avantages". Op.cit., p. 179.

151. On this, see Chapter 4 below.

152. Dirección Nacional de los CDR, "Deberes de los miembros", op.cit., pp. 11-12.


155. This account is based on observation and on descriptions offered to the author of specific individuals in the CDRs.
We are constructing the house of the future brick by brick, but we must watch over it and protect it, and prevent the enemy who lurks in shadowy corners from going about his work - those ghosts from the past who still stalk about among the ruins of capitalism, dreaming of its return.

Popular Courts were first established in the Cuban capital on an experimental basis in 1966. Two years later the new courts had been inaugurated throughout the city and enjoyed exclusive jurisdiction in summary cases. The genesis, rationale and implementation of the Popular Court idea, with its reliance upon a non-vocational judiciary and emphasis upon 'moral' sanctions and community-participation, will be examined in Chapter 3. Neither the proposal itself, however, nor the practical implications of its application can be understood in abstraction from political, economic and social developments in Cuba during the latter half of the decade of the 'sixties. As we have seen, the year 1966 witnessed the inauguration of a new phase in the evolution of the Castroist leadership in the course of which Cuban spokesmen asserted their independence of judgement vis-a-vis the established orthodoxy of the Soviet bloc in matters of political organisation as well as in foreign policy and economics. The decision to introduce the new courts on a national basis in 1967-68 belongs squarely within this phase of Cuban policy and is inseparable from it. At the same time, the social consequences of the creation of Popular Courts in Havana and elsewhere cannot be treated apart from the effects of other measures of the revolutionary regime in the period in question.
Without aspiring to completeness, the aim of this chapter is to provide some insight into the background against which the performance of the Popular Courts is to be analysed. For this purpose, three problems are selected for special attention: (1) the causes and consequences of the Revolutionary Government's expropriation in March 1968 of the entirety of the non-agricultural private sector; (2) the trend of crime rates in the 'sixties and the attitude of the Cuban authorities towards the continuing problem of common crime; and (3) the nature and effects of Government policy with respect to the capital and its inhabitants.

REVOLUTIONARY OFFENSIVE

On 13 March 1968, in the course of a speech devoted to a painstaking analysis of Cuba's economic prospects and the burden of underdevelopment, Fidel Castro launched a new "revolutionary offensive". The primary objectives of the Offensive were two: an intensification of the national economic effort in the period leading up to the sugar harvest of 1970, and a dramatic reassertion of the role of central planning and 'moral' incentives in the organisation of the transitional economy. According to the Commission for Revolutionary Orientation of the PCC, the immediate tasks which presented themselves in the Offensive were:

To combat egotism and all manifestations of the ideology of individualism. To combat shallowness, and the parasitism of those who do not want to work for their living. To combat subjectivism, by calling for a profound and objective analysis of our problems and the solutions to them.

To direct more and more effort into production, that is into the fulfillment of the gigantic plans of our Revolution in agriculture, industry and hydraulic works. And finally, to make an organisational effort to improve the provision of services to the people.²
The Commission went on to warn against any tendency permitting the movement to be deflected from these essential objectives.\(^3\)

Rhetoric aside, the Revolutionary Offensive had three major long-term consequences. First, it resulted in the abolition of transactions between state-owned enterprises expressed in monetary terms.\(^4\) Second, the relationship between the performance and the remuneration of state sector workers was significantly and deliberately weakened by the procedure of persuading groups of workers to renounce overtime payment and bonuses in exchange for improved pensions.\(^5\) Third, the non-agricultural private sector ceased to exist following the nationalisation between March and June 1968 of 58,000 private concerns.\(^6\) For present purposes it is possible to dwell only upon the last two issues.

The political genealogy of the Revolutionary Offensive is not difficult to trace. The ideas which became the Cuban orthodoxy during this phase correspond closely to the positions defended by Ernesto "Che" Guevara in the debate on economic planning and incentives which occupied the pages of official journals between 1963 and 1965.\(^7\) At the time when they first appeared in print they clearly represented the point of view of a minority within the Cuban leadership and, what is more, they were not espoused by Fidel Castro. As late as 1965, and even 1966, close observers of Cuban affairs still wrote to the effect that, whatever Fidel thought of Che's ideas (he had not yet made this clear) he manifestly did not intend putting them to the test of practice.\(^8\) The silence was broken when, in May 1966, Castro began to warn of the danger that, in their enthusiasm to prepare the economic foundations of the new society, revolutionaries might be led to endanger the
achievement of the very goal for which they were struggling: "the formation of Communist man." One possible source of error, he indicated, was the Soviet doctrine which stated that the communist society would be reached by passing through two stages, the second of which - involving the definitive overthrow of bourgeois concepts of morality and distributive justice - could not begin until the first was complete. Whilst this theory condemned backward countries to an indefinite postponement of the final victory, it also created the illusion that the accumulation of riches in a single country was a sufficient basis for communism:

We modestly think that it is still to be considered and answered whether, in a world divided between industrialised and underdeveloped countries, between countries with a high labour productivity and countries without any labour productivity whatsoever, any nation can undertake the building of communism in a single country, without the productive forces and technology being first developed in the rest of the underdeveloped countries of the world. I believe that socialism can be built in a single country and that communism can be built to a certain degree. But communism, as a formula of absolute abundance, in the midst of an underdeveloped world, cannot be built in a single country, without running the risk, involuntarily and unintentionally, in future years, of immensely rich countries finding themselves trading and dealing with immensely poor countries. Some peoples in communism and other peoples in loin-cloths!

Castro spoke again at length on this theme in his speech on the sixth anniversary of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution in September of the same year. Communism would never be achieved, he now argued, so long as people had "dollar-signs in their heads". "We do not believe in Utopia", he insisted:

We do not believe that [communist] consciousness can be developed in just a few years, but we do believe that it will never be created if we do not struggle unceasingly in this direction, if we do not advance incessantly on this path.
During 1967 Castro's public speeches were devoted primarily to working through the implications of these ideas on the international plane. It was the same thesis however to which he returned during and after the Revolutionary Offensive in 1968. Communism would require, he explained on 26 July, "the highest degree of social awareness ever achieved" because what was involved was no less than that "degree of understanding and brotherhood which man has sometimes achieved within the close circuit of his family":

And we should not use money or wealth to create political awareness. To offer a man more to do more than his duty is to buy his conscience with money. To give a man participation in more collective wealth because he does his duty and produces more and creates more for society is to turn political awareness into wealth. .......... The task is difficult, and many will criticise us. They will call us petty bourgeois, idealists; they will say we are dreamers; they will say we are bound to fail. And yet, facts will speak for us, realities will speak for us, and our people will speak and act for us, because we know our people have the capacity to comprehend these roads and to follow these roads.\[12\]

Subsequent events notwithstanding, the decision of the Cuban leaders to place 'consciousness' and moral incentives to the fore during these years is by no means entirely attributable to their tendency towards voluntarism and the "Marxism of the Will". Important objective considerations intervened, including the consequences of earlier policy decisions. As has been pointed out in other contexts,\[13\] the capacity of a revolutionary regime to deploy conventional economic incentives as a means of raising the productiveness of labour depends upon its ability to procure sufficient supplies of consumer goods for the purpose, or upon its willingness to distribute such goods as are available on a non-equitable basis. Since early in 1962 in Cuba the supply of consumer goods of all types had fallen short of demand (which itself
had expanded, owing largely to the Revolutionary Government's early redistributive policies) and had continued to do so by a margin which increased annually. From the outset shortfalls were met by means of a comprehensive system of price-controls and rationing on a per capita basis. By the middle of the decade, as a result, more than a few Cuban households had difficulty in disposing of their monthly income, even with resort to luxury restaurants or the inevitable black market; absenteeism, and the permanent withdrawal of individuals from the labour force began to affect the economy in a serious manner from this point on. The available indices for the period immediately preceding the Offensive bear out this point.

The new course adopted, with an abruptness which is deceptive, in March 1968 was founded upon the rejection of two ways of remedying this situation which recommend themselves theoretically. Implicitly, and probably without much hesitation, Fidel Castro and his group refused the alternative of introducing price increases affecting the range of goods then available. The effect of acting otherwise than they did would certainly have been to mortgage the possibility of mobilising the mass of the Cuban working class on a political basis for many years. Explicitly, and with misgivings of which the length and content of Castro's 13 March speech are testimony, the reorientation of Cuba's economic plans in such a way as to increase the availability of, say, consumer durables was also rejected. The point was eloquently put by Castro himself. The question of moral versus material incentives, he explained:

is not only a matter of principle for us, but an objective and real matter. Can an underdeveloped country afford to do anything else? ................. Can we stop investing to close
the enormous gap between us and the other countries in order to buy trinkets and superfluous paraphernalia so that the purchasing power of the peso is greater and so that a man earning a peso and buying a trinket thinks he has everything? .............. Imperialism can offer material incentives of many types, and, in the face of this, what are we to do?17

It was in this way that the leaders of the Cuban Communist Party decided in 1968 to stake the future of the economy upon an appeal to the mass of its followers on the basis of levelling measures and egalitarian slogans. The expropriation of the urban private sector helped to create the necessary political atmosphere whilst at the same time serving to stem the outflow of labour from the state economy.

That the private sector expanded during the middle 'sixties at the expense of state employment is indicated by surveys conducted by the Cuban authorities in 1967. As early as 1964, an estimated 75% of retail trade, 95% of transportation, 98% of construction and 95% of industrial production had been brought into state ownership.18 No detailed and up-to-date information regarding relations between the state and private sectors appears to have been available in subsequent years even to JUCEPLAN, the Government planning agency. A special survey conducted by the National Bank19 at the request of the Party and covering transactions between the state economy20 and private non-agricultural producers21 during the first quarter of 1967 resulted, however, in the tracing of some 45,548 private producers. The state sector made 'substantial' purchases (10,000 pesos and above) from 97% of these businesses during the quarter whilst state sales to this part of the private sector were 'substantial' in the case of 91% of the firms. Havana province
accounted for a disproportionate share of the total volume of transactions (49%) and the bulk of this share was concentrated in the metropolitan area itself.\textsuperscript{22} Other National Bank figures indicated that 57% of private sales to state enterprises and agencies consisted of services, whereas finished and 'intermediate' goods accounted for 28% and 14% respectively. This pattern was reversed in state sales to the private sector (Services: 2%; Finished Goods: 16%; Intermediate Goods: 82%).\textsuperscript{23} Signs of definite capital-concentration were nonetheless perceptible. In one case, a business established as recently as 1964 for the production of agricultural machinery had begun to exploit a market for iron bedsteads and had grown as a result to the point where, in the first quarter of 1967, it employed 89 workers and sold goods to the state to the value of 628,020 pesos.\textsuperscript{24}

More significant from an employment point of view were the results of an investigation of retail establishments conducted by the local governments of the six Cuban provinces in the course of 1967. Throughout the country, a census revealed 74% of the total number of retail establishments were in private hands (it has been estimated that these controlled a little below one-third of the value of consumer-goods distribution).\textsuperscript{25} In a "sample survey" of 711 of these establishments, however, the more significant fact was discovered that over half of their proprietors had gone into business since 1961; moreover 12% of the total had previously been engaged in agricultural pursuits, and 27% had been industrial workers.\textsuperscript{26}

It was to these findings that Fidel Castro was no doubt
alluding in his CDR-anniversary speech of 28 September 1967. Because the Revolutionary Government had not 'intervened' small retail establishments during its early nationalisation programme, he asked, was it to be understood that the Revolution sought the proliferation of small business? No, it was not! "It is one thing to respect an existing situation and another thing to foster and seek to develop that situation". It is clear that what concerned the Cuban leadership was not the existence of a private sector, but its growth. On 15 March 1968 Castro explained:

What worried us most was not that certain businesses left over from before continued to exist. That is, we thought it would be possible to reduce the number of businesses little by little. That they would be sold, the owners would retire, that little by little private businesses would disappear. But what actually did happen? Businesses did not disappear, they increased in number.28

But why could a modest increase in private economic activity not be tolerated? After all, it was not denied that the growth of the private sector responded to a certain demand on the part of the Cuban citizenry, and moreover that the 'demand' was not entirely private in character. Indeed the attention of Party members was specifically drawn to this fact:

Our own state enterprises preferred the producers of the private sector if they were under pressure and short of time to fulfill their planned targets. State organizations and enterprises had recourse, by preference, to the private sector to satisfy their requirements; and as a result, the state enterprise responsible for the manufacture of a given good was never presented with the task of producing it.29

Nor was it claimed at any point during the Revolutionary Offensive
that state enterprises could achieve greater efficiency than private units.

The nub of the matter was the labour situation. The private sector "introduced elements of spontaneity and anarchy into the national economy", principally by using offers of high wages to attract labour which might otherwise have been employed in national development projects. For this reason, Fidel Castro explained, there was no overcoming this problem piecemeal:

We had not wanted those who had spent their whole lives in a grocery store or some other business, who were accustomed to that life, to be told, "Well, now this activity must end". But, in reality, this activity could not be abolished without pulling it out by the roots. Because what happened was that many persons, instead of thinking in terms of truly productive work, for the benefit of the whole nation, were inventing anything so that they could make 10 or 20 times as much as a regular worker and live 10 or 20 times better than any worker. This is the situation which existed, and that is why there was no way to compromise on this matter.

Here was the central difficulty as the Cuban leaders saw it in 1968. The earnings to be had from private trading or working "on one's own account" were now so substantial that it was positively disadvantageous to be an employee of the state. The profits of bars and vending stalls in Havana were particularly remarkable.

As if this were not enough, a clear connection was claimed to have been established between private commerce and a wide spectrum of social and political evils. Seventy-two per cent of bar owners, it was assessed, "maintain an attitude contrary to our revolutionary process" whilst 66% of their customers were "anti-social elements". The case of the hot-dog men (timbiricheros) was even worse: the attractiveness of this business for some Havana people derived
primarily from the fact that it "not only yields high profits but permits them to be in constant contact with lumpen and other anti-social and counter-revolutionary elements". In addition to being based upon illegal, unsanitary or undesirable practices, the timbiriches were a focus of attraction for layabouts and malcontents and - an infallible index - 78% of vendors in the interior of Havana province were not "integrated into the Revolution" by virtue of membership of a CDR or other mass organization. In addition to their own corruption furthermore they corrupted the rest of the population.

Under socialism, Castro asserted in his 13 March speech, petty commerce would always tend to appear "in those cases where State organizations do not give adequate service to the public". However this was not a reason for letting it flourish at the Revolution's expense:

Many people may ask themselves what kind of a revolution this is, that permits such parasites to exist after nine years of revolution, and they would be right in asking. Gentlemen, we did not make a Revolution here to establish the right to trade! Such a revolution took place in 1789. When will they finally understand that this is a revolution of socialists, that is a revolution of communists.

By 1968, the Cuban leaders were for better or worse committed to making moral incentives work, to fuelling economy and society with the sense that all were participating equally in a gigantic national effort to overcome underdevelopment. Few things could be more damaging to this collective morale than the knowledge that a great many people were not participating or contributing a service whose priority was questionable. On the other hand, few measures
could be expected to be more popular among the revolution's most committed supporters than the expropriation of a new layer of "parasites". The notion that the revolution was directed against "parasites" of all sizes and types was a well-established one. In his very first CDR anniversary speech Fidel Castro had dealt with just this subject at some length. I quote:

Before the revolution there were the big parasites and the small parasites, .... from the big parasite - the owner of a sugar mill, the owner of a thousand caballerías of land, the owner of a big factory, the owner of 300 houses, or the owner of a housing estate - to the small parasite: the neighbourhood stool pigeon, the vote-buyer, the lottery-racketeer and the "lumpen". A "lumpen" is a declassed person who seeks to live not by working but parasitically.

To tell the truth, we knew of people who had to devote themselves to the lottery-racket because they couldn't get a job. Because it was partly the shortage of jobs that was responsible for the parasitism of people who became lottery racketeers; and the same was true of an infinite variety of parasites - like holders of sinecures, for instance, who were a classical type of small parasite.

.............. What is the revolution but a great rebellion of workers and peasants, of the generous, honourable and useful people, against the parasites, the exploiters, the drones, the spivs and the easy-livers.

Thus, in 1968:

The big-time exploiters had been eliminated, but there were still a number of medium-sized exploiters and a great many petty exploiters. And, when all is said and done, whether exploitation be big, medium or petty, it must all disappear.

The implementation of the measure may now be dealt with briefly. Ad hoc commissions set up for the purpose had by the early summer of 1968 completed the 'nationalisation' of 58,012 private concerns. In most cases no compensation was paid,
although, at the discretion of the National Bank, persons who had been established in business prior to the revolution or whose reputation in the neighbourhood was morally and politically spotless were indemnified with a pension or, where appropriate, encouraged to remain in their posts as administrators on the payroll of the Ministry of Internal Commerce. Some 36,506 people however, consisting of 19,450 "proprietors, co-proprietors and partners", 8,132 self-employed and 8,924 employees of private concerns, were judged not to qualify under this rubric. Sixteen thousand, six hundred and seventy-one of them were found to be both physically fit and not already in receipt of a wage or pension from the state.

By June about 85% of those involved had accepted the new jobs offered them by the Ministry of Labour, a fact interpreted as "an extremely encouraging sign and evidence of how the policy of the revolution towards them has yielded good results". Nearly half entered one of the two principal sectors of labour shortage - agriculture and construction. The expropriations had achieved their primary aim.

GHOSTS FROM THE PAST

In the last years of the 'sixties in Cuba crime, like business, was a highly political affair. One reason for this was that the rhetoric of moral incentives and fraternity in struggle induced low levels of tolerance with respect to criminals and crime in the mass of revolutionary Cubans. Another reason was that, far from having "withered away", certain categories of offence were becoming more frequent in this period.

For a combination of reasons, including both changing socio-
political attitudes and the trend of crime itself, ordinary crime had become sufficient of a national problem to warrant the calling of a special Conference on Internal Order in March 1969. The statistics provided for the conference and published in the Cuban press allow us to draw some limited conclusions about the effects of the revolutionary experience in this area. But it is necessary to proceed with some care. For example, the overall trend of crime during the first decade of revolutionary power - between 1960 and 1968, a decline in the annual rate of 58% - is partly spurious from a criminological point of view and also conceals conflicting trends in different types of crime. The element of spuriousness derives from the category of Offences against Life and Limb, which will serve as an appropriate starting point.

The number of Offences Against Life and Limb registered in Cuba fell consistently in the period for which data are provided, from 61,000 in 1959 to 60,000 in 1960, 58,000 in 1962 and 17,000 in 1968. The decline in the most serious sub-category of offences - murder and homicide - follows a clear pattern: from 1962 their number fell by some 77% in the space of two years. The inclusion here of offences committed in the last years of the Batista period, in the service of the counter revolutionary forces or in consequence of the general turbulence of the period would appear to account for the very high level of murders and homicides (over 2,500 annually) maintained during 1959-1961. The absence of these factors in later years would also explain the subsequent decline. In the case of less serious offences, such as Assault and Light Woundings, there is perhaps more justification for the interpretation that the decline reflects "the progress of the revolution, the improved
social conditions, the elimination of brothels, of centres of
delinquency and of the worst kinds of rowdyism". However it is
difficult to read anything precise into these figures.

Other of the statistics published in April 1969 are more easy
to interpret. Before the revolution an estimated 11,500 women in
Cuba had earned their living as prostitutes. The fact reflected
a demand inflated by the presence especially in Havana of foreign
'tourists' in large numbers, the connivance of the police and an
adequate supply of female migrants from the interior of the country.

As one native of Oriente province explained,

When women came up to Havana from Oriente they
used to come looking for decent work, but often
enough they ended up in la vida. There were
lots of pimps in Havana in those days - well-
dressed individuals who sported good watches and
elegant rings and who appeared to be rich men.
They used to invite a woman out to a night club,
make love to her and then get her to work for
them. Girls used to write home to their people
saying that they were working in a cafe, but
sometimes this wasn't the whole truth!

Now, in 1969, it could be claimed that "although there are some
isolated cases of prostitution in our country, brothels have been
totally eliminated, and, along with this, procuring - also a crime -
has disappeared". Vigorous government action, including a
"retraining" programme for prostitutes, had been mainly responsible,
backed up by changes in both the prevailing mores and the economic
climate.

In the years before 1959 both cannabis and 'hard' drugs had
circulated in Cuba. Between 1935 and 1942, for instance, narcotic-
addiction was alleged to be widespread in Havana, especially in and
around the notorious barrio chino, near the old city centre.
From one hundred to two hundred convictions for drug peddling were handed down annually in three of the component municipalities of the city during these years. In shanty-towns like Las Yaguas, with a population of nearly three and a half thousand, marihuana circulated freely and the trade in it was an important source of the neighbourhood's income. "The marihuana, which was smoked latterly by nearly everyone, the women and the children included", according to the testimony of one ex-resident, "was supplied for sale in the barrio by the chief of the Drugs Department of the police himself .....". Energetic action by the authorities in 1959 and after was responsible for the following numbers of prosecutions for drug traffic and use:

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<td>Prosecutions</td>
<td>1,464</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>566</td>
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Of course, police statistics are not a reliable guide to actual consumption and short-term fluctuations are most likely to reflect varying levels of police activity in this field. Nevertheless in 1969 the Ministry of the Interior announced that "as a result of our daily experiences in our struggle against users - we know how they operate and what the situation is - we can affirm that this crime has decreased in Cuba". The same source continues: "In Cuba there is no such thing as international smuggling of narcotics or drugs. This, to a great extent, is the result of the revolutionary process itself. The elements which, in the past, used such drugs, were, generally speaking, of the bourgeoisie, with the financial means to purchase them. Control on foreign exchange, the monopoly of foreign trade, etc., also have a bearing on this". The last factor is obviously decisive. (The author's own enquiries confirm
that whatever illegal drug consumption continued to exist in Cuba in 1969 was virtually restricted to cannabis, which grows readily in parts of the island and which does not therefore need to be imported.)

Prosecutions for certain types of gambling were also frequent in 1959 and 1960, becoming much less common in the course of the next eight years. Although the Social Defence Code of 1936, the major piece of codified criminal legislation which the revolution inherited, provided for the punishment of Prohibited Gaming, the law allowed considerable scope for legal gambling of various sorts, from the rich casinos of Havana and other resorts to the National Lottery. At the same time, the illegal sweepstakes run by private individuals using the tickets of the official lottery were tolerated by the police, who sometimes received payment in return. Since the revolution a permanent campaign has been waged by Fidel Castro and other leaders to wean the Cuban people from its "lottery mentality" including, in addition to speech-making and propaganda, such drastic measures as collecting-up and storing, the island's 'fruit' machines. The task has not proved an easy one. In 1968 it was decided to wind up the National Institute for Savings and Housing (INAV), the agency which financed the first housing programmes after the revolution, because its lottery continued to be the source of secondary sweepstakes. With the destruction of the economic base of the lottery mentality, nevertheless, the net effect of ten years of revolution was to bring about a "notable decline" in gambling and its influence upon Cuban national life.

Before the revolution, begging, too, had been widespread. There were at one time an estimated 5,000 beggars in Havana alone,
and an inestimable number of children were used as beggars, as well as newspaper sellers and lottery-ticket vendors. During the 'sixties this problem and its associated evils had all but ceased to exist in Cuba. As the Vice-Minister of the Interior observed in 1969: "The very development of the Revolution itself has brought about the elimination of the causes of begging and prostitution through its bettering of social conditions not only as a result of police-work but basically as a revolutionary development". The full employment inaugurated by the Revolutionary Government had cut away one important prop of the island's tropical debauchery of previous decades. The elimination of corruption in public life in general and in the police force in particular, and the termination of the Miami-Havana tourist circuit, had prepared the conditions for its final elimination.

It is not the case however that the indices of all categories of known crime fell between 1960 and 1968. For example the offence of Misappropriation was the cause of over 400 cases each in 1962 and 1963 but over 3,000 cases in 1967. This increase is to a substantial extent a legal fiction, the result of the transformation of cases of theft into cases of misappropriation as more and more Cubans came into the category of state employees. By itself it has no clear significance. The same cannot however be said of the other broad category of offence which remains to be considered, that of Offences against Property. Offences in this category - Robbery, Theft and Swindle - exhibited what was officially described as "an alarming tendency to rise".

The most remarkable aspect of the history of Offences against
Property in Cuba since 1959 is not perhaps that annual totals should have tended to increase but that the inverse should have occurred in so dramatic a fashion during the two years 1963 and 1964. From a plateau of approximately 36,000 cases reported per year in 1960-62, Ministry statistics indicate that the incidence of offences in this category fell in 1963 by more than one half (17,000 cases) and in 1964 by a further 41% (10,000 cases). It began to rise again only in the second half of the decade.  

Partisans of the deterrent efficacity of draconian penalties may take satisfaction from the apparent explanation of this phenomenon. On the view of the Ministry of the Interior the decline of Offences against Property during these two years was attributable to the announcement in 1963 of Law 1098 - a law calling for the death sentence for robbery compounded with violence in occupied dwellings, robbery involving the impersonation of police officers, and robbery or theft involving the use of minors. The new upturn was to be explained as the product of (a) the failure of the courts to implement fully the provisions of Law 1098, and (b) a shift in criminal tactics which had resulted in the successful exploitation of loopholes in the Law.  

Underlying this argument is a more basic reason why in the absence of stiff penalties the frequency of Offences against Property might have been expected to rise: the increased incentive to robbery created by conditions of shortage and rationing. By the middle of the decade, these conditions had resulted in the creation of an extensive black market on which most goods fetched prices several times those fixed by the Ministry of Internal Commerce. The existence of the black market in turn rendered the
theft of such mundane - and easily stolen - items as adults' clothing an unusually lucrative activity, worthy of considerable privations and risks. The same set of circumstances, on the other hand, made robbery, theft or swindle peculiarly painful to its victims. A household deprived of its wardrobe in this way in 1969 would have difficulty in replacing it, even if it resorted itself to paying high black-market prices. The lengths to which Cuban policy-makers have gone in providing deterrents to certain types of crime can scarcely be understood outside this context.

In selecting robbery for particular condemnation, Cuban officials drew attention to the new social conditions which, in their view, had removed all possible justification for it. Thus the Minister:

In our country, before the triumph of the Revolution, a thief might have had a social justification, since the very conditions of the exploiting regime condemned him to living in poverty, hunger and corruption, but today the thief is committing a double crime; first, because he does not have to steal to live decently; and, second, because his crime is committed not against an exploiter or idle person, but rather against workers and farmers, against our people.

And the Vice-Minister:

Today, with infinite work opportunities existing in our country, there is no reason for burglary.

There were other reasons why the levels of crime tolerable in a society such as Cuba in 1969 might be expected to be lower than those of, say, a liberal capitalist country. The type of work incentives upon which the economy had by default or by policy come to rely - based on appeals not to immediate personal gain
but to long-term collective advantage - required for any degree of success a sense of security incompatible with high levels of crime. The continued problem of robbery, theft and swindle could have serious effects upon the morale of the population, particularly if workers were robbed or their families swindled, as not infrequently happened, during their absence as voluntary labourers in the cane fields. It was both because of the recent increase in the incidence of Offences against Property, and because of the apparently threatening character assumed by this type of crime, that "internal order" became an important focus of concern in the spring of 1969. A Granma editorial observed of the Conference that "from the preliminary assemblies held at the base, to its national culmination, it showed the tremendous irritation and indignation of our people concerning the upsurge of various criminal activities, and especially of crimes against property".\textsuperscript{82} A variety of solutions were proposed where the law was concerned, stiffer penalties were recommended in certain areas to close existing loopholes,\textsuperscript{83} and a Commission for the Study of Jurisdictions was established to investigate an observed inconsistencies in the legislation in force.\textsuperscript{84} On the eve of the conference Castro himself went as far as to threaten inveterate criminals with their "radical elimination" at some future date if they did not mend their ways.\textsuperscript{85}

Particular worries were expressed regarding the participation of minors in crime. In Cuba the revolution had created "favourable conditions for developing the abilities of all young people and children by expanding the entire educational system and by creating numerous incentives for encouraging children and youngsters to develop on the basis of our moral and ideological standards".\textsuperscript{86}
High hopes were held that the new generation of Cubans would prove morally superior to their parents as well as technically more proficient in the skills required for their country's development. Yet in 1967 41% of all criminal cases still involved minors, either alone or, more commonly, in the company of adults. In 1968 minors accounted for as many as 27% of convictions for theft and 12% of those for robbery, whilst the participation of minors in the commission of serious offences like robbery with violence had shown a "marked increase" in recent years. It was therefore proposed that further consideration be given to lowering the age of majority for penal purposes from 18 years to 16 years. The other type of measure adopted in the fight against crime involved as we know the consolidation and extension of the 'vigilance' afforded by the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution.

In March 1969 Fidel Castro expressed a view not just his own when he asserted that what would prove decisive in the struggle against inveterate criminals would be, in the long haul, the success or failure of the Revolutionary Government's expansion of the formal education system. This struggle - he held - would be "so much easier, so much less necessary from the moment when the country is able to dominate the problem of education from an early age", and he added:

We do not believe that this type of criminal can be engendered in a society which has achieved this objective. Although it is never possible to predict what will be the isolated behaviour of some men, .......... there is no doubt that the problem of crime will be extraordinarily reduced in keeping with the pace at which there is a spreading of education, and, through education, of culture, and, through culture, of consciousness, into society as a whole.
At the same time the expansion of the educational system would entail concomitant risks if, through neglect, some children were allowed to escape from the net, or to fall behind the rest.

Think of the maladjustments and think of the problems which will arise in those individuals who, confronted with a whole mass of people which is becoming better and better informed, are left behind, not knowing anything.

What will become of them? They will become society's problems, candidates for delinquency, candidates for conflict with a society to which they are unable to adapt, in which they are scarcely capable of living.91

Already the dominant characteristic of juvenile delinquents in Havana was their backwardness in educational terms. Ninety percent of them were found to be lagging three grades or more behind their contemporaries and 75% had a history of frequent absence from school.92

In general Cuban policy towards criminals and crime combined a capacity for severity in selected instances, based upon profoundly pessimistic premises, with a supreme optimism regarding the potential of education and the malleability of the human personality. Even where incorrigibles were concerned it was argued that the problem lay in the miseducation to which these men had been subject in the past, or in the survival of pockets of the old society within the new:

Such a criminal mentality which permits some people to steal whilst others work is due to the specific milieu in which such persons develop, and to the influence exerted upon them by others who have not adapted to the system and who persist in living in the present with the ideology of the past.93

One could be still more specific:
The existence of this phenomenon within the socialist society is explained by the survival of a dead-weight of loafers, lumpens, apathetics and youngsters influenced by micro-environments which still survive and exercise their deformatory influence.94

On a theoretical plane it was argued first of all that all crime was environmentally determined - that bad habits, like good ones, were socially learnt and therefore in principle capable of being unlearnt.95 Secondly, the argument ran, crime today no longer had any objective justification in the nature of the social order; it was now no more than a manifestation of false and distorted consciousness, and therefore the "education and re-education" of criminals, delinquents and other persons who persisted in antisocial acts was blocked by no insuperable obstacles. Precisely because crime was now no more than a problem of ideology and of the development of political awareness, it could, with effort, be overcome for good.

One field in which this faith was clearly expressed was in government policy in the late 'sixties with respect to the country's penal institutions. The entire Cuban penal framework was based on a "system of progressive rehabilitation" which incorporated generous inducements to the inmates of prisons to prove themselves capable of reform.96 An effort was being made, where political and ordinary prisoners alike were concerned, to eliminate from prison life the spirit of retribution and to inject it with that of "re-education".97 To this end, "political instruction" classes for prisoners were nearly universal and, if most prisons were in fact rural work-camps or 'farms' (granjas), this was not just because agricultural labour was in short supply
nor because the island's conventional prisons were mostly old, insalubrious and overcrowded. It was also because of the Cuban leadership's convictions regarding the educative effect of labour in general and agricultural labour in particular. In juvenile reformatories, too, the combination of work and study was "the fundamental basis of re-education". Another sphere where belief in the efficacity of revolutionary education and re-education had made its mark was, as we shall see, in the judiciary. It is indeed upon this belief that was founded the most novel creation of the Cuban revolution in the judicial field: the Popular Court.

THE CITY AS SETTING

Part of the discussion of the Popular Courts which follows in Chapter 4 draws upon an investigation in depth of the operation of the courts in a selected Sectional division of the city of Havana. The nature of the neighbourhood in question will be described at the proper time. However at this point it is necessary to comment upon one further preliminary question: what caveats are in order regarding the reliability of generalisations based primarily upon observations in the capital city of Cuba?

The proposition is often repeated as a warning to foreign visitors to the island that it is impossible to "see the revolution" in Havana and that it can be misleading to attempt to form an opinion either of the progress or of the problems of the country on the basis of experience of life in the capital. There is one sense in which this is clearly true, if only marginally relevant
to our specific concerns. After the shift of 1963-64 in Cuba's economic priorities, the bulk of long-term investments found their way into the countryside in one form or another. Newly-constructed dams and model farms, as well as schools and hospitals were soon to be seen distributed across the countryside or in the smaller towns of the interior. In sharp contrast, the capital was in a state of visible architectural decay by 1969, having been deprived of even elementary infrastructural investments. This situation was frequently explained and justified, even though its roots were in a decision of a purely economic order, in terms of the (moral) need to reverse the relationship of 'internal colonialism' which had obtained between city and countryside ever since the arrival of the Spanish on the island at the end of the fifteenth century. It was just, as well as economically expedient that the metropolis should 'pay' for the development of its hinterland. An early version of the rationale for government policies with respect to Havana was given by Fidel Castro to Lee Lockwood in 1965. Speaking of pre-revolutionary Cuba, Castro explained:

If you came to Havana in those days, you saw a city with many businesses, many neon signs, lots of advertisements, many automobiles. Naturally this could have given the impression of a certain prosperity; but what it really signified was that we were spending what small resources were left to us to support an elegant life for a tiny minority of the population. Such an image of prosperity was not true of the interior, where the people needed running water, sewers, roads, hospitals, schools, and transportation, and where hundreds of thousands of sugar workers worked only three or four months a year and lived in the most horrible social conditions imaginable. You had the paradoxical situation that those who produced the wealth were precisely the ones who least benefited from it. And the ones who spent the wealth did not live in the countryside, produced nothing, and
lived a life that was soft, leisurely, easy, and proper to the wealthy. ............ We inherited an overdeveloped capital in a completely underdeveloped country.99

This was a recurrent theme in Castro's speeches during the last years of the 'sixties. On 13 March 1968, for example, he quoted at length from the study of rural life made by the Agrupación Católica Universitaria in 1957, emphasising the finding that agricultural workers and their dependants amounting to approximately 34% of the national population received a mere 10% of the national income. Even in 1967, Havana province, with 27% of the island's population still accounted for 38% of its total state wages bill, 35% of consumer goods sales and 49% of commercial services.100

Until the Batista era of the 'fifties, one consequence of the pre-revolutionary distribution of income (as between the city and the interior) had been a steady - if, by Latin American standards, modest101 - migratory movement from rural areas towards the cities. In the 'fifties, migration came to a halt but during the first three years after the victory of the revolutionary forces, owing to the expansion of the army and other government services as well as to the industrial expansion programme, Greater Havana started to grow dramatically at the expense of the rest of the country. Beginning in 1962, however, the new development priorities and the various means of migration-control acquired by the government during its first years in office not only halted this relative growth but turned it into a steady decline.102 Since 1963, Cuba has experienced, perhaps uniquely among the Latin American nations, a rate of growth of its primate city inferior to that of its national population.
TABLE 3


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Note: Prior to the local government reform of 1966-67, Greater Havana included the municipios of Habana, Guanabacoa, Marianao, Regla, Santa María del Rosario and Santiago de las Vegas. Since the reform, the term Metropolitan Havana has been used to refer to the Regionales Centro-Habana, Plaza de la Revolución, Díaz de Octubre, Guanabacoa, Marianao and Boyeros. Official Cuban sources do not indicate that the change affects the comparability of these statistics however.

The intentions of the Cuban government are not straightforwardly anti-urban and do not rest upon an idealisation of rural life as such. They are directed against the expensive primacy of Havana, favouring the growth of a network of smaller cities and substantial villages, organically linked to an economy of large-scale, mechanised agriculture. A prominent Cuban demographer summarises the achievement to date and the prospect for the future:

Hundreds of socialist villages with tens of thousands of modern houses supplied with running water, electricity, and European-type community services now shelter workers on the popular farms, a population formerly dispersed in huts little different from those of the Indians who peopled the island in the 15th century.

In a few more years this effort will change the face of the Cuban countryside. From a
nation with scattered settlement, a showcase
capital, and a few dozen sleepy, dusty little
towns, it will create a new country with a
population clustered in modern villages and a
network of medium towns of 20,000 to 100,000
inhabitants, approximately distributed,
animated, and aware of their individual function.

It is true, then, that from before the middle of the 'sixties
Havana was being deliberately bled in both an economic and a
demographic sense, and that from these points of view the city is
set apart from the whole of the rest of the country. More
pertinent from our point of view however is a different, if related,
claim commonly made about the city. This is that Havana possesses
particular sociological features which render it politically
atypical and less "revolutionary" than the rest of the country.
Fidel Castro's 1968 CDR anniversary speech broached the subject
in a characteristic way and is worth quoting from at length:

How long did it take, we wonder, for the
revolutionary spirit to really conquer the capital
of our country? We should not confuse the victory
of sentiment, the victory of enthusiasm or the
victory of the emotions with the victory of
consciousness. Nor, on the other hand, should we
blame the masses of our capital who have always
shown such enthusiasm for everything to do with
the Revolution. But the fact is that in our
capital there was an accumulation of many other
factors.

In the capital lived the richest families of
the country, the families of cattlemen, landowners
and industrialists, in their lavish mansions. It
was in the capital that the phenomenon of bureau­
cracy in our country was concentrated to the
highest degree. It was the seat of all adminis­
trative and political activities, and the
principal seat of all commercial and speculative
activities; it was moreover the seat of a
sector of the proletariat which has been charac­
terised with reason on other occasions as an
aristocracy of labour. Let us say with complete
clarity that, in spite of the presence of a
considerable sector of true industrial proletarians
and extensive zones of the lower strata (capas
humildes) of our population, the petty-bourgeois
spirit prevailed in the capital of our country. The old spirit of the colonial period, the old spirit of the mediatised Republic, with all its vices, and above all the influence of Yankee imperialism - culturally, politically, ideologically and in every sphere - was very marked in the capital of our country. And we may say that it has taken years for the victory of revolutionary consciousness to come about among our masses.¹⁰⁵

The datum provided by Castro the previous March - that Havana province's 27% of the national population accounts for 63% of all emigres¹⁰⁶ - helps to sustain this view. A few points may be added.

Firstly, leaving aside the 'aristocracy of labour' - a term used most often after the revolution to refer to the highly-paid employees of the foreign-owned utilities, oil refineries, banks and hotels - the urban working class of the 'fifties was far from homogeneous. In some urban industries, the factory system predominated but many others employed tens of thousands of workers in chinchales - workshops employing no more than five or six men or women - or in domestic industry. In cigar and cigarette manufacture, for example, there were in the whole country three large, mechanised factories but countless small shops. It has been estimated that 9,000 workers were engaged in factory production in this sector but 26,000 in small-scale, mainly domestic, industry. Moreover in Cuba's three largest industries aside from sugar milling - clothes and footwear, tobacco products, and wood and cork products - the "typical" worker was a home or sweatshop worker.¹⁰⁷ Although in cities like Havana, then, there existed a substantial proletariat in the classical sense, it would be misleading to think of this group as composed uniformly or even
predominantly of factory workers; as a result of the Revolutionary Government's policy of "consolidating" industry, introduced on a large-scale in 1962, many Havana workers were employed in units of factory dimensions for the first time in the history of their industry.

Secondly, the manufacturing sector as such was only part of the story; on a national scale, alongside its 327,000 workers (a mere 16.6% of the economically active population), the Census of 1953 listed as many as 396,000 persons engaged in services or related activities. Elsewhere it listed by occupational groups no less than 160,400 persons dedicated to "domestic", "personal" or "protective" services, as well as 123,200 "salesmen or vendors" of which the bulk were "retail or itinerant". The joint effect of stagnation and the economic proximity of the United States was thus an expanded tertiary sector consisting in Havana to an unverifiable but probably substantial extent of petty services, one-man vending stalls or timbiriches, shoe-shiners, lottery-ticket vendors and the like. Reinforcing this characteristic, the instability of Cuba's sugar economy in its later years, also tended to foster in Cubans the virtues of adaptability rather than those associated with steady labour; corruption too, which was as much an activity of small entrepreneurs as it was of large ones, was sustained by "the lack of opportunities in a stagnating economy, the all-pervasive gambling mentality which conditioned the outlook of urban Cubans and which was rooted in the island's overall dependence on the volatile international sugar market....".

Thirdly, and at slightly more length, it is worth indicating...
that some at least of the zones of lower class settlement in Havana could legitimately be placed on the negative side of Castro's balance sheet. Although pre-revolutionary Havana did not experience in the same degree as, say, Caracas or Kingston the phenomenon of rapidly growing shanty-towns and squatter settlements, a number of sizeable barrios de indigentes did exist. With names like Las Yaguas, Llega y Pon, El Pulguero, La Purísima, Isla de Pinos, La Cueva del Humo, La Timba, they were to be found in every part of the city and even, in the case of the last mentioned, close to its modern centre, overspilling on to what is today the Plaza de la Revolución. The creation and growth of barrios de indigentes occurred on a large scale in the 'thirties, triggered by the initiation of the Depression in Cuba and accelerated, according to some authors, by the "weakening of the principle of authority" during the political upheavals following the fall of the dictator Machado in 1933.\textsuperscript{111} A retrospective account published in 1945 describes the process vividly:

In various places in La Vibora, Jesus del Monte, El Cerro, the residential quarter of the Vedado, in the vicinity of the Central Market and wherever there was a vacant plot \textit{solar yermo}, there arose unsightly huts made of packing-cases, palm leaves \textit{yagües} and refuse of all possible sorts, without order and without concert. In these discreditable precincts there lodged a multitude of needy people bearing the marks of hunger, sickness and filth.\textsuperscript{112}

We are told of the inhabitants of the barrios in the 'forties that they beg in public places and from door to door, steal with an air of nonchalance, or rummage avidly in rubbish dumps in search of food or waste materials which they can sell to others.
of their kind. It is a painful spectacle that confronts the passer-by when he comes across one of these encampments: a revolting sewer into which the capital has emptied its human garbage, to decompose, physically and morally.

This author estimated that by 1945 there were more than 2,000 shacks of this type in Havana, housing 15 to 20 thousand people. More detailed information was collected about one of the most notorious shanty-towns, known as Las Yaguas and situated in the popular suburb of Luyano, shortly before it was torn down in 1963. Las Yaguas occupied a space of about 6,250 square metres and housed a population of 3,412 (about 740 families) in 1960. The site, a privately-owned vacant plot, began to be occupied in piecemeal fashion in the twenties, but the growth of the barrio took place around two peak years, 1932 and 1954, reflecting a softening of public and official attitudes towards the squatters during the respective crises of the dictators Machado and Batista. Although in regard to the barrios in general it would appear that both organised invasions and systematic evictions occurred in some periods, the legal owners of the site of Las Yaguas do not appear to have been able to muster more than sporadic harassment of its occupiers and failed to secure governmental intervention in their favour in spite of successive law suits. The shanty-town was created by infiltration, family by family, rather than by invasion. Perhaps for this reason the capacity of the yagüeros for autonomous cooperative efforts designed to improve their collective lot appears to have been extremely limited in all periods. It is not that the inhabitants did not know how to make use of the rest of the city and its facilities. The economic base of the neighbourhood appears
to have consisted partly of petty service activities carried on within its own boundaries - washing and repairs - but this was supplemented by newspaper sales, begging and petty-crime. Residents of Las Yaguas made frequent use of hospitals and charitable institutions to complement folk-remedies and mutual support among kin but their main source of contact with the 'outside' was as the objects of vote-buyers, the police and, from time to time, social workers or Catholic activists.117

After the revolution of 1959 the authorities moved quickly, first to bring the barrios under the law by "cleaning up" their more offensive features, then to eradicate them. Most of the larger shanty-towns were pulled down and their inhabitants rehoused under the first INAV programmes, yanquis being paid to build their own dwellings in one or other of the newly-created estates.118 According to one ex-resident, "the people of the barrio adapted themselves very quickly to the revolution; from selling their votes to Batistiano politicians they were converted overnight to attacking the houses of these politicians in a very 'revolutionary' manner". She continues: "They changed their colour to olive green like iguanas, even becoming militiamen".119 Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that most of the "criminal elements" had left the neighbourhood before the new authorities arrived, the literacy campaign of 1961 was notably unsuccessful in Las Yaguas. The militia and the CDRs gained a handful of recruits only and these, it is alleged, mainly on the basis of the unfounded belief that failure to join would mean losing their jobs or forfeiting the chance of obtaining new housing. Without exception, it is reported, the people of the neighbourhood regarded membership of the CDRs as humiliating and those who joined were referred to
Here, then, we have an additional factor in the balance against Havana and in support of the view that the city was sociologically predisposed to resist the advance of revolutionary politics. It remains here to express some doubts about the thesis of capital-city exceptionalism as it is ordinarily advanced. Unquestionably the considerations mentioned create special conditions and special problems in the city. In the first place, however, granted that over 20% of all Cubans live in Greater Havana - and that not less than 40% of them are located in one or other of the island's twenty-six urban centres of over 20,000 population - the cruder version of the view that the first years of revolution left the city, or urban Cuba generally, politically untouched are obviously suspect. It would be impossible to explain the survival, let alone the immense popularity, of the revolutionary regime if this were the case. Whatever the final interpretation which is put, for instance, on the growth of the CDRs in the 'sixties, it can scarcely be denied that political factors proper were involved, and CDR growth, as we have seen, occurred disproportionately in Havana. There are few indications on these grounds that, taken as a whole, habaneros were slower to "understand the process" than anybody else.

It is true that in their efforts to convince the Cuban people of the wisdom of the new development priorities after 1963, the revolutionary leadership was forced to confront extremely negative attitudes held by almost all city-dwellers with respect to the countryside in general and agricultural labour in particular. The
notion that the country was *p'a los pajaro* (for the birds), and the stereotype of the crude and ignorant *guajiro*, took some time to die. However by 1969 considerable changes had perceptibly taken place with respect to this particular element of revolutionary conciencia, owing particularly to the initiation in the autumn of 1967 of a programme for mobilising large numbers of Havana people on a semi-regular basis for work in the 'Green Belt' around the city, where the peasantry had been persuaded to join state-directed "mini-plans" for coffee and fruit growing. On 28 September 1969, Castro was able to argue as follows:

> It might well be said that the 28th of September last year marked the beginning of a new revolution in the province of Havana, that it marked the beginning of a revolution both of a material order and of a political order. That is to say, there began a real revolution in the agriculture of this province and at the same time a real revolution in the spirit of the masses of the capital of our country.

> And we truly believe that it has been this year just past that the triumph of the Revolution in the consciousness of the masses of our capital has become apparent.122

Castro went on to say that economic relations between Havana province and the rest of the country had been transformed in such a way that now the province 'exported' more to the interior than it 'imported' from the interior. As for political awareness, a constant and genuine source of amazement to officials and CDR militants in 1969123 was the extent to which Havana people had proved capable of changing their basic orientations towards life and work in a mere ten years of revolutionary rule.

> It is probable that variations in the penetration of revolutionary politics as between different types of neighbourhood
in the city are more significant than variations between city and country as such. According to the National Directorate of the CDRs, the level and quality of the work of the committees varies considerably within Havana, though not only politics is involved. The social character of the neighbourhood in question has a considerable bearing on the efficiency of the CDRs as measured by the National Directorate's emulation campaigns.\textsuperscript{124} Emulation contests tend to be won by committees in the 'traditional' popular barrios - Cerro, Luyanó, Guanabacoa - with their stable working class populations. Modern housing projects like the famous Habana del Este, where professional people rub shoulders with erstwhile shanty-town residents in tall tower blocks, create serious headaches for CDR officials anxious to meet regional targets in salvage collections and blood donations.\textsuperscript{125} Modern suburbs like Nuevo Vedado which are still largely populated by government officials and professionals are difficult to organise too - in this case, according to the National Directorate, because such people are "often overworked" and find little time for the committees. Finally the central quarters of the city spanning the area between the Parque Central and the Vedado - present a complex and unique set of problems. Far more than any other part of the city, these neighbourhoods bear the imprint and the social influence of the pre-revolutionary tourist trade. Where middle class exile families have left vacant apartments, these have often been filled by families from condemned areas; and, finally but not least important, this is the Bohemian quarter par excellence, containing a greater concentration of intellectuals than any other part of the city.
It is nonetheless this last type of neighbourhood, with its uniquely heterogeneous population, and consequent sources of tension and hostility between neighbours, whose image impresses itself upon the retina of the casual observer in Havana. Because of the accessibility of these areas they are a likely spot where the foreign visitor will alight to "see the revolution". It is to them that the warning with which we began really applies.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. Although, as we shall see in Chapter 4, the idea of the Popular Court had been formulated several years earlier.

2. "La Nacionalización de los Establecimientos Privados en la Ofensiva Revolucionaria", El Militante Comunista, special number, June 1968, p. 5.

3. Ibid.

4. No public announcement was made of this decision, of whose existence the author was made aware by an economist working in Cuba. However, it represented the logical culmination of a trend in this sphere of policy in evidence since 1966. See especially Roberto M. Bernardo, "Managing and Financing the Firm", in C. Mesa-Lago (ed.), Revolutionary Change in Cuba (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), pp. 185-208.


6. "La nacionalización de los Establecimientos Privados", op.cit., p. 38. Private agriculture was formally untouched. However, partly as a result of the elimination of private traders and the corresponding extension of the radius of the state procurement agency (Acopio), some 12,000 farms were sold to the state in 1968. (The figure is cited by Nelson Amaro and Carmelo Mesa-Lago, "Inequality and Classes", in C. Mesa-Lago (ed.), op.cit., p. 359.)


The most thorough documentation of the evolution of Cuban policy on planning and incentives between 1963 and the end of the decade


10. Ibid., p. 45.


15. Expensive restaurants, which were heavily over-subscribed, were kept open in large measure because of their money-absorbing function.

16. Reports suggested that the average work day of agricultural labourers was not more than 4 or 5 hours. See the discussion in Huberman and Sweezy, op. cit., pp. 141-143. The claim made by Karol, and since immortalised by Thomas, that 4 hours was the national average working day (i.e. for the whole labour force) is on the face of it highly implausible. It is based, moreover, upon


18. As well as 70% of agriculture, 100% of wholesale and foreign trade, and 100% of banking. Alberto Martínez E., "El Plan de la Economía Nacional para 1964", Cuba Socialista, año 4, No. 31 (March 1964), pp. 1-2, cited Mesa-Lago, Labor Sector, op.cit., p. 27.

19. These data are given, together with a large amount of otherwise unpublished information, by "La Nacionalización de los Establecimientos Privados", op.cit.

20. Excluding the Armed Forces and installations under the control of the Ministry of the Interior.

21. Private carriers in transportation and enterprises engaged exclusively in commercial transactions were excluded here.

22. Ibid., pp. 11-12.

23. Payments to private carriers for freight transport are included here. Most of the 'enterprises' were owner-drivers of lorries but they nonetheless accounted for over half of the total of services rendered by the private sector to the state. Ibid., p. 15ff. Owner-drivers of trucks were excluded from the 1968 expropriations for reasons spelt out by Castro in his speech of 15 March (Castro, Major Speeches, op.cit., pp. 294-5.)


26. I infer that an effort was made at random selection in this instance. "La Nacionalización", op.cit., pp. 17ff.


30. Ibid., pp. 20-21.
31. According to this source, the labour used by the private sector came both from "a certain residual labour-market" and directly out of the state sector. Another consideration was that once the state sector, whether because of bad management or because of handicaps inevitably imposed upon it in competition with private business, became dependent upon the non-state sector, this dependence might be increasingly difficult to break out of. Ibid., p. 24, pp. 24-25.


33. Joint Party/CDR investigating teams in Havana estimated that 32% of bars made daily profits of fifty pesos or above (i.e. roughly 1,000 pesos per month; the wages of unskilled workers at this time were below 100 pesos a month, and a Comandante earned about 500 pesos). Castro, Speech of 13 March 1968, op.cit., pp. 388-390.

34. Hot-dog and other cooked meat stands were realising profits higher than those of the bars in some neighbourhoods of Havana; this was due mainly to sales of goods at prices 150% to 250% above cost. Ibid., p. 393. See also "La Nacionalización", op.cit., p. 72, Tabla XI.

35. As Castro pointed out himself, this sample was not randomly selected. Castro, Speech of 13 March 1968, loc.cit.

36. Ibid., p. 391.

37. Ibid., p. 392; and "La Nacionalización", op.cit., p. 70, Tabla IX. The proportion not "integrated" was in fact lower in metropolitan Havana. The full range of organisations counted for this purpose was: the CDRs, Defensa Popular (militia), the FMC, the ANAP, the UJC, Police Auxiliaries and Red Cross Auxiliaries.

38. Though never specifically mentioned by Castro himself, a major worry centred upon the ideological 'corruptibility' of the small peasant members of ANAP who, it was suspected, might easily be won over to the social and political attitudes of the private traders with whom they were in (mutually profitable) contact. On this, see ibid., p. 42.


40. Ibid., p. 388, p. 395.

41. The Cuban Spanish terms actually employed were respectively el chivato del barrio, el sargento politico and el bolitero.

42. botelleros.

43. manganzones, holpazanes, vividores. "Discurso pronunciado el 28 de Septiembre de 1961", in Discursos de Fidel, op.cit., p. 44, p. 46.

44. Speech of 15 March 1968, op.cit., p. 293.
45. The figure included 9,176 persons 'working on their own account' or self-employed.

46. "La Nacinalización", op.cit., p. 35.

47. A total of 10,682 new pensions were granted, and 2,970 were offered light- or part-time work. Ibid., p. 74, Table XV.

48. Ibid., p. 40.

49. Ibid., p. 74.

50. Pedro Pupo Pérez et al, "Report on Internal Order", Granma Weekly Review (GWR), 11 May 1969. The declared purpose of the conference was to initiate a wide-ranging discussion on crime prevention and related problems, with the participation of representatives of the CDRs, the UJC, the FMC and other organisations in addition to members of the staff of the Ministry of the Interior, in order to "improve and standardise" the work of the Vice-Ministry for Internal Order (i.e. the ordinary police). Ibid., p. 10.

51. Calculated from ibid., p. 7, as follows. The figures provided were simple annual totals (1960 = 198,107; 1968 = 96,693). However, if the population of Cuba was 6,800,000 in 1960 and 8,000,000 - a conservative estimate - in 1968, we get rates per thousand of 29.1 and 12.1 for these years. For the population estimates, see Compendio Estadístico de Cuba 1967 (Havana: JUCEPLAN, 1968); and Fidel Castro, Speech of 13 March 1968, op.cit., pp. 379-380. The conference statistics refer, of course, to offences 'known to the police' and are subject to the usual strictures.

52. Ranging from Murder to Light Woundings, following the classification established by the Código de Defensa Social. These offences accounted for a proportion of not less than 18% of the total during 1959-68. Calculated from Pupo, "Report", op.cit., p. 9.

53. Ibid.

54. Calculated from ibid., p. 8.

55. The level of 500 offences in this category annually, towards which the Cuban figure tended after 1964, was still high for a country of Cuba's population by, say, British standards, but low - as was emphasised - by those of the U.S.A. This fact has to be viewed in the context of the claim that there were more firearms per head of population in Cuba, not counting arms carried by the Forces, than in any other country in the world. Ibid., p. 9.

56. Ibid.

57. This figure is given by Thomas (op.cit., p. 1095 n) but estimates vary considerably. "Statistics tell us", Fidel Castro has stated, "that in our country there were more than 50,000 people practicing prostitution as a regular profession". Speech of 1 May 1971, GWR, 16 May 1971, p. 3.
Women migrated more often than men, drawn by the expectation of opportunities in domestic service, etc. and impelled by the scarcity of suitable employment in rural areas. W. MacGaffey and C. Barnett, Twentieth Century Cuba (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1965), p. 65.

To the author.

Cf. the plot of Manuel Granados' novel Adiós y el tiempo roto (Havana: Casa de las Américas, 1967) which explores the themes of migration, colour and social mobility in the setting of pre-revolutionary Cuba.


Ibid., p. 194. Cubans of Chinese extraction do appear to have been the object of considerably more than their share of convictions for both peddling and consumption. See Ibid., pp. 196-197.


Ibid.


According to James O'Connor, the pre-revolutionary Cuban taste for gambling was rooted in the country's heavy dependence upon the roulette wheel of the international sugar market. The Origins of Socialism in Cuba (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), esp. p. 149.


Thomas, op.cit., p. 1097.

In one reformatory in the nineteen forties, it was found that about seventy per cent of the inmates had previously been engaged in the selling of lottery tickets or newspapers, or both. Saavedra, op.cit., p. 165. The recommendations of the author of the study were not acted upon until 1959.

Pupo, "Report", loc.cit.

Ibid., p. 9. However, it was explained, at least 99 per cent of the latter were cases of petty misappropriation: "As for grand misappropriation, we can say that it has been completely eradicated". Ibid.
75. So defined in the Código as to exclude Misappropriation (involving government employees responsible for State property) and Fraud (whose victim is also the State).


77. Pupo, "Report", op.cit., p. 7. The figure for 1968 (28,000) was still not as high as in the early years but nonetheless "alarming".

78. Ibid.; and del Valle, "Speech at the First National Forum", op.cit., p. 4. Law 1098 also transferred these offences from the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts to that of the Revolutionary (military) Courts.

79. Dry-cleaning shops and laundries were reportedly favourite targets for burglars in 1969.


83. I.e. robbery with violence in warehouses, shops, laundries, etc. Ibid.

84. del Valle, "Speech at the First National Forum", op.cit., p. 5. This took its place alongside a number of other Party commissions already set up to examine various aspects of the legislation in force in Cuba at the end of ten years of revolution, including the Fundamental Law of 1959 which has served in place of a Constitution since the overthrow of Batista. The Secretariat of the Judicial Commissions was headed by the veteran Communist and erstwhile General Secretary of the FSP, Blas Roca. On the results of the work of this body between 1969 and 1973, see the "Epilogue" to Chapter 4 below.


87. Ibid.


89. Pupo, "Report", op.cit., p. 10. See "Epilogue" in Chapter 4 below.

90. "Discurso pronunciado el 13 de marzo", op.cit., p. 3.

91. Ibid.
Fifteen per cent had not even advanced beyond first grade and less than four per cent had achieved 6th grade, thus completing their primary schooling. Pupo, "Report", loc.cit. It was also found in 88% of the cases of juvenile delinquency that "unstable homes" were partly responsible. Ibid.


"Lucha a muerte", loc.cit.

See for example the pamphlet "Nociones de Criminología", used in the training of policemen, social workers and Popular Court judges. The argument is directed self-consciously against racist and psychologistic theories and the corresponding popular prejudices. A variety of components of the social and physical ambience are cited as affecting proneness to crime but it is emphasised that none of these influences is irreversible where a given individual is concerned. The pamphlet is reproduced in Comisión de Prevención Social, Material de Estudio para las Trabajadoras Sociales (Havana: FMC, 1968).

The fullest account of the clouded subject of how the system worked in practice is to be found in Lee Lockwood, Castro's Cuba, Cuba's Fidel (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), pp. 230-264. Where an inmate showed signs of improving his attitudes, he could be rewarded with transfer to an 'open' establishment and, except in the most serious political cases, obtain a substantial remission of sentence.

See Ibid.

Alfredo Echarry, "Frente a una herencia del pasado", Juventud Rebelde, 16 August 1970, p. 6. In the Campamentos Juveniles de Trabajo Agropecuario, with which this article is mainly concerned, agricultural labour and "semi-military discipline" were combined with technical training and political education. The last mentioned was effected by classes devoted mainly to "the history of the Revolution". Ibid.

Lockwood, op.cit., p. 90, 104.

Agrupación Católica Universitaria, Por Qué reforma agraria (Havana, 1958); Castro, Speech of 13 March 1968, op.cit., p. 362, p. 353. This document has been reprinted in Economía y Desarrollo, No. 12, July-August 1972, pp. 188-212. See also in this connection Castro's speech of 8 December 1968, which contains some reflections on the particular experience of Cuba's Oriente province. GHR, 9 December 1968.

Philip Hauser suggests that in the Cuban intercensal period 1931-43 possibly as little as twenty-six per cent of population growth in urban centres as defined by UNESCO was due to migration. Roughly comparable statistics for the Dominican Republic, Colombia and Venezuela were respectively 65%, 68% and 71%. See Urbanization in Latin America (Paris: UNESCO, 1961). The percentage of the national population resident in Greater Havana rose from 19.6 to 20.8 between 1943 and 1953. Writing in 1957,
a geographer described Cuba as "one of the world's leading examples of marked concentration in the largest city of the nation". Donald R. Dyer, "Urbanism in Cuba", *Geographical Review*, Vol. XLVII, April 1957, p. 228.

102. On these, see Amaro and Mesa-Lago, "Inequality and Classes", in Mesa-Lago (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp. 342-346.

103. Castro's arguments depart from considerations of (a) social justice, and (b) economic planning; they are not to be confused with the kinds of claims about the rural community which are incorporated, for instance, in the Arusha Declaration, or with the quasi-environmentalists' theses sometimes attributed to the Chinese.


107. O'Connor, *op.cit.*, pp. 139-140.


112. Ibid., p. 154.

113. Ibid., pp. 154-155. Shantytowns were not found only in Havana but became a feature of a number of urban centres up and down the island. According to *Granma* the best known were of the following size and location:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Shanty Town</th>
<th>Maximum Population</th>
<th>Location (Urban Centres)</th>
<th>Estimated Population of Urban Centres (1964)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Las Yaguas</td>
<td>3,495</td>
<td>Havana (City), Havana Province</td>
<td>940,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Manzana de Gómez</td>
<td>3,036</td>
<td>Santiago de Cuba, Oriente Province</td>
<td>231,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Grifos</td>
<td>914</td>
<td>Santa Clara, Las Villas Province</td>
<td>120,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poyo Colorado and El Fuente</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>Banes, Oriente Province</td>
<td>24,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colón</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>Baracoa, Oriente Province</td>
<td>under 20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Gua</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>Pinar del Río, Pinar del Río Province</td>
<td>66,700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Raimundo Rodríguez, "The Poor and the Revolution", GHR, 29 April 1973, p. 8; for population of urban centres, JUCEPLAN Dirección General de Estadística, Resumen de estadísticas de población, No. 1 (Havana, 1965), p. 4.

114. The source of the details on Las Yaguas in this paragraph is Aida García Alonso, *op.cit.*, pp. 9-20. The composition of this population by place of birth appears to have been as expected in view of the migration patterns pointed out above. Although the basis for discriminating between urban and rural areas is not made clear, the following figures provided by García Alonso may have some indicative value.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of Birth</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Las Yaguas</td>
<td>4.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Urban Area</td>
<td>61.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Area</td>
<td>28.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Cuba</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information not Available</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from *ibid.*, p. 11 and Chart Number 2.
115. "On repeated occasions", Chailloux Cardona tells us of the 'thirties, "... it was necessary for the authorities to use force to evict indigent people from vacant lots which had been taken by storm in a moment of neglect by their owners, or even against the latters' opposition". Op.cit., p. 154.

116. As García Alonso puts it, "they lacked organisational spirit and did not belong to any institutions". Op.cit., p. 14. The testimony of Manuela, a long-standing resident of Las Yaguas whose story the book tells, appears to bear out this assertion; no collective organisation originating in the barrio itself seems to have existed at any stage, mutual support remaining mainly at the level of bilateral relationships between kinsmen and comadres. Comparative studies of slums in other cities of Latin America suggest a causal relationship between the degree to which an organised invasion is required in the initial stages of the formation of a settlement and the quality of neighbourhood organisation and social relationships subsequently. The experience of Las Yaguas appears to correspond to that of the slums studied by Rogier in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where a relatively tolerant attitude on the part of the authorities permitted the formation of squatter settlements piecemeal and by individual effort, helping to account for the low level of cooperative activity and the poverty of interpersonal relationships observed in later years. See Lloyd H. Rogier, "Slum Neighbourhoods in Latin America", Journal of Inter-American Studies, Vol. 9, No. 4 (1967), pp. 507-526; and William H. Margan, "Latin American Squatter Settlements: A Problem and a Solution", Latin American Research Review, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1967), pp. 65-98.


119. Ibid., p. 413.

120. Ibid., pp. 10-14. It is conceivable that this was only true of Las Yaguas and that the socio-political character of other, smaller and less well-known barrios de indigentes in Havana was quite different. If so, it can only be said that this has not been documented and that hearsay in Cuba in the late 'sixties did not indicate that this was the case. Oscar Lewis' speculation, in his Introduction to La Vida, to the effect that the recent experience of a Havana slum might prove an exception to the universality of the "culture of poverty" is impossible to comment upon in this context, not only because of the intrinsic eclecticism of this concept but also because the type of slum in question is not specified (generously defined, 25% of the popular housing in Havana in the 'sixties might have been described as slums). See La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty - San Juan and New York (London: Panther Books, 1968), p. 55. As for extracting generalisations from the experience of Havana about the political potential of the Third World lumpenproletariat, much care would need to be taken (a) not automatically to identify this

121. Calculated from JUCEPLAN, *Resumen*, op. cit., p. 4, and *Compendio*, op. cit., Table 2. On the looser definition of an urban centre used by the Cuban Census (concentrations of population of 2,000 or more), the island's population was 60% urbanised in 1970. Calculated from "Preliminary Data, Census on Housing and Population", op. cit., p. 8.


123. In conversation with the author.

124. This paragraph is based on the author's interview at the CDR National Directorate on 28 December 1968. The official in question also stated that in general urban CDRs had a greater implantation in the local population than rural ones, and were involved in more spheres of work.

125. An apology for the CDRs in Habana del Este is contained in Rogelio Camusso "En una nueva ciudad un nuevo tipo de ciudadano" in *Pueblo Organizado* (Havana: Ediciones Con la Guardia en Alto, 1965), pp. 185-192.
The problem of justice is eternal and the people have a deep sense of justice, above and beyond the hair-splitting of jurisprudence.

- Fidel Castro in "History will Absolve Me", as quoted on the title page of the Manual of the Popular Courts.

Few issues divided Cubans so soon and so bitterly after the overthrow of Batista in January 1959 as the question of justice and the courts. Already in the spring of that year, according to the well-known report of the International Commission of Jurists, two divergent and clearly identifiable tendencies existed regarding such questions among those who, for one reason or another, had supported the establishment of the Revolutionary Government a few months previously. The one, we are told, was "seeking to reorganise the Judiciary according to the democratic patterns established in the 1940 Constitution", whilst the other was "demanding 'a popular judiciary according to the new aims of the Cuban revolution'". Yet from the point of view of the revolutionary transformation of the capitalist state and its institutional framework, the changes introduced in the Cuban legal system as a whole during the first half-dozen years after 1959 were few in number and slight in their formal ramifications.

The dispute between the 'Constitutionalists' and followers of Fidel Castro's leadership which unfolded in the course of the two years 1959-60 both began and finally resolved itself in the form of a conflict of jurisdictions between the Supreme Court of the Republic and the Revolutionary Courts, the judicial organs of the
Rebel Army. The terrain of this battle was political rather than legal philosophy, since from a procedural point of view the Revolutionary Courts, which were first used in Havana for the trial of Batistiano 'war criminals' early in 1959, were of a conventional type. The Revolutionary Courts were first subjected to the disapproving glare of the world's press following two incidents which occurred during the first months of 1959, the 'mass trial' of the notorious Jesús Sosa Blanco on 22 January and Fidel Castro's personal intervention in late March to secure the re-trial and conviction of a number of Batistiano airmen who had been acquitted in the first instance. There is some doubt however as to the number of Cuban jurists who reacted to these events with the same indignation that they provoked abroad. In the light of the documentation provided by the International Commission itself, what was more decisive was the gradual impact upon members of the ordinary judiciary of diffuse pressures intended to make the courts serve revolutionary political ends and, at the highest level, the promulgation of successive amendments to the Fundamental Law of February 1959 (substantially a restatement of the Constitution of 1940) which, little by little, cast doubt upon the constitutional position of the Supreme Court. It was the maturation of these tendencies rather than dramatic institutional innovations which led to the final break between revolutionaries and reformers in the judicial sphere in the latter part of 1960. In October the Court of Constitutional and Social Guarantees was forced to pronounce upon the constitutionality of events of the preceding months, and in November Fidel Castro, in the name of the Revolutionary Government, obliged senior members of the judiciary to opt one way or another on the constitutional question. A majority chose the Constitution, 'defected' from the Revolution
and were replaced.

According to the International Commission of Jurists, a contributory factor in the dispute was the prevalence through the summer of 1960 of rumours to the effect that the regime was considering the creation of Soviet-styled 'People's Courts'. In reality, the regime, if by this is understood the Fidelista group in the government, appear not to have countenanced any such thing in 1960. Moreover, and this is the more surprising fact, even after Castro's declaration of the socialist character of the Revolution in April 1961 and the proclamation by the Government Division of the Supreme Court of "the socialist character of the new Cuban revolutionary justice" in August, there were no developments in this direction. Throughout this phase - one in which Soviet organisational models found greater resonance in the Cuban leadership than at any time in the 'sixties - the institutional forms of Cuban justice were not further altered. Members of the judiciary were urged that they could not make a proper interpretation of the revolutionary legislation "without a close regard to the social reality which supported this legislation", but conventional judicial organs continued to function in other respects as usual alongside the Revolutionary Courts, whose jurisdiction was restricted to Offences against the State.

The substantive criminal legislation in force in Cuba also changed remarkably little during the first years, and indeed the first decade, of revolutionary power. This consisted of three codified elements: the so-called Leyes Mambisas decreed by the Cuban forces during the 1895-98 War of Independence and retained under the Republic as a secondary source of law; the Social Defence Code of
and the regulations originally drawn up by the High Command of the Rebel Army during the armed struggle against Batista and given force by the Fundamental Law of 1959. These elements were, however, of very unequal weight, and the major source of law throughout the 'sixties remained the 1936 Social Defence Code. This was modified by a series of Acts of the Revolutionary Government, the most important of which were concerned with counter-revolutionary offences (Laws Nos. 425 of 7 July 1959 and 664 of 23 December 1959) and with the consequences of the progressive nationalisation of the economy (Laws Nos. 719, 732, 858 and 923, decreed between January 1960 and January 1961). The only other notable alterations to the substantive legislation in force came in November 1961 with the passage of Law No. 988, which extended the death penalty to a variety of offences including arson, political assassination, sabotage and invasion of the national territory by armed groups, and in 1963 with Law No. 1098 which, as we saw earlier, had the same effect with respect to certain types of common crime. The authors of the report of the International Commission of Jurists were impressed by "the lack of method underlying the legislative action of the regime", but in retrospect what was perhaps most notable feature of this action was the modesty of its intent. By the middle 'sixties, neither in procedural nor in substantive law had a systematic effort been made to give the Cuban legal system a specifically socialist shape. The coming of the Popular Courts after 1966 therefore marked a major new departure for the makers of Cuban policy in the judicial sphere.

THE POPULAR COURTS: THE IDEA

The Popular Courts were the product both of circumstance and
of the most deeply-held convictions of the Fidelista leadership regarding the nature of Justice and its role in the creation of a new society in Cuba. On the practical side, the emigration of large numbers of judicial personnel in and after 1959 created a severe shortage of qualified lawyers on every level of the judiciary, and some means had to be found of overcoming the difficulties which inevitably resulted from this situation. At the same time, more than merely emergency measures were called for:

What was the function of justice in the past? It was to defend the right of the bourgeoisie to extract greater and greater profits from the labour of the workers. It was to defend the right of the banks and the biggest capitalists to expropriate small proprietors and the smallest capitalists. It was to protect the right of the latifundist to receive a part of the peasant's product in a rent, in money or in kind, as well as to evict tenants from the land and homesteaders from their homes at his pleasure. It was to condemn all those who struggled for a new system without poverty and without exploitation, and to punish the least misdemeanour committed by a poor man whilst ignoring the crimes of the official thugs, torturers and murderers of the Tyranny. In a word, the function of justice in the past was to defend the rights of the rich against the aspirations of the poor.

Today, on the contrary, the function of justice was to protect the interests of the mass of the people and to contribute to the formation of a social order of a new type. Consequently, new structures and methods for its administration needed to be evolved. Not only Marxism, moreover, but a long tradition of indigenous Cuban thought decreed the form that the new justice should take. As the poet and 'Apostle' of Cuban Independence, José Martí, once wrote:

Among free peoples, the law has to be clear. Among peoples which are their own masters, the law has to be popular.

It is in this thought, and in the Martián reflections of Fidel Castro
himself at the time of his Moncada trial,\textsuperscript{13} that are to be found the ultimate ideological roots and inspiration of the Popular Courts.

The origin of the Popular Court idea may be traced back to discussions held between Castro and students of the Havana law school as early as October 1963.\textsuperscript{14} At this time it was proposed that experiments be undertaken with a view to designing a new type of court to supersede the Tribunales Correccionales over which single magistrates still presided throughout the country with jurisdiction in summary cases. The first Tribunal Correccional had sat in Havana at the turn of the century under the First Intervention by the forces of the United States and was presided over, to the undying horror of nationalist Cubans, by a monolingual U.S. Army captain named Pitcher. In addition to these painful associations, however, the Correccionales were felt to have a number of important structural defects. Firstly, they incorporated no right of appeal, in spite of the provisions of the Constitution of 1940 which declared this to be a universal right; secondly, magistrates sitting singly were particularly exposed to the corruption which had been common before the revolution; and, thirdly, but not least importantly, the social prejudices of the magistrates and their distance from the life-conditions of the mass of the people were such that the justice meted out by them was often both arbitrary and ineffectual.\textsuperscript{15} The new courts should seek, by contrast, to bring the administration of justice close to the people and to deal with the minor offences and contraventions in their jurisdiction "not with sanctions of the traditional sort but with measures conceived in a profoundly educative spirit". To this end, Castro emphasised at his meeting with the students, the preliminary work should be carried out "in close and intimate contact with life and with social reality", not
upon the basis of "armchair formulae" which were "alien to the revolutionary style of work".  

Characteristically, the locations chosen for the first experimental courts were the mountainous regions of Oriente province and the Ciénaga de Zapata in Las Villas, both inhabited by a dispersed and impoverished peasantry. Among these initial subjects the 'Popular Courts' appear to have been sufficiently successful to justify their introduction in other rural areas after 1963, but it was not until 1966, in the new phase of Cuban policy which has been identified in preceding chapters, that the decision was taken to generalise their use. Two pilot courts made their appearance in Havana in 1966 but it took until the Spring of 1968, coinciding with the beginning of the Revolutionary Offensive, to set up Popular Courts in every neighbourhood of the capital. In the meantime, the institution had acquired definite features which set it apart not only from the old Coreccionales but also from normal judicial practice in most socialist countries.

In 1968-69, Popular Courts functioned in Havana under their own management committees established at sectional level and responsible to the Ministry of Justice. Their competence extended to a wide range of offences, from larceny and assault to minor infringements of sanitary and other regulations, all previously under the jurisdiction of the Tribunales Coreccionales and carrying maximum sentences of six months imprisonment. The amended Code of 1936, reproduced in manual form for the use of Popular Court judges, was employed as the principal legal source, and, like their predecessors, the new courts were empowered to hear cases initiated in writing either by the police or by private citizens. There, however, the
The originality of the Popular Courts derived from a combination of their composition, their procedure and their approach towards sentencing. First of all, they were composed entirely of non-vocational, unpaid judges who were elected in the first instance from among the ordinary inhabitants of the Court's area of jurisdiction by mass assemblies open to all local residents. Nominees as judges, who worked on a part-time basis in the evenings, were required to be both of spotless political reputation and morally irreproachable, the effect of the latter consideration being to exclude, among others, negligent parents, adulterers and homosexuals. Age and educational qualifications of 21 years and sixth grade were also imposed with the result that, in some rural areas, candidates were hard to find without a certain relaxation of the regulations. In most urban areas, judges were recruited from among the better educated workers and housewives. Since the jurisdictional area of each court was small - in the country, the environs of a village or hamlet, in the city a neighbourhood of about 7,000 population - candidate-judges were typically well-known, and discussion of their merits (and occasionally of their demerits) at election meetings was ordinarily vigorous.

The freedom of local assemblies to elect whom they preferred as 'popular judges' was not unqualified. Nominees proposed and approved in this way were expected to pass an aptitude test and attend a crash course of evening classes lasting ten days before appearing before a joint Commission of the Ministry of Justice and the Party for a final vetting. The significance of the procedure was to assure the selection of capable, honest, hard-working and
politically committed individuals. In practice few candidates proposed by mass assemblies appear to have been eliminated at the later stage, suggesting that 'unsuitable' candidates were already recognised as such at the local level. The courts, which were thus 'popular' in the double sense that their presiding judges were typically of humble or at least working-class origin and that the participation of the local populace in their selection was assured, induced high hopes in their sponsors.

The fact that the masses, in a profoundly democratic way, choose and elect those who become popular judges is a decisive blow for the conception, widely held amongst the people, that justice is something official, something which is administered from above, and alien.20

The most important procedural innovations upon which the Popular Courts rested were designed to establish close links between them and the neighbourhood or village to which they corresponded. Thus, first of all, persons against whom charges had been brought were expected to appear before the court in their locality of residence even if, as sometimes happened, the alleged offence had been committed outside its area of jurisdiction. Secondly, Popular Court sessions were always held publicly, and with maximum publicity - most often in a local hall, street or park - with a view to obtaining the largest possible audience.21 Thirdly, it was customary for the President of the court, a position held in rotation by the judges attached to it, to open every session with some lengthy remarks about the philosophy and procedure of popular justice, these being intended primarily for the 'education' of the assembled citizenry and to involve them in the proceedings from the outset. Thus, as the Popular Court judges' Manual has it:
The Popular Courts spring from the people, are chosen by the people and at the same time draw the masses, ordinary people, into the government of the State. The justice administered by the Popular Courts is the justice of the people, applied by the people themselves, through the courts which they themselves choose.22

A number of other procedural safeguards were insisted upon, since they had either not existed or had often been flouted under the old system. Before each case was heard, the accused was advised of his rights, which were as follows. First, he might object to any one, or all, of the sitting judges on the grounds of personal enmity, friendship or kinship, and have him stand down. Secondly, he might elect to be defended by a third person, lay or professional. And, thirdly, after the hearing he might appeal to a special court composed of two different judges together with the professional Assessor of the municipality. In Havana in 1969 it was seldom that the accused availed himself of his first two rights, but appeals were frequent in the more serious cases.

The purpose of holding Popular Court sessions in the most public possible way was not only to educate local residents; it was also in order to bring the moral weight of the local community into play in the cross-examination and, above all, in the sentencing of guilty parties. Although the law still in force in the late 'sixties empowered the courts to impose fines, Popular Court judges made a point of abjuring the use of monetary sanctions in all circumstances. To start with, fines were obviously a type of sanction which punished without educating; what was more, since most offenders had dependents, they tended to punish the families of the guilty as much if not more than the guilty subject himself. For these two reasons, the
imposition of fines was alien to the spirit of the Revolution in general and popular justice in particular. In accordance with this spirit, the Popular Courts stood for the principle that the best sanctions were "moral" ones. The principle of retribution was not rejected absolutely.

The punishment of offences and contraventions committed by persons who continue engaging in anti-social behaviour and who retain the habits, or the scars, of the old exploitative and oppressive society is necessary to their reformation.23

But there was punishment which reformed the person on whom it was imposed, and punishment which merely repressed. With this in mind all convicted offenders were admonished publically, as a matter of principle, and sometimes at great length, by the president of the Popular Court. Commonly no additional sanction was imposed, the guilt or shame felt by the object of a public admonition being considered sufficiently 'educational' by itself. Where other sentences were deemed necessary, judges were expected to show ingenuity as well as a sense of justice in 'making the punishment fit the crime'. In Havana in 1969 some judges took special pride in obliging an offender judged to be the victim of his own illiteracy or lack of formal education to attend evening classes until he or she had improved his grade of schooling. In other cases offenders were obliged to spend, say, three Sundays in unpaid agricultural labour alongside volunteers, or to make other open expression of his shame. Where self-imposed unemployment was deemed a contributory factor in the commission of an offence, its author might be obliged to report for paid but nevertheless unpopular agricultural work during a period of months. Only the most serious offences and persons in whom shame was not forthcoming were sent for detention in prison-farms
which - in spite of the efforts of the penal authorities to render them centres of effective re-education - were regarded by Popular Court judges as a last resort. 24

The reliance of the Cuban Popular Courts on a non-vocational judiciary, public participation and "moral sanctions" is not of course entirely without precedent in the judicial history of other socialist countries. The Cuban approach nevertheless inverted current Soviet practice in at least one respect. In the People's Courts of the USSR, vocational judges are assisted by 'People's Assessors' - elected representatives of mass organisations who sit in the courts in an advisory capacity. In Cuba, elected judges were assisted by professional lawyers who acted as Assessors on points of law but who were not permitted to act as judges except in appeal cases. 25 A closer Soviet parallel is to be found in the 'Comrades' Courts' which made their appearance in factories, collective farms and neighbourhood units in and after 1961. Here elected non-vocational judges presided over courts whose competence was broadly similar to that of the Popular Courts in Cuba and whose decisions were valued principally for "their educational effect on the offender and the spectators". 26 These 'courts' however were not, like their Cuban counterparts, an integral component of the national judicial system and came under the direction of the corresponding local trade union-, farm- or housing collective-committee. 27

In the People's Republic of China, People's Assessors, elected or appointed by mass organisations or military units, have been used in various phases of the revolution in conjunction with the People's Court system. 28 However, regular courts relying substantially on non-vocational personnel were employed on a large scale before the
Cultural Revolution only in one period, during the Judicial Reform Movement of 1952-53. \(^2^9\) (The quasi-judicial Comrades' Adjudication Committees' formed on an experimental basis in Chinese factories and mines during the period 1953-57 correspond not to the Cuban Popular Courts but to the Consejos de Trabajo formed in Cuban work centres in 1965.) \(^3^0\) Nevertheless the spirit of Chinese judicial practice is probably closer to that of the Popular Courts in Cuba than anything to be found in the Soviet bloc. The traditional Chinese emphasis on conciliation and the Confucian concept of \(^1^i\) are of course absent from the Cuban cultural background. \(^3^1\) A clear convergence between the two models is to be noted nevertheless to the extent that the tenets of the 'mass line' in China require that justice and the courts be 'brought to the people' and involve mass participation wherever possible. At a deeper level, the two concepts of the fundamental purpose of judicial proceedings are similar, both insisting upon the "education and re-education" of the subject, upon his internalisation of socially accepted standards of behaviour, and the achievement of this result by means of "moral" sanctions and community-participation rather than by coercion. \(^3^2\)

In China those periods characterised by the ascendancy of the "internal model" of law and the decline of the "external model" derived from Western and Soviet theory have also been marked by a systematic unconcern for codified legislation and procedural niceties. \(^3^3\) In the Cuban Popular Courts in the late 'sixties, beyond the formal procedural requirements already mentioned, emphasis was placed upon informality, which was regarded as an essential ingredient of the process of "education and re-education". Procedural flexibility, underpinned by the feeling that legalistic rules are more often than not an obstacle to the expression of the masses' "profound sense of
justice", was particularly notable in one area. A widely accepted principle of modern procedural law in the 'Anglo-Saxon' countries maintains that the assessment of guilt and the determination of an appropriate sentence should be distinct and separate processes; whence the procedural rule that the criminal history of the accused, and other information required for sentencing purposes, should not be revealed until and unless his guilt is proven. In the Popular Courts this requirement was not usually respected, both for practical reasons and for philosophical ones. Judges were of course expected to establish the facts of a given case objectively and without prejudice. Nevertheless, in circumstances where judge and accused might well be acquaintances, few courts could expect the luxury of ignorance where the accused's history and circumstances were concerned. Nor was this sought after. In addition to educating the populace and helping to make moral sanctions effective, the wedding of the courts to the local community was valued precisely because it permitted judges to acquire a thorough knowledge of the personal backgrounds of all the parties in a given case. In this way, it was argued, the popular character of the new courts helped to render them "more profoundly just".  

Part of this reasoning had to do with sentencing. In order to devise genuinely educative and hence preventative sanctions or public admonitions, it was essential for judges to have at their fingertips certain essential information about the accused. For this purpose the courts compiled files on each case which were studied by the sitting judges before the corresponding session commenced. Contained in the files were (a) the initial accusation, (b) witnesses' statements and (c) reports on the background of the persons involved. Popular Court cases could be initiated in any one of three ways: by
private citizens, by the police (DOP) or, in cases of perjury or
contempt, by the courts themselves. In either of the first two
instances, a written accusation was required to be dictated at the
local DOP station and then lodged at the offices of the court.
Written statements by witnesses could also be submitted at this
stage. On receiving the accusation, the court judges issued
summonses to all those concerned, and at the same time requested
reports on some or all of these persons from the pertinent
authorities. The latter could include the police or the Concejo
Superior de Defensa Social in more serious cases; more often it
meant the administrator of a person's workplace, together with the
chairman of his local CDR. The information provided in the reports
was expected to touch upon the domestic situation, work-record,
social habits and political history of the subject as well as his
criminal record, if any.

Whilst the principal purpose of the files was to permit
intelligent sentencing, Popular Court judges were not concerned in
practice or in theory to make any sharp division between the
(confidential) information provided in them and the 'facts of the
case', as revealed in court. Often, the cross-examination of the
accused and of witnesses during the hearing was as much concerned
with the 'background' of the case as with the alleged offence itself,
reflecting the view that to judge a man for what he is as well as for
what he has done was just and good, both from his own point of view
and from that of society. What sense did it make to judge a person
for a single, possibly isolated, act, when what really mattered was
the sum total of his actions and the relations between them? Was not
a persistent loafer who stole from his neighbour guilty of a greater
offence than a respected worker who did the same thing in a moment of
temptation? In the face of arguments such as those, the distinction between considerations relevant to the assessment of guilt and those affecting sentencing usually became blurred beyond recognition in Popular Court hearings.

In the last analysis the Popular Courts have to be evaluated not only by the criteria of legal philosophy but also, and not less importantly, by those of a revolutionary order which seeks to employ its judicial institutions, together with every other instrument of social domination at its disposal, to help right the wrongs of the past and lay the foundations of a new society. In Cuba, to renounce the use of the courts as, amongst other things, agencies of social and ideological change would be to underestimate the dimensions of the task in hand. At the same time important differences between conventional 'Anglo-Saxon' and Latin American concepts of law may be relevant to an appreciation of the apparent procedural 'laxity' of the Popular Courts.

From the time when the Cuban Revolutionary Courts were first noticed by the Western press in 1959, the respective assessments of Cuban revolutionary justice espoused by Cubans on the one hand and foreign legal experts on the other have diverged sharply. Alleged Cuban arbitrariness and neglect of the elements of procedural law were a contentious issue long before the coming of the Popular Courts. It has been argued in this context, however, that it is a mistake to interpret such differences of opinion in terms of a simple conflict between the upholders and the enemies of the 'Rule of Law'. What is at issue, on the contrary, is two opposing but equally well-established conceptions of Justice, Law and the relations between the two. The position adopted by Fidel Castro in the affair of the
Batistiano airmen in Spring 1959 was a good deal less shocking to members of the Hispanic tradition of jurisprudence than it was in North American legal circles; indeed Castro's remarks on this occasion can be understood as "an eloquent statement of the traditional Latin American conception of law". According to this conception, enacted legislation (or ley) is both ethically and juridically dependent upon the abstract concept of justice or 'right' (derecho). The heavy influence upon Spanish legal thinking of the Roman concepts of Lex and Jus is such that the English term 'law' (and hence 'Rule of Law') is incapable of adequate translation. One consequence of this fact is that Latin Americans have often been liable to the charge of disregarding the law even whilst remaining strictly within the framework of their own countries' legal traditions. More especially a relative unconcern with the niceties of procedural law - and even the positive assertion that procedural guarantees are sometimes obstacles in the path of Justice - is characteristic of Latin American judicial thinking, not of Cuban aberration from this tradition.

Partisans of the Popular Court idea in 1969 did not deny that the institution had weaknesses both intrinsic and extrinsic in kind. Sometimes, for instance, worker-judges failed to command the respect automatically accorded to professionals, a consideration which had to be weighed against the greater moral authority in a revolutionary society of a man himself of the social origin of the accused. A few judges possessing a natural flair for cross-examination fared as well as their vocational counterparts might have done but these were the exception. The weakness of most popular judges in the technical skills of the courtroom was compensated only by the public character
of the proceedings, which, it was sometimes claimed, made it impossible for a lie to be sustained in a Popular Court.

But what advocates of the courts insisted upon was that their efforts should be judged not against abstract yardsticks but in the light of practical experience and against the backdrop of the particular political and social upheavals under way in Cuba at the time. As we have already seen, the introduction of the Popular Courts throughout the country coincided with the onset of a phase in Cuba's recent history in which egalitarian slogans and a stress upon 'moral' sources of motivation came to the fore to a greater extent than at any time before or since. This was a phase in which the Fidelista leadership deliberately sought a confrontation not only with their ideological foes at home and abroad but also with the vestiges of capitalism in Cuba at a more mundane level beginning with a Revolutionary Offensive against the small private trader and ending with a more drawn-out but no less serious engagement with the criminal and the "loafer". To these elements we have also added some less dramatic, more permanent features of the social context in which the Popular Courts perforce operated in Havana itself.

In the section which follows, an attempt is made to show how these contextual elements impinged upon the administration of justice in the case of the Popular Courts in one Sectional division of Havana in 1968-69. By describing in detail the experience of a single neighbourhood, it is hoped to arrive at a more concrete and realistic account of the Popular Courts as they actually functioned in this period, and to permit a meaningful assessment of their role in the social transformation of Cuba. Material for this section has been
drawn from three sources: (1) extended informal interviews with Popular Court judges and CDR activists in the neighbourhood in question, (2) direct observation of court proceedings, judges' meetings and other local events, and (3) the records of one court corresponding to the cases heard during the period May 1968 to May 1969. The author was a frequent visitor to the neighbourhood between January and October 1969 and was made an honorary member of the CDRs in the locality. A number of the participants in the events to be described here offered him their friendship as well as their time and patience, all in considerable measures, and this is a fact which the reader must bear in mind. In accordance with convention, the Section has been given the fictitious name 'San Ramón' by which it is referred to throughout.

THE POPULAR COURTS: A CASE

The San Ramón Section of Havana, a popular residential district of about 35,000 inhabitants, lies some three kilometres to the southwest of the old city centre. Separated by approximately the same distance from the Vedado, with its modern tourist and business amenities, the neighbourhood forms a part of the dense belt of proletarian settlement which stretches out behind the central axis of the city on the shoreward side.

Seventy years ago, like much of what is today metropolitan Havana, San Ramón was occupied only by the elegant villas and pretty farms of the rich, becoming incorporated into the city proper only after the turn of the century, during the first years of the Republic. Something of this history is reflected in its outward appearance, which is distinguished architecturally by the interleaving
of delicate Spanish colonial styles with newer influences of North American origin. The quality of the housing is varied. Some of the older and more imposing buildings have decayed beyond repair, partly through age and partly as a consequence of their hasty conversion into crowded tenements to meet the pre-revolutionary demand for cheap accommodation. At the other extreme, San Ramón does not lack a few modern blocks where before the revolution well-paid industrial workers could rent modest but sound apartments. But the commonest type of dwelling is of intermediate quality, consisting of small solares or casas de vecindad where a dozen or more families occupy apartments around a central patio equipped with collective facilities. Unlike some of their city centre counterparts, the solares of San Ramón typically have a well-scrubbed and airy aspect, though they are often overcrowded. A minor component, finally, of the total housing stock of the neighbourhood consists of belts of wooden houses and roughly-constructed shacks erected along a disused railway line and on other waste land, a reminder, no more, of the shanty-town which once occupied much of the adjacent terrain.

Most of the people who live in San Ramón work outside the neighbourhood. Although within its boundaries there are a printing works, numerous small workshops and warehouses, and a multitude of corner shops or bodegas, cafés and bars, it is primarily a residential area. To the extent that it possesses a natural centre (and most Sections in Havana are administratively-created entities rather than integral social units) this is provided by a grassy square, which alone disturbs the pattern of straight intersecting metalled streets. The meeting places of the twelve CDR zone committees in the Section - converted shops or colonial mansions, in most cases - come to life in the evenings, along with the bodegas
and the restaurants along the main street which flanks San Ramón. At other times the neighbourhood is quiet, disturbed only by the occasional groaning General Motors bus or rickety taxi.

In 1969 there were a total of 235 block CDRs in San Ramón, approximately one between each pair of street intersections. The total CDR membership for the Section (13,766) was distributed more or less evenly between the zones, each of which organised between 31% and 62% of the corresponding population of all ages. (See Table 4.) The reputations of the different zones from the point of view of CDR organisation and activity varied between "average" and "good". Zone Number 12 had a particularly high standing, having earned honorific titles for overfulfilment of emulation targets on a number of recent occasions, though in other respects it did not appear in any way untypical of the district. Consisting of a dozen or so street intersections and encompassing a population of a little over 2,000, the zone included thirteen block committees. Of these, nine traced their origin to Autumn 1960 and were formed, according to their chairmen, immediately after Fidel Castro's appeal on 28 September. A further two CDRs claimed to have been founded in 1961, whilst the remainder dated from 1964 and 1968 respectively, when over-large 'blocks' were divided into more manageable units.

Ten out of the thirteen committee chairmen in Zone 12 were women - five of them housewives, two of them primary school teachers, and the others a cleaner, a cafeteria attendant and a caretaker. The men were employed respectively as a grocery assistant, a policeman and a fishing port operative. On the author's estimate, nine of the chairmen would have been regarded by other Cubans as 'white',
TABLE 4
SAN RAMON SECTION CDRs, SPRING 1969

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone Number</th>
<th>Number of Block CDRs</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Membership as a Percentage of Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1,575</td>
<td>4,414</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1,499</td>
<td>2,421</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1,559</td>
<td>3,201</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1,442</td>
<td>3,024</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>985</td>
<td>3,576</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1,116</td>
<td>3,586</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1,012</td>
<td>2,748</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>1,731</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1,261</td>
<td>3,670</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>946</td>
<td>2,560</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>2,155</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>2,195</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section Totals 235 13,766 35,281 39

Source: Based on CDR internal census figures provided to the author.

two as 'mulatto' and two as 'black'. Their educational background ranged from primary teacher-training down to third grade, the modal attainment being sixth grade, six of them having raised their educational levels by at least two grades in night school since 1959. Eleven of the chairmen said that they had belonged to no political party or trade union before the revolution, the deviants belonging to the Liberals and the PSP respectively. The average time for which they had been incumbents of their positions was two and three-quarter years.
### Table 5

**Members of Number 12 Zone Committee, San Ramon Section, Spring 1969**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position held</th>
<th>Organiser/Coordinator</th>
<th>Finance</th>
<th>Vigilance</th>
<th>Propaganda</th>
<th>Voluntary Labour</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Salvage</th>
<th>Political Consumer Education Services</th>
<th>Foder Local delegate</th>
<th>Economy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>M 43</td>
<td>F 27</td>
<td>M 57</td>
<td>M 43</td>
<td>M 32</td>
<td>F 37</td>
<td>M 34</td>
<td>M 51</td>
<td>M 39</td>
<td>M 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birthplace</td>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>Santa Clara</td>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>Santiago</td>
<td>Santa Clara</td>
<td>Havana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin Colour</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Radio Technician</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Electrician</td>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>Lorry-driver</td>
<td>Bricklayer's mate</td>
<td>Taxi-driver (retired)</td>
<td>Shopkeeper</td>
<td>Cafeteria employee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade of Schooling</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>7th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership of pre-revolutionary party or trade union (TU)</td>
<td>TU</td>
<td>TU</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>TU</td>
<td>TU</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>TU</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>TU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDR Chairman</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author's interview.*
The Zone Committee responsible for directing the activities of these CDRs had been created as a result of the restructuring of 1966, and met about once a month in the converted mansion which had previously served as the Section headquarters. The eleven members of the committee, some of whose personal and biographical characteristics are summarised in Table 5, were more likely than CDR chairmen to be male, white and a member of a pre-revolutionary trade union. Three of them also held the position of CDR chairman in their own block.

What kind of people did not belong to their local CDRs in Zone 12? Zone militants who were asked this question tended to give political rather than sociological answers. A widespread view however was that those who refused to become "integrated into the Revolution" were usually gente desclasada - declassed people - who had held privileged positions before the revolution as foremen, office workers or employees of foreign firms. Such persons, it was argued, "lack guts and lack principle because they are declassed and don't recognise the great and essential tasks before us". When pressed, the same informants were prepared to admit that apathy was not wholly a question of marginal status-positions and frustrated ambitions. Old people generally participated little in the CDRs, but also "many of the weak elements are our brother workers; there are lots of workers with very materialistic attitudes, because the way in which our society developed before the revolution made a lot of people very materialistic". Another category of political deviant frequently mentioned was that which consisted of "lumpen elements". Although it is arguable that, as employed in Cuba, this concept denotes a specific set of political attitudes rather than a social group or category, cederistas used the term frequently in
certain social contexts and very seldom in others.

In San Ramón, the appellation _lumpen_ was most commonly heard in connection with "La Corona", a tumbledown tenement-house which was the _bête noire_ of Zone 8. Built as a substantial villa towards the end of the last century, La Corona had been converted latterly for use as a clinic and as a school, finally being transformed in the 'fifties into a _solar_ providing housing for well over fifty families in small apartments or single rooms. In 1869 there were still fifty-two households living on the three floors of the building, in its outhouses or in wooden constructions erected on its roof. Before the Urban Reform of October 1960, the average rent paid for rooms had reportedly been of the order of seventeen pesos per month, or about twenty per cent of the monthly wage of an unskilled labourer, and evictions had been frequent. Now nobody paid rent in La Corona and evictions were unheard of, but time had not improved either the aspect of the place or the quality of the shelter it provided, and the shortage of housing prevented most of the Coroneros from finding alternative accommodation. It was hoped that the Government would declare the building uninhabitable so that the occupants might be moved to one of the new housing projects on the outskirts of the city. With this expectation neither the local maintenance authority nor the families themselves had devoted their resources to its upkeep, and it was even said of the latter that they deliberately sabotaged the plumbing with a view to bringing the day closer when they would be rehoused.

The people of La Corona had always been among the poorest in the locality, a position they shared with the inhabitants of "La Lomita", the settlement along the railway line. In the new blocks not far from the _solar_, some families had been able to afford
monthly rents of up to fifty pesos, which was at least half of what most Coroneros earned in a month. Even in 1969, the personal incomes of the sixty-five wage-earners in La Corona tended towards the national minimum of eighty pesos (see Table 6) and this had to be distributed among a total population of 210. Rationing and the provision of free recreational, educational and public health facilities had had a levelling effect, yet there were not a few in La Corona who regarded these things as unsolicited luxuries which scarcely outweighed the loss of the bright lights and easy atmosphere of the old Havana. This was true most particularly of the four households which had been dependent for their income on small vending businesses until the nationalisation measures of Spring 1968, and of the numerous others which, during the years before the revolution, had drawn an income from occupations por su cuenta of varying degrees of respectability. 43

TABLE 6
"La Corona": Monthly Money Wages of Working Population, Male and Female

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pesos per Month</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80-100</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>87.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-149</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150-199</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on San Ramón, Zone 8, CDR census.
Not all the "problematic elements" in Zone 8 of San Ramón lived in La Corona, but a remarkable concentration of them were to be found there. The heads of twenty-five, or nearly half, of the households were CDR members but there were two or three activists at most. One member of a family which recently moved out was even a candidate for Party membership but of the majority it could be said that "they do not understand the revolutionary process" (no comprenden el proceso). The first CDR established in the street on which La Corona stands had been based in the building and headed by a resident who was later implicated in the drug-peddling activities of her numerous sons and publicly deprived of her position. In 1969 the committee was run from one of the other buildings in the block in the face of the frank hostility of many Coroneros who regarded its chairman, somewhat uncharitably as the local stool-pigeon for the DOP. What made the place "problematic" from the point of view of the CDRs was not the political backwardness of the people by itself so much as the conjunction of this factor, in a mutually reinforcing fashion, with social problems of a more or less serious type. The contents of the Popular Court files for the locality, as we shall see presently, appear to confirm the universal opinion that La Corona was un ambiente muy malo. Several residents were prima facie alcoholics, and it was complained that when beer was on ration some of them took to manufacturing mofuco - a mixture of untamed spirit with sugar. Five men and one woman normally resident in La Corona were currently serving prison sentences of various lengths after being convicted of criminal offences and twelve households out of fifty-two had a record of recent detention. A number of youths were regarded by cederistas as potential delinquents.

The lumpen inhabitants of La Corona were not typical of San
Ramon as a whole, nor were their relations with the CDR. Even La
Lomita, the small shanty-town along the railway line, managed to
sustain a number of active committees organised effectively 'from
within' and consequently lacking the aspect, dominant in the former
case, of particularly energetic social-work agencies. One feature,
however, of life in La Corona was of general significance in the
neighbourhood and is worth remarking upon before we proceed. A
factor which unquestionably contributed to the disreputability of
the Coroneros' life-style in 1969 was the cramped physical
conditions which resulted from the accommodation of as many as 210
people in the equivalent of under fifty rooms of average dimensions.
To this must be added the inadequacy of the collective sanitary and
washing facilities, and the lack of privacy afforded by the often
roughly-constructed partitions between apartments. In 1953,
however, the Cuban Census found that throughout the country nearly
one-fifth of urban dwelling units consisted of single rooms, with
an average of five occupants each.\footnote{45} The solar - a rundown mansion
divided into small units, with collective facilities - was typical of
lower class dwelling in the cities generally and in Havana
particularly, as, to a large extent, has continued to be the case
since 1959. Although, as was indicated earlier, the solares of
San Ramon did not as a rule deserve the highly derogatory connotations
which the term has acquired in recent years, the commonest form of
housing in the district fell into this category in 1969.

Much of what is often attributed by Cubans to Cuban national
character may be directly related to the overcrowding and open
layout typical of the solar. Writing not about Havana but about
San Juan, Puerto Rico, Rogler has summarised the effects of over-
crowding and the "outdoor, open quality" of life in the slums and
caseríos of that city in the following way:

To the husbands and wives in our study, the neighbourhood presents a series of problems: it disturbs the privacy that families want; it makes the family vulnerable to intrusions by neighbours; it enables the intimate activities of a family to be exposed to the forum of neighbourhood opinion; it permits the individual to be evaluated repeatedly, not only as a neighbour but also in his performance of family roles; it exposes the family directly and indirectly through the mechanism of gossip. As a result, bitter feelings emerge. The person feels he is being disrobed by a judge and jury of critical neighbours with whom he has little or no favourable emotional identification and from whom no special exemption can be sought. Gossip, insults, indirectas, and physical conflict enmesh his life in the neighbourhood. Though he may seek to isolate himself from them, escape is practically impossible.

Rogler's study was concerned to identify factors alleviating and aggravating severe psychiatric distress among lower-class Puerto Ricans. In the solar, as in the caserío, very little is private, members of different households often living and sleeping a few feet away from their neighbours, separated from them by a thin board partition. The ecology of daily existence renders impossible anything but a gregarious style of living and one in which chismoría, gossip, neighbourly rivalries, feuds and open conflicts play a conspicuous role. In this connection, the official pamphlet "Notions of Criminology" observes:

Among the various environmental factors studied by criminologists are housing and, in general, the possible influence upon men's behaviour of the material conditions in which they live. In regard to housing, more important than physical or sanitary conditions is that kind of forced promiscuity which lends itself to the commission of offences, particularly sexual ones.

It continues:

The crowded conditions faced by families in
solares and ciudadelas favour the establishment between them of relationships of friendship or enmity, with the result that disturbances, brawls, insults, etc. frequently occur - sparked off, generally, by the use of common facilities (lavatories, water taps, etc.) The policy of our Revolution is to have an end with this legacy of capitalism in the same way that it has finished with the so-called barrios de indigentes.  

In the meantime, however, the solar presents a problem which has to be confronted in other ways.

The Popular Courts came to San Ramón in the Spring of 1968, soon after the launching of the Revolutionary Offensive. Most cederistas in the neighbourhood, and other local residents too, had attended the assemblies called to elect the first 'judges' for the new courts and many turned out for the selection of additional judges in 1969. Candidates, it was pointed out, should be of a high moral calibre, must have a reasonable educational level "without having to be any kind of intellectual", and should have a humane interest in social problems of the type dealt with by the Courts. They should, of course, be revolutionaries, because, after all, only revolutionaries could really comprehend social questions; people who still had selfish attitudes and personalist motives could not start to solve collective problems. But it was not necessary to be a Party member or anything of the sort in order to qualify, for there were many revolutionaries who didn't have Party cards, and no comrade should hesitate to accept a nomination because he was not perfect or because he lacked experience. Gaining experience in practice was what the Revolution was all about.

For purposes of Popular Court administration, San Ramón Section was divided into three "Localities". Locality number 2, which was
investigated in greatest depth, consisted of the CDR Zones numbers 3, 8 and 12 and included a population of 7,127 (see Table 4 above). The first elections for the court which was to have jurisdiction in the locality resulted in the training and confirmation as judges of an elderly railway worker - a man of trade union and PSP background; a young factory worker who studied part-time at the Worker-Peasant Faculty of the University of Havana and was an "aspirant" to Party membership; a student in his late twenties; and a middle-aged negress of whom it was said that she was a devotee of santería, but "a thoroughly good revolutionary all the same". 50

The typical court session was held in the open-fronted CDR Headquarters in Zone 12, though on one memorable occasion it was decided to set up shop in the spacious backyard of La Corona, thereby to "bring justice to the people" in a manner which would be easily understood. The judges sat in threes behind a table under a flag and a portrait of 'Che' Guevara taking turns as President of the Court. Audiences from a dozen to fifty people occupied the benches opposite. Efforts were made to ensure that children aged under twelve were excluded from the courtroom, no smoking was permitted and the court was expected to rise at the beginning of the session, but there were few other formalities. Silence was maintained throughout if one of the stronger personalities was presiding, and intermittently if not.

The proceedings always began at about seven-thirty in the evening with a speech of five to ten minutes by the court's president, which invariably dwelt upon the nature and purpose of 'popular justice' and the greatness or the 'beauty' of the task
with which the courts had been entrusted. The job of the courts was to combat crime, together with all the other bad social habits which were the legacy of the old society, with a view to eliminating them for good. But the Popular Courts had a special way of tackling the problem - by wagering upon the shame felt by offenders and trusting to the efficacity of moral sanctions. They could be harsh and uncompromising if necessary, but that depended on whether those convicted of a first offence proved themselves willing to be re-educated and to heed the warnings of their neighbours.

Each case, which occupied between twenty minutes and two hours, was dealt with in the following sequence. First of all, the accused and, where appropriate, his accuser were made to stand to the side of the bench on opposite sides. The full texts of the written accusations and statements were then read aloud by the judge serving as the Secretary of the Court, and the accused was informed of his rights. This having been studiously done, verbal statements were accepted from the parties concerned and from such witnesses as wished to come forward, followed by a lengthy cross-examination of each. Having once satisfied themselves of the facts of the case the judges withdrew to a private place to consider their verdict and, not least important, the nature of the admonitions and sanctions, if any, which were called for. The Assessor of the Section, a young professional lawyer, was sometimes available for consultation at this stage. In case of guilt, a public admonition was always delivered by the President of the Court, since, as a wall-poster in the Sectional office of the Popular Courts announced "A Good Admonition Supports the Sanction and Renders it more Efficacious"; in case of innocence, the accuser himself was often admonished at some length, together with witnesses suspected of partiality in
Most of those subjected to this type of chastisement suffered it in silence, the occasional indignant protester usually receiving an additional sentence for his pains.

When the Popular Courts first began to function in San Ramón, the judges claimed, the effect was electrifying: "The lumpen and the loafers scarcely knew what hit them!" After the first few months of court sessions, the neighbourhood became unusually quiet and orderly. By counting the numbers of accusations filed in Locality number 2 each month between May 1968 and April 1969 inclusive, the author was able to check out the suggestion also made by judges that the frequency of cases declined dramatically as a consequence of vigorous action by the new courts. Table 7 presents the pertinent data, with sub-totals representing the numbers of persons 'convicted' and 'acquitted' in each of the monthly groups. No trend of the type suggested is apparent from the table, though it remains a possibility that these figures conceal complex developments such as a real decline in 'hard' cases offset by a growing inclination on the part of the ordinary citizenry to seek judicial solution to personal feuds and other minor matters. The monthly totals of convictions also fail to exhibit a trend.

Table 8 shows the total numbers of persons accused, convicted and acquitted during the whole period May 1968 - April 1969 according to the Delito or Contravención in question. In cases where more than one offence was alleged - for instance, Assault with Verbal Abuse - accusations, convictions and acquittals were counted for the sake of simplicity under the more serious offence. The classification of offences accords with the Manual de los Tribunales Populares de
TABLE 7
POPULAR COURT, LOCALITY 2, SAN RAMON: ACCUSATIONS, CONVICTIONS AND ACQUITTALS BY MONTH,
MAY 1968 - APRIL 1969

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month in which accusation filed</th>
<th>MAY</th>
<th>JUN</th>
<th>JUL</th>
<th>AUG</th>
<th>SEP</th>
<th>OCT</th>
<th>NOV</th>
<th>DEC</th>
<th>JAN</th>
<th>FEB</th>
<th>MAR</th>
<th>APR</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of persons accused</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Convicted</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Acquitted</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Explanations in the text.
TABLE 8  
POPULAR COURT, LOCALITY 2, SAN RAMON: ACCUSATIONS, CONVICTIONS AND ACQUITTALS, MAY 1968 - APRIL 1969 INCLUSIVE, BY PRINCIPAL OFFENCE OR MISDEMEANOUR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Persons Accused</th>
<th>Persons Convicted</th>
<th>Persons Acquitted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. OFFENCES (Delitos)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault (Maltrato de obra)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Woundings (Lesiones Leves)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatening Behaviour (Amenazas)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insulting Behaviour (Injurias)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disrespect for Authority</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disobedience to Agents of Authority</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft (Hurto)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swindle (Estafa)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prohibited gaming</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offences against the People's Economy (various)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clandestine Trading</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perjury</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False accusation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violation of sentence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total of Offences</strong></td>
<td>143</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **B. MISDEMEANOURS (Contravenciones)**                         |                 |                   |                   |
| Coaction                                                       | 5               | 4                 | 1                 |
| Verbal Abuse (Maltrato de palabra)                             | 22              | 18                | 4                 |
| Parental Neglect (of minors)                                   | 6               | 6                 | 0                 |
| Public Disorder                                                | 13              | 13                | 0                 |
| Public Indecency                                               | 12              | 8                 | 4                 |
| Damage to Property                                             | 7               | 6                 | 1                 |
| Contravention of Sanitary Regulations                          | 9               | 7                 | 2                 |
| **Total of Misdemeanours**                                     | 74              | 62                | 12                |
| **GRAND TOTALS**                                               | 217             | 181               | 36                |

*Source: Explanations given in the text.*
which itself comprises long extracts from the Código de Defensa Social of 1936 together with amendments and additions deriving from legislation enacted more recently. The distinction between Offences (Delitos) and Misdemeanours (Contravenciones) has the same source. The further categorisation of offences indicated by the Code - viz. Against Property, Against the Person, Against Public Order, etc. - is omitted as overly cumbersome.

Table 9, however, shows sub-totals and percentages for two groups of offences and misdemeanours composed with a view to their sociological significance. The high proportion - well over half - of total accusations and convictions attributable to acts of physical violence or verbal 'violence' by one citizen against another is immediately striking. A second substantial group emerges if the two Offences against Property included in the jurisdiction of the Popular Courts - Theft and Swindle - are considered together with black market and other economic offences. Nearly twenty percent of convictions belonged to this category.

According to the speech made in 1966 by the Public Prosecutor of Cuba concerning the Popular Courts, the commonest offences and misdemeanours dealt with by them were Light Woundings, Insulting Behaviour, Theft, Public Disorder, and Damage to Property. It would seem likely that idiosyncratic classification accounts for the relative importance in the figures for Locality 2, San Ramón, of Assault, as against Light Woundings, and of Verbal Abuse, as against Insulting Behaviour, a partiality being shown by court judges in favour of the more serious offence in the former case but the less serious in the latter. Other discrepancies - such as the relative insignificance in our statistics of Damage to Property - are more likely to express objective differences as between urban and rural
TABLE 9
ACCUSATIONS AND CONVICTIONS: SELECTED SUB-TOTALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence</th>
<th>Persons Accused</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Persons Convicted</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Woundings</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatening Behaviour</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insulting Behaviour</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Abuse</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Disorder</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>123</strong></td>
<td><strong>56.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>55.2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swindle</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offences against the People's Economy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clandestine Trading</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
<td><strong>18.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
<td><strong>19.3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>217</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>181</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Table 8.

environments; there were, it will be recalled, only two Popular Courts operating in Havana in 1966, and only four in urban areas in general.

Some further general observations are in order before we go on to illustrate the content of the cases heard in the locality during 1968-9. Although the court files were expected to contain full biographical details on all parties to a given case, these data were in reality too incomplete in regard to accused or convicted
persons to permit the drawing of any notable conclusions, particularly in view of the absence of information about the Locality's population at large. In all cases, however, the accused's address was supplied. An investigation of those addresses most frequently appearing in the files led to a confirmation of the view often expressed in San Ramón that the people of La Corona were responsible for more than their share of offences and misdemeanours. Individuals resident in La Corona accounted for sixteen convictions out of the total of 181, which is a rate of 76.2 per thousand of population, compared with 25.4 per thousand for the Locality as a whole (for La Corona, N = 210; for Locality 2, N = 7,127). Five of these cases involved Assault, two were for Threatening Behaviour, two for Verbal Abuse, two for Theft, and the same number for Public Indecency (Contravención de Buenas Costumbres y el Decoro Público); there were, in addition, one case of Public Disorder and two Sanitary Contraventions.

Of the various "Indices of Social Dangerousness" (i.e. of proneness to crime) established by the Code of 1936, "Habitual Alcoholism" was mentioned in the files of seven cases resulting in conviction, whilst "Habitual Loafing" occurred eight times. Coroneros accounted for as many as five of the former but only one of the latter cases. Forty-seven of the total of 181 convictions were recorded as involving people with a history of previous conviction, though the information was not always sought. Finally, the participation of minors was not outstanding overall (seventeen convictions, or 9.4%) but high in the particular case of Theft convictions (five, or 43.3%).

In order to illustrate the nature of the social situations and problems which were responsible for Popular Court cases in San Ramón
and the ways in which the courts typically sought to deal with them, we may draw upon two sources: the texts of the statements contained in the files for May 1968 to April 1969, and the author's observation of all the court hearings in Locality 2 during the overlapping period January-August 1969. Beginning with the cases of physical or verbal attack which accounted for over half the total, the information provided in the files was sufficient to indicate that at least thirty-six convictions out of 100 in this group were caused by disputes between close neighbours occurring in or around their place of residence. Not all of these cases were sparked-off, like Number 12769 for Assault, by the alleged theft of a scrubbing-brush from the collective wash-basin of a solar or, like Case 76/68 for Assault, according to the testimony of the local CDR, by "some chickens which the accuser kept in the passageway, causing a nuisance to the accused's mother, who is the caretaker of the building". Nevertheless, a large number of the cases heard would never have come to court if it had not been for malicious gossip, long-standing feuds and other underlying factors related to physical overcrowding of the type indicated earlier. Case Number 57/69 is typical. The case was initiated by a middle-aged negress resident in a solar against the man living in the next room. The accuser stated to the police:

That at approximately 6 p.m. today she was ironing in her dwelling when the citizen Andrés González, resident of the same address, room 3, came to her door, using the worst phrases that it is possible to hear, and saying that he was going to finish off all the blacks in the solar. At this, she told him not to get fresh with her. Then the said citizen entered her room and tried to assault her, at which she held out her iron to defend herself; and it was then that he fell onto the floor, owing to the intoxicated state that he was in.

She added:
That obviously the citizen took advantage of the fact that her husband and son were not at home to do this. When he drinks, he makes a habit of saying the most terrible obscene words opposite her room. And, since she is at home alone with a minor, she is frightened.

This case was heard together with a counter-accusation, Number 58/69, in which the man in question alleged:

That he was in his residence quietly having a beer with some friends, when suddenly he heard the said citizen having a fight with her godchild. At this, he went out and told her she should stop fighting with the minor, because today was Saturday and they were relaxing at home and didn't want any disturbances, at which the citizen gave him a slap. Then she went inside her room and came out with an iron and attacked him with the same, trying to burn his face.

In court, the man and the woman were condemned respectively for Verbal Abuse and Light Woundings, and each was given a suspended sentence of 60 days paid detention in a prison-farm.

Twenty-seven out of 100 convictions for physical or verbal violence arose from brawls or disputes among members of the same household. At least five of these were the product of a single type of situation, frequent in Havana in the late 'sixties because of the housing shortage and the somewhat inflexible system employed in the distribution of housing - the continued cohabitation of divorced or "separated" spouses. The tensions arising from such a situation were clearly responsible, for instance, for Case Number 33/69, where a number of the Young Communist League and his ex-wife came to blows, armed respectively with a carving-knife and a bucket of water.

A final significant sub-category of cases, most of them for Public Disorder (and accounting for the near entirety of convictions for this misdemeanour), were the result of brawls or arguments in
bodegas and other retail establishments. Queues were an ubiquitous feature of life in Cuba in the late 'sixties and consequently the setting of numerous broncas in San Ramon. The CDRs, of course, are responsible among other things for the maintenance of good order and discipline in neighbourhood shops and cafes, whence such scenes as described in file number 9/68. The accuser, the responsible for Finance in the CDR Zone, declares:

It being approximately 6 p.m. today, she was in the cigarette queue opposite her home and, when she had collected her cigarettes, she went round to the back of the queue again (which is allowed); other people queued again too. But the citizens whom she only knows by the names of Teresa and Luisa did not go to the back of the queue but instead, together with a third citizen, stayed up at the counter so as to avoid queuing again. For this reason the declarer told the third citizen that respectable young ladies didn't do what they were doing, and that they had to get in the queue.

When the declarer also told the citizen that she, the declarer, was the financier of the neighbourhood and that she could not stand by and let this happen, the citizen affirmed: "Some financier! You are a prostitute!" etc., and straight away gave her a slap. Subsequently, the declarer having lost consciousness, the citizens Teresa and Luisa came and attacked her......

Whatever their cause, the violent disputes upon which Popular Court judges in San Ramón were obliged to pronounce invariably involved a routinised show of bravado and a certain virtuosity in the language of insult. Use was made of the full spectrum of terms relating to the honour, paternity and sexual normality of the subject, and the people of San Ramón were quick to call one another not only brothel-keepers, rehabilitated whores and sons of the same, but also tortilleras and maricones (lesbians and 'queers'). An important focus of attention in Popular Court admonitions was the need for individuals and society to overcome the twin heritages of guapería and chusmería, respectively the
cultural value which leads Cubans to measure their manliness (and their womanhood) by their quickness to engage in verbal or physical combat, and 'commonness' of conduct in general. A frequent line of argument used by judges involved pointing out that, today, "the real tough-guys" were the guerrilla-fighters of the Sierra Maestra and the Bolivian highlands and guapería reflected a false and degenerate concept of manhood. Likewise one could be poor and humilde without being uncouth, and, now that it was the humildes who were in power, what possible justification was there for chusmería? Where an offender guilty of exhibiting these attitudes was also poorly educated - the possessor of First or Second Grade, or illiterate - judges invariably dwelt upon the fact in order to make general points about the importance of education in the new society.

It was noticed above that nearly twenty per cent of convictions in Locality 2 involved either Offences against Property or one of the recently created Offences against the People's Economy. Cases of Theft and Swindle were treated along the lines described in Chapter 3, with emphasis on the transformation in the ethical status of these crimes as a result of the socialisation of the means of production. Five cases of Clandestine Trading were counted during the year in question, four of which resulted in convictions, though only one of these involved a black-market organisation of significant scale. In this case (39/69), eighteen individuals received sentences of one kind or another. The principal defendant, a forty year old mulatto listed as "unemployed" and as of First Grade schooling, had been detained in the province of Matanzas in the act of exchanging substantial quantities of industrial goods for agricultural produce. Subsequently gold objects, textile fabric,
nylon stockings, gloves and jewellery were found at his home in Havana. Seventeen witnesses were called in the trial and each was made to recount transactions with the principal accused over a period of some years. Coffee had been sold at ten pesos a pound—about three times its price in the bodega; a bottle of Bacardi rum had been exchanged for a single chicken, a pair of shoes for three chickens, and so on. The court's summing-up in the case focussed upon the "stupidity" of the minor offenders in accepting such a degree of price-exploitation but distinguished sharply between "exchange for use" and "exchange for business", condemning the principal defendant as a "danger to society" because of his "mercantile mentality".

In general harsh condemnation was reserved for people who operated on the black market on a full-time basis and who could be accused thereby of living "parasitically" off the rest of the population. Indulgence tended to be shown, especially outside the courts, towards casual participants—perhaps because just about everyone had erred onto the black market in some moment of weakness. Petty sales involving only "amateurs" were strictly speaking illegal but in fact quite common, and no serious attempt was made to police them. Case 80/69 resulting in a conviction for Clandestine Trading is typical of the three relatively minor cases recorded. To the embarrassment of all parties, it involved a 52 year old CDR chairman, a native of a village in Las Villas province, with Sixth Grade and a job as a cleaner at 74 pesos a month. His misfortune was to have been arrested by a policeman in the act of selling a scrubbing-brush for two pesos. In his defence he argued that to sell a scrubbing-brush at two pesos was not "speculation"; he had bought eight of them at 1.50 pesos each from a man whose name he had forgotten, but
he worked for a living, and this was the first 'problem' he had had. The judges called it "abuse of the needs of the people" and, pointing out that these were probably stolen goods, dwelt at some length on the theme that a Cederista should know better.

Who were the "loafers" responsible for eight convictions in Locality 2 between May 1968 and April 1969? Here we rely heavily, as the courts did, upon the highly-charged and colourful CDR reports submitted before the hearings. The following is a good example. The accusation in this case was a sixty-one year old CDR chairman with Sixth Grade education and working as the driver of an ice-lorry for 160 pesos a month. The subject of the accusation was his own stepson, who was aged forty-eight, with Second Grade education and "unemployed". The accusation, which was classified under Threatening Behaviour, was

That the accused started to say things like 'why didn't they all go off to Fidel Castro's house, so that they could have milk every day' - because the accuser's two sons, who belong to the PCC, went to eat at Fidel's house. And he started to say that he was going to set the house alight, and that he would get a knife and finish them all off.

The statement went on to explain:

He has had various problems with the accused and they have had one court case when he broke up the CDR noticeboard. He is a dangerous individual, because he has been in prison several times, and for this reason the authorities are requested to take some action, as he is a lumpen who does not work.

The Vigilance responsible of the local CDR dictated the following report on the accused at the police station:

He has never worked in the nine years that she has known him. He was in prison several times under the previous regime of the Batistato
because of problems with the police; he has always spent his time in gambling and vices, and it was said that he had a drugs business. His morality is thoroughly undesirable, for he mixes with elements with negative attitudes towards the Revolutionary process, and his friends leave much to be desired. In the zone he has had problems with the chairman of the CDR, who is at the same time his stepfather, striking him on one occasion. His relationships are with gambling elements like one Martínez ("The Cripple"), two of the brothers Padilla of [address] and José Padroň of [address], several of whom are presently detained for gambling. He is single, though it is not known whether he has a woman. He drinks frequently and is a habitual alcoholic, making breaches of the peace in the INIT fish restaurant. He is not integrated in any revolutionary organization; he has always declared that his people (the negative ones) give him everything he needs, not like his brothers and his stepfather who are revolutionaries but who go hungry, and that it is thanks to his friends that he eats and drinks and has a peso in his pocket. His religion is unknown but he always wears a red handkerchief in his pocket. In broad daylight he gets together with Martínez "the Cripple" and another man called "the Dog"; the last mentioned was sent to a camp in Camagüey for vagrancy, but he declares that 'he will not go there again even if they shoot him'. In addition he has several more friends who get together in the INIT fish restaurant to gamble on the buses that have the highest number. He never showed any interest in studying or in working, but he did always like to be on the fringe of the law.

A final document included to help the court to make up its mind in this case consisted of supplementary comments dictated by the accuser in his capacity as CDR Chairman. Of all his sons, he complained that only this one "refused to work and to be guided by good advice".

Because whenever they found him some sort of job, he made up a series of excuses and gave it up after a few days. He never wanted to study either; at that time the district was full of lottery stalls, drug peddlers and mofuco drinkers, and it was with these people that his son liked to associate........

At the beginning of the Revolution, seeing that the opportunities were being closed-off for continuing to live the life to which he was accustomed, he declared
himself an enemy of the Process; and his stepfather and his brothers, who were integrated into the same, were called to account for him. Although the block committee is based in his house, he has taken advantage of the absence of his stepfather at work and the illness of his mother to bring into the same a series of *lumpen* individuals to engage in illicit trading and to drink *alcoholite*.58

The case was heard at the very first session of the Popular Court in Locality 2 on 17 May 1968. The accused, according to the terse note in the corresponding file (5/68), admitted the facts, and was sentenced to sixty days' detention in an open prison-farm subject to the guidance of the Provincial branch of the Consejo Superior de Defensa Social, the main advisory body on penal matters.

Not all the cases recorded as having a background of "loafing" were as apparently intractable as this one or characterised by the same compounding of social and political deviancy. But the instance was not unique even in Locality 2. Case Number 72/69, involving a youth aged twenty and of First Grade schooling accused of threatening to set alight the house of the young woman next door (incidentally referring to her as a "Communist stool pigeon" and a "Communist swine"), also illustrated the development of a species of anti-Communism which has little to do with the '-ism'. With two previous convictions for car-stealing, an absent father and a brother taken off forcibly to perform his Military Service, the subject had remained, as the President of the Court put it, "marginal to everything that has happened in the Revolution". Admonishing a number of witnesses associated with the local CDR for permitting such a state of affairs to develop, the court placed him 'at the disposition of' the Consejo Superior de Defensa Social.

One last file among those examined calls for some comment since it illustrates a feature of Cuban social attitudes and policy which
is to be discussed in Chapter 5. The case, Number 86/68, classified under Public Indecency, was never brought to trial but in the documents assembled for this purpose it is already possible to perceive the elements of its probable dénouement and conclusion. Cases of Public Indecency (Contravención de Buenas Costumbres y el Decoro Público) were typified in San Ramón by Number 62/69, arising from the arrest of a man suspected of pressing up to a girl in a crowded 'bus, and Number 57/69, the product of something similar in a cinema. No exceptional gravity was attached to a conviction in this category under normal circumstances, but to be a young homosexual in Havana in 1969 was to expect normal treatment in few areas of public social life and least of all in the courts. The accused, a white seventeen year old born in Santiago de Cuba, possessing secondary education but unemployed, was arrested by a DOP patrolman.

The policeman declared:

That today he was patrolling Trinity Street, and when he reached the corner of the said street he observed the above-named citizen who had his trousers down nearly a quarter of the way and was rearranging his underpants. [The patrolman] therefore asked the said citizen to account for himself, to which he replied that he was doing this because nobody would see it. At this he proceeded to conduct the citizen to this Unit.

The accused made the following statement in the police-station:

That when he arrived at the corner of Trinity Street, owing to the fact that his belt was a bit loose and that consequently his trousers were slipping down, he proceeded to pull them up. And at that moment the patrol-car went past. The patrolman called him over in an incorrect manner and then took him to the Unit, and at no point did he take his trousers down in the manner that the patrolman states.

In order to make sense of the case, it was essential to read the appropriate CDR report, which attested that the subject had
abandoned his studies but was not working, adding under the heading of "Family Relationships"

His family say that these are good and decent, but that he turned out queer [salió afeminado].

And, under "Relations with the Community":

These are not known, since he associates with Vedado elements and belongs to the Hippy Gang [la Banda de los Jipí]. He is not integrated and is a homosexual.

Almost certainly the source of the patrolman's affront was the style of trousers worn by the young man - tight and cut low at the waist - and the depravity indicated by his appearance. It is unlikely that the Popular Court would have thought differently. However the documentation on the case terminated abruptly: "File archived. The minor is already detained in Camagüey as a scum [lacra] and a queer, and as a member of the Hippies".

The sanctions imposed by the Popular Court in Locality 2, San Ramón, in the cases we have been considering are listed as Table 10. As previously noted, public admonitions were a universal and integral part of sentencing procedure in the Courts and one of the principal bases of the claim that they represented a genuinely new departure in the administration of justice in Cuba. It may now be observed that close to forty per cent of convictions in Locality 2 called forth no other sanction than an admonition. Twenty-eight per cent of convictions, on the other hand, led to the deprivation of the offender of his liberty, but in two-thirds of these cases no detention of any kind was involved. A further nineteen per cent of the total were sentences of this type, but suspended conditionally upon the offender's not being convicted again for the same or a similar transgression. The usual period during which suspended
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Sanction</th>
<th>Number of Offenders</th>
<th>Proportion of the Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Admonition (ONLY)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detention in prison-farm, 6 months</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detention in prison-farm, 1-5 months</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid agricultural labour without detention, 1-3 months</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid Sunday labour without detention, 6-15 days</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid Sunday labour without detention, 1-5 days</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUB-TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY - SUSPENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detention in prison-farm, 6 months</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detention in prison-farm, 1-5 months</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid agricultural labour without detention, 1-3 months</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUB-TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VARIOUS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referred to the Consejo Superior de Defensa Social</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attainment of educational Grade</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restriction of movement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confinement to domicile</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deprivation of Social Rights</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fines</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUB-TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>181</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Explanations in the text.

**Notes:**

a. Excludes subsidiary sanctions.
b. Only those cited in the formal accusation submitted in writing before the hearing.
c. One of these was with full wages.
d. Ten of these were with full wages.
sentences remained operative was from one to two years in the case of prison-farm sentences and six months where only compulsory labour was at issue.

A number of the sentences listed as 'various' require some further explanation. The attainment of a given educational Grade, usually the equivalent of one year's schooling above that already possessed by the subject, was normally required of offenders whose educational background was particularly poor, and was expected to be complied with by means of attendance at the local Worker-Peasant Education classes. 'Restriction of Movement' involved the specification of locations - in the single case observed, the house of the offender's ex-wife - which could not be visited during a stated period, under pain of Contempt. 'Confinement to Domicile' consisted of the inverse type of restriction and was applied for periods of up to thirty days, normally in cases where an offender had acquired notoriety for disputes in public places. Two types of sentence laid down in the Code of 1939 for offences and misdemeanours in the jurisdiction of the Popular Courts - fines and the deprivation of offenders' social rights - were deliberately eschewed because they were regarded as unlikely to contribute to the "education and re-education" of the subject.

The figures presented in Table 10 do not include admonitions and other sanctions to which accusers, witnesses or members of the public were subject in some court hearings. According to the records examined, either accusers or witnesses, or both, were formally admonished at the conclusion of sixteen hearings, whilst in four cases persons cited as accusers in the corresponding files were sentenced to penalties ranging from four Sundays' unpaid labour to ninety days
detention suspended for one year. Finally, only four convicted persons exercised their right of appeal, receiving a retrial at Section level in a court composed of judges from other Localities and presided over by the professional Assessor for San Ramón. In three cases, the original decision was upheld but the fourth led to an acquittal.

Cederistas in San Ramón in 1969 were, as might be expected, pleased with the results of the introduction of the Popular Courts in their area. Of the thirteen CDR chairmen in Zone 12, who were specifically questioned on this point, nine expressed the view that the sentencing of the local court was 'just', 'correct' or 'good', a number of them volunteering comments to the effect that this manner of administrating justice provided an excellent education for the people. The remainder believed that the sentencing of the Popular Court was too mild, either in general or in particular cases, though two of them added that this had to be so in order for the educational functions of the institution to be performed. Asked whether, in keeping with the claims made by the judges about Locality 2 as a whole, the situation in their streets had "improved" since the introduction of the new courts, a majority (seven) disclaimed ever having had any "problems" in their blocks which, they explained, were quiet blocks. Others were more or less emphatic in agreeing that the respect in which the citizenry held the Popular Courts had created order and tranquility in the neighbourhood as a whole.

JUSTICE, PARTICIPATION AND THE LAW: AN EPILOGUE

The major drawbacks of the Popular Court system from a judicial point of view have been alluded to in various places. The first
difficulty observed arose from the heavy reliance placed by the
system upon the 'innate' qualities and capabilities of the ordinary
students, workers and housewives who presented themselves as judges.
Though not necessarily constituting a fatal objection to the
Popular Court as an institution, it is clear that, in the absence
of the levelling of talents associated with professional legal
training, some worker-judges displayed the firmness and skill
required by the court-room situation in abundant quantities, whilst
others conspicuously failed to do so. A second problem, connected
with the first in as much as the sense of justice, as an 'innate'
quality, is also distributed unevenly in most populations, has to
do with the procedural informality which typified the Popular Courts.
In particular, I have stressed the telescoping of cross-examination
and sentencing. The increased risk of injustice entailed by this
procedural development has to be weighed against the advantages
claimed for it. Thirdly, it was observed in a footnote above that,
whilst private individuals making an accusation in a Popular Court
were required to press charges in person, the same was not insisted
upon where a case was initiated by the police. In San Ramón, in
fact, charges made by the DOP were always accepted in writing. The
judges regarded the question as one of minor significance, reflecting
to a degree to which the author is unsure traditional practice in
Cuba, and, when pressed, they pointed to the excellent record of the
DOP. Without denying, however, that the standards of honesty and
social responsibility achieved by the Cuban police since 1959 are
probably outstanding by international as well as local standards, it
is possible to perceive potential abuses in this area. One instance
where the cross-examination of a policeman was patently called for
was described above in another connection.
The purpose of this epilogue is to indicate two developments under way since 1970, one affecting directly the future of the Popular Court system, including some of the features just mentioned, the other touching upon the wider theme of participation and the law. Both developments had their beginnings in the National Forum on Internal Order held in Havana in March 1969. At the conclusion of this conference, a number of innovations were recommended, ranging across all the major spheres of activity of the police, the social-work agencies and the penal authorities. Two points were particularly insisted upon however, the first being the need to 'tighten-up' the substantive criminal legislation in force in certain areas, taking account of the trend of crime statistics. No timetable was set for the introduction of new legislation and no indication was given as to the methods to be employed in drawing it up. Linked with this, secondly, was a proposal to begin a study of existing organs for the administration of justice in Cuba "with a view to unifying them into a single juridical system in keeping with the needs engendered by the impetuous advance of our Revolution".  

The existence of several organisations for the administration of justice and the lack of uniformity in the policy of penalties are important factors affecting our whole judicial system. The diversity of penalties for the same type of crime and the differences in how rigorously or flexibly they are applied have an adverse effect both on any project aimed at combating crime and on the work of rehabilitation itself. Specifically, we infer, the proposed "unification" of the judicial system would result in the elimination of differences in the severity of sentences handed down respectively by the Revolutionary Courts and the ordinary Juzgados and Audiencias. At the same time it would be expected to involve the extension to the whole of the judiciary of the concepts of justice and sentencing currently
enshrined only in the Revolutionary Courts and the Popular Courts.

For two years nothing further was heard of the matter or of the commissions established to look into it. In June 1971, however, at a meeting held to mark the Tenth Anniversary of the creation of the revolutionary Ministry of the Interior, Fidel Castro reaffirmed that "in the coming years, together with the struggle against the counter-revolution, the struggle against common crimes and other anti-social activities must assume an equally important position", adding that it would be necessary "to unify jurisdictions .... so that we may know exactly under which of the various organs of the judiciary a given activity or crime falls". The rejection of the voluntaristic orientation of Cuban policies in the late 'sixties, which characterised all of Castro's public statements after summer 1970, was also present here:

We are now faced with the problem of organising the courts, systematising all of that, aiding the people's courts, integrating the tribunals in criminal cases and insuring that the people have a working knowledge of our laws. In every revolutionary process there is a paradox; in a given class society, whose laws are class laws, there arises a revolutionary process which, in its early phase, is characterised by being iconoclastic toward the established laws - the system, its laws, everything must be destroyed - and this results in a certain habit of disregard for the law. Again we are faced with two truths: the first truth is that capitalist legality must be destroyed, and the second truth is that socialist legality must be established.

Castro went on to speak of the need for Cuba to rely to a greater extent than in the past upon legal and other experts, in order to create "an intelligent and scientific order" for the new society under construction.

In August 1971, Granma announced that the Secretariat of the
A number of points in these proposals are worthy of note. Firstly, all four existing jurisdictions are to be included in the reform: the Ordinary, Revolutionary, Popular and Military Courts, and the new system is to be the sole judicial power in Cuba. Secondly, there being no contradiction in a revolutionary state between the independence of judicial officials and the subordination of the courts to the supreme organs of power, the new judiciary will be responsible and subordinate to the Council of Ministers. The authority to draw up regulations for the day-to-day running of the courts is to be vested in a Ruling Council of the People's Supreme Court, comprising the President of the Supreme Court, the Presidents of the latter's four branches and the Minister of Justice. The divisions of the Supreme Court will be concerned respectively with criminal, civil and administrative matters and with state security. Thirdly, the unified judiciary will consist at every level of both professionally qualified and non-professional judges, all judges being subject to election by "delegates of the people selected by different organisations". At the same time "non-technical participation by the people at all levels of the courts" is to be instituted with a view to preventing the "professionalisation" of the judiciary. Finally, private law practices are to be abolished and justice is to have a "class-character", being dispensed "on behalf of the people and in defence of their interests".

At the time of writing, it remains for the final proposals to be submitted to the bodies which will have decision-making power in the matter - the Political Bureau of the PCC and the Council of
Ministers. Regarding the future of the Popular Courts, nevertheless.

On the one hand, these organs are to disappear in the form in which they operated in the late 'sixties, to be replaced by courts which draw to a greater extent upon vocational legal personnel. On the other hand, however, the experience of the Popular Courts has manifestly made a mark upon revolutionary Cuban legal thinking, and, whilst the reform contains important concessions to Soviet orthodoxy on such questions, there are important respects in which it may be regarded as a generalisation of the lessons of this experience to the whole of the judicial system.

It remains in this epilogue to indicate the direction of the other development mentioned at the beginning affecting "participation" and the legal system in Cuba. In December 1972 it was announced that the Politbureau of the Party had resolved "that the people discuss" the drafts of a number of new laws drawn up by Commissions for Juridical Studies under the chairmanship of veteran Communist Elias Roca. The new laws - recognisably the product of the proposals made in 1969 - called for greater severity in the penalties corresponding to offences "against the national and people's economy, against the normal development of sexual relations (rape, molesting, etc.), against family order and against the healthy development of children and young people", and the employment of military uniforms or insignia in the commission of certain crimes. 

Also included for discussion were to be the draft of a law establishing sixteen as the age of majority for purposes of criminal responsibility, and legislation required in connection with the reorganisation of the judiciary. The texts of five out of seven of the required Acts were published and under discussion in assemblies in trade union locals and CDRs.
throughout the country early in 1973. 76

The content of some of the legislation in question will call for comment in Chapter 5 below. At this point it will suffice to notice that the manner in which its enactment is being proceeded with represents an interesting extension of the practice first introduced in the case of the "anti-loafing" law of 1971 and foreshadowed in the evolution of the CDRs in the late 'sixties. The aims and rationale of this style of government were indicated in a provocative fashion by Fidel Castro in answer to questions by a member of the Chilean National Party in Santiago in November 1971:

Our Revolution is not perfect. We still haven't reached higher forms. We still haven't reached forms of expression of what we would call democracy. But we do say that in our country the people feel that they are a part of the Revolution, part of the state. In our country, the important decisions are no longer discussed in a Parliament. No! They are discussed in the work-centres, in the mass organisations. The Revolutionary Government began by governing by decree. But, by now, every important law that has to do with the main interests of the people is discussed by millions of people through our work centres, our mass organisations and our military units, by everybody. ....... Now tell me, could bourgeois parliamentarianism ever be more democratic than this? 78
1. Cuba and the Rule of Law (Geneva: International Commission of Jurists, 1962), p. 63. This document is still a useful source on the juridical history of the first years of the revolution in spite of its notable failure to come to grips with the issue underlying the disputed legal questions - in a word, the likely consequences for Cuba of a restriction of the 'revolution' to the implementation of the Constitution of 1940 - and its labouring of the point that Fidel Castro's conception of Law was not the same in the early 'sixties as it had been in the early 'fifties. The Constitution in question was a liberal-pluralist document well-known for its advanced provisions on social and labour matters and for the fact that it was never effectively implemented.


4. Ibid., p. 64.

5. Ibid., p. 66.

6. At the lower levels, Tribunales Coreccionales, Juzgados de Primera Instancia and Audiencias.

7. Initially the Revolutionary Courts had responsibility only for the summary judgement of persons involved in the excesses of the late Batista years. In November 1959 however, following their suspension for a brief period, these courts were reintroduced with jurisdiction in all cases of offences defined as Counter-revolutionary or as Offences against the State. See ibid., pp. 131-141.

8. Ibid., pp. 114ff.

9. Ibid., p. 127.


13. Quoted at the head of this chapter.

14. This observation and the account which follows are based on the speech made in September 1966 by the Public Prosecutor [*Fiscal del Tribunal Supremo*], Dr. Santiago Cuba, reprinted as Santiago Cuba, *Los Tribunales Populares* (Havana: Ministerio de Justicia, 1966).


19. See *ibid.*, p.13. Judges appointed in this way held the position indefinitely. However, they could be suspended permanently either by local assemblies or by their colleagues in the governing committee at Section level in case of incompetence, dishonesty or immorality. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

20. Blas Roca *"Prólogo", op.cit.*

21. Where a minor was accused, court sessions were held in camera, but otherwise never.


24. Cases suspected of requiring medical or psychiatric treatment could be "placed at the disposition" of the *Consejo Superior de Defensa Social* or one of its provincial off-shoots. The *Consejo*, which dates from the pre-revolutionary period, employed in 1969 an unknown number of psychiatrists and other professional personnel. In addition to serving the courts in this way it provided an advisory service to the penal authorities at the Ministry of the Interior in matters of the location, treatment, and granting of remission to convicted prisoners. In 1969 there was a feeling among some cederistas, if not among popular judges, that the *Consejo* was overly lenient with 'loafers' and others placed on probation under its supervision. What was clear was that it was understaffed, and that this fact tended to limit the quantity of supervision actually provided.

25. See Robert Conquest, *Justice and the Legal System in the USSR* (London: Bodley Head/Soviet Studies Series, 1968), pp. 29-32. The *Popular Court Aseores*, in addition to presiding in case of appeals, were expected to take charge when and if a complaint was lodged concerning the conduct of a judge. On a day-to-day basis they participated in, but did not direct, the management committees responsible for the running of the courts at municipal/sectional
level. Frequently these men, who were employees of the Ministry of Justice, were recent graduates of the Havana law school.

26. Ibid., p. 118.

27. Ibid., pp. 116-119. The Comrades' Courts also lacked the power to sentence Soviet citizens to detention, though they were permitted to impose fines.


29. Ibid., p. 33, pp. 39-44.

30. That is, both were elected bodies whose function was to pronounce upon cases of labour indiscipline, negligence, petty-theft on the premises and similar transgressions, but which lacked the status and sentencing powers of a court of law. On the Chinese Committees, see ibid., pp. 93-94. On the Cuban Labour Councils, see Roberto E. Hernández and Carmelo Mesa-Lago, "Labor Organization and Wages", in C. Mesa-Lago (ed.), Revolutionary Change in Cuba (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), esp. pp. 219-224. Cf. also in this context the Polish experiment described in Adam Podgórecki, "Attitudes to the Workers' Courts", in Vilhelm Aubert (ed.), Sociology of Law (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 142-49.


33. For instance during and after the anti-rightist campaign of 1957, on which see ibid., pp. 238-247.

34. Blas Roca, "Prólogo", op.cit.

35. Where the DOP initiated a case, it was not customary to call upon a police representative to press charges in person, as was always required of private individuals. The implications of this fact are further discussed below.

36. See for example Cuba and the Rule of Law, op.cit.

37. Moreno, "Justice and Law in Latin America", op.cit.

38. Ibid., p. 373. What Castro said was: "We shall be respectful of the law, but of the revolutionary law; respectful of rights, but of revolutionary rights - not the old rights but the new rights we are going to make. For the old law, no respect; for the new law respect. Who has the right to modify the constitution? The majority. Who has the majority? The revolution". (Revolución, 23 March 1959, cited ibid.)
39. Ibid., pp. 374-376.

40. Graphic descriptions of Havana during the first decade of this century are contained in René Méndez Capote, Memorias de una Cubanita que Nació con el Siglo (Havana: Ediciones Unión, 1964).

41. A fictitious name has been chosen for this and other well-known landmarks in San Ramón.

42. La Corona was not an isolated case. According to Granma, the occupants of solares and cindadelas were obliged to pay from one-fifth to one-third of their wages in rent. Raimundo Rodríguez, "The Poor and the Revolution", GWR, 29 April 1973, p. 8.

43. The CDR internal census, from which these data are drawn, listed under 'last known occupation' one prostitute, two marihuana-peddlers and one santera (Afro-Cuban religious leader).

44. Chivato. When the author began to conduct informal interviews in La Corona he was asked by a child aged about twelve whether he had come p' a echar pa' alante a la gente (to denounce people).


48. What distinguishes a cindadela from a solar is its greater size. According to the Granma article cited above, the former is expected to contain over 100 rooms. Rodríguez, "The Poor and the Revolution", loc.cit.


50. On santería and the revolution, see Chapter 5 below.

51. República de Cuba, Ministerio de Justicia, op.cit.

52. The inclusion of Public Disorder in this group is motivated by the actual content of accusations placed under this rubric in the files examined.


54. The adjective guapo or guapa is usually regarded as a compliment and, throughout most of the Hispanic world, it has the sense of 'good-looking'. In everyday usage in Cuba, however, it refers to the 'tough-guy', the 'fighter' or the bully, with negative or positive connotations depending on the context.

The noun chusma, literally 'mob', was the traditional upper-class
term for the uncultured and unwashed multitudes. Today it is
used generally to refer to individuals judged to be vulgar and
exhibitionist, sloppy in dress and speech, or truculent and
bad-mannered.

55. In the Yoruba religious cults prevalent in Cuba (see Chapter 5)
the bearer of a red handkerchief is identified with the deity
Shango.

56. *Vidrieras de apuntaciones.*

57. *Palmoliveros.*

58. *90° spirit.*

59. In late summer 1968 the authorities in Havana carried out a
*recogida* of young people who had established the custom of
meeting in groups at street-corners, in the Vedado quarter of the
city. Dressing according to the recent European fashions, the
Jipis were also allegedly prostituting themselves with foreign
visitors in order to obtain transistor radios, gramophone records
and other stylish goods not obtainable in Cuba. In his speech of
28 September 1968, Fidel Castro described this behaviour as
"excessive":

And I speak of excesses because the Revolution has not
been demanding, it has not imposed anything on anybody,
it respects to the maximum the rights of the individual
[el fuero de las personas], and it is not against progress
in any sense........

But what were they thinking? That we live in a
bourgeois liberal regime? No! We don't have a liberal
hair on our heads. We are revolutionaries! We are
socialists! We are collectivists! We are communists!
......

And the Revolution will educate these youngsters, or
re-educate them; it will treat each case as it ought to
be treated, but it will re-educate them above all through
work, which is the finest form of education. ("Discurso
pronunciado en el acto conmemorativo del VIII Aniversario
de los CDR", Ediciones COR, No. 18, Havana, 1968, pp. 23-
24.)

60. Five accusations made during the period under examination were
withdrawn and their withdrawal accepted (as not always happened)
by the court. These have not been counted in the foregoing.

61. See Sergio del Valle, "Speech at the closing session of the First
National Forum of the Deputy Ministry of Internal Order", GNR,
6 April 1969, pp. 4-5; and reports, *ibid.*, p. 6.


63. One of the means by which it was proposed to increase the deterrent
to certain types of robbery was by their transfer from the jurisdic-
tion of the ordinary courts to that of the Revolutionary Courts.
64. Rafael Garriga, "La lucha contra el delito", Juventud Rebelde, 22 May 1969, p. 2.

65. Fidel Castro, "Speech of 6 June 1971 at the meeting to mark the X Anniversary of the creation of the Ministry of the Interior", GWR, 13 June 1971, p. 4.

66. I.e. the Popular Courts in the translation adopted here.

67. Ibid., p. 6. A semi-colon has been added to the second sentence of this quotation.

68. Ibid.


70. The 'labour justice' administered by the workplace Consejos de Trabajo, never strictly a part of the judiciary, is to be excluded "in view of the fact that its present complex and special functions are directly related to the administrative activity of the distribution of the labour force". Ibid.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.


75. "Political Bureau resolves that the people discuss proposed laws", GWR, 10 December 1972, p. 3.

76. For details see, "A discusión: Proyectos de Ley elaborados por las Comisiones de Estudios Judiciales" (Havana: n.d., n.p.).

77. See Chapter 2, above.

78. Fidel Castro, "Answers to questions by students at the State Technological University, Santiago de Chile, 29 November 1971", in Fidel in Chile (New York: International Publishers, 1972), p. 194.
Preceding chapters have traced in detail the changing fortunes and significance of the Castroist concept of participation as manifested in the evolution and practice of the CDRs and the Popular Courts. Throughout this discussion a constant theme has been that the purpose of these organisational forms is not merely to promote the identification of the mass of ordinary Cubans with the Revolution and its leadership, but also to serve as means for transmitting new social values and models of behaviour to the population at large. Both the committees and the courts, it has been suggested, are expected to make a long-term contribution to the diffusion of an interrelated set of social priorities, beliefs and precepts judged to be appropriate to a society engaged in the simultaneous tasks of overcoming economic underdevelopment and building the communist society. So far, I have treated the content and genesis of the new values either as unproblematic or narrowly within the perspective of short-term socio-economic changes in the last years of the decade of the 'sixties. It has already been hinted, however, that certain features of the cultural nexus within which the CDRs and Popular Courts operate are far from unproblematic and warrant further investigation. The aim of this chapter is to fill certain lacunae of this type which have made their appearance in the course of the discussion.

One of the outstanding political events of the years immediately following the 'turn' in Cuban policy of summer 1970 was the convocation between April 23 and 30 1971 of the First National Congress on Education and Culture. The purpose of this meeting, which was attended by 1,800 delegates representing the country's teachers,
cultural agencies and mass political organisations, was to discuss and determine the orientation of the educational and cultural policies of the revolutionary regime for the coming years. At the opening of a new 'high school in the countryside' on 25 April, Fidel Castro explained that the Congress could adopt all pertinent decisions in the confidence that they would be endorsed by the Party leadership and the Government, and he went on to describe the deliberations of the assembled educators as "the concrete practice of the mass line in the revolutionary process". The themes of the meeting included most prominently the importance of educational advance as a lever for the achievement of economic development, the need to pay attention to the ideological formation of future generations, and the threat to the Revolution posed by new and ever more subtle forms of "cultural colonialism". The final declaration adopted by the delegates constitutes a fundamental document for the student of social and cultural change in contemporary Cuba.

Contained in the Declaration are a number of recommendations affecting technical aspects of the educational system and its growth. More significant in the present context though are the views also expressed regarding a number of "environmental factors" which are held to be among the determinants of educational progress in Cuba and which are discussed under the following rubrics: "links between the home and the school", "relations between the school and the workplace", "fashions, customs and extravagant behaviour", "religion", "juvenile delinquency", "sex", "free time and extra-curricular activities", "the mass media" and "cultural activities". In what follows, it is not proposed to exhaust this list of topics, or to be restricted by it. Instead, three problems have been selected for discussion, corresponding to what has been called "the characteristic
trilogy of the Caribbean social drama". The first of these questions, concerning sexual, familial and related values, is pronounced upon with some force by the document; the second, relating to the present status and future role of the popular syncretist religions, is discussed obliquely; whilst the third - the question of colour and of contemporary Cuban 'race relations' - is conspicuous by its complete absence both from the Declaration and from the deliberations of the Congress.

In their attempt to create the foundations of a new social order by diffusing throughout the population the values of self-sacrifice, collectivism and egalitarianism, the revolutionary leaders in Cuba do not enjoy the luxury of a sociological tabula rasa. As we have already seen, they are obliged to come to grips, as best they can within the limits imposed by the economic and social resources of the island, with a wide range of social problems in the conventional sense of this term, many of them 'inherited' from the immediate pre-revolutionary decades. At the same time they must utilise, mould, combat or otherwise come to terms with other, more regular features of the national socio-cultural heritage. In general a great deal hinges upon the intelligence, audacity and creativeness with which this is done, and nowhere is this more true than in regard to our trilogy: sex, religion and colour. In the pages which follow, I wish to suggest that the record of the revolutionary regime to date in the formation of policies adequate to deal with traditional Cuban attitudes in these areas in a progressive fashion has proved extremely uneven. In the conclusion of the dissertation, the successes and the failures of the Revolutionary social and cultural policies will be located once more in the context of the problem of political organisation.
The parallelism of many elements of the Cuban socio-cultural background with the phenomena observed in other territories of the Caribbean will be apparent from the outset. Generalising about the region as a whole, Gordon Lewis has been able to write:

The frontier conditions of Caribbean life made the family a fragile institution at best. The sugar and slave economy, uprooting whole generations from their African background, gave rise to the esoteric cult religions - voodoo, obeah, the saint cults - of an Afro-Caribbean variety. Racial intermixture, finally (the inevitable consequence wherever the sex drive finds itself in a slavery environment), produced massive complexes of color psychology in the regional life, with serious results both for the quality of personal self-esteem and of social life.6

The literature devoted to assessing the impact of plantation slavery upon colonial Cuban society is relatively substantial and has been swollen recently by the addition of a number of historical studies of a high quality.7 In contrast, the evolution of Cuban family patterns, religious practices and 'race relations' in the period after the abolition of slavery (in 1880) and during the first half of the twentieth century remains a drastically under-researched field. On many specific points it is simply impossible to say whether Cuban patterns accord with or diverge from those which have been carefully described and recorded in other parts of the region. Since 1959, of course, additional factors have intervened in helping to make Cuba, the largest of the Antilles, the most neglected by sociologists. If this chapter indicates the scope of our ignorance as much as the measure of our knowledge of twentieth century Cuban society, a major part of its purpose will have been achieved.

SEX, MACHISMO AND THE SOCIALIST FRONTIER

And what did they imagine? That we live under
a bourgeois liberal regime? No! We haven't a liberal hair on our heads. We are revolutionaries! We are socialists! We are collectivists! We are communists! ..... And we repeat: Of liberalism, nothing! Of softening, nothing! A revolutionary people, an organised people, a combative people, a strong people - these are the virtues which are needed in these years. All the rest is pure wishful-thinking. It is to underestimate the task we have before us, to underestimate the enemy, to underestimate the historic importance of these years, to underestimate the struggle.

- Fidel Castro, September 1968.

No systematic study of Cuban family- and kinship-patterns in the twentieth century has yet been made. On the available evidence however it is clear that in most essentials the pre-revolutionary Cuban family approximated to the norms observed elsewhere in the Hispanic Caribbean. That is to say, the dominant values in the society contained a strong element of Spanish male authoritarianism modified and underpinned by the homespun ideology of machismo. The position of women was defined in relation to an ideal of submissiveness and constrained by a system of beliefs which wedded the concept of honour to that of virginity. As in other settings, however, where Hispanic concepts of honour and shame were imposed upon an underlying population in the context of plantation slavery, the 'dominant' values and norms told only a small part of the story. Thus the commonest forms of domestic arrangements outside the upper strata of society, and particularly among the black lower strata, were similar to those observed throughout the Caribbean area: both common law unions and extra-residential mating were statistically frequent and morally acceptable alternatives to matrimony. According to the Cuban census of 1899, consensual unions accounted for about thirty-three per cent of the total and the rate of illegitimacy was approximately
forty per cent. Both proportions were markedly higher for blacks than for whites. Statistics quoted by the Foreign Policy Association's Problems of the New Cuba indicate that in 1932 there were 10,356 white marriages but only 1,720 among the coloured population. On the other hand there were nearly as many illegitimate births reported among blacks as among whites, although Negroes constituted less than one-third of the population.¹⁰

Important differences appear to have obtained as between urban and rural districts. In 1953, common law marriages were reported by the Census to be slightly more numerous than legal marriages in rural areas, whilst in urban centres nearly three times as many people claimed to be legally married as said they were married by consent.¹¹ On the other hand, ten per cent of all women over the age of fourteen were heads of their households in the most urbanised province (Havana), whereas the corresponding proportion for the most rural province (Pinar del Río) was only six per cent.¹² The tendency towards the 'matrifocality' of the domestic group was not therefore distributed in accordance with the incidence of common law marriages. Still less were consensual unions to be identified with unstable domestic situations or casual affairs. Popular attitudes in both town and country reportedly distinguished sharply between common law marriages and extra-residential mating, the principal impediment to legal marriage among the poor being the cost of the ceremony.¹³ In 1968, Verena Martínez-Alier conducted interviews in a village in the foothills of the Sierra Maestra where ninety-five per cent of the couples were living aplazados, that is, in consensual unions. In the opinion of these, overwhelmingly 'coloured', couples, marriage, and particularly marriage in Church, was cosa de lujo or cosa de los ricos. The expense mandatory upon the male in order for him
to avoid incurring the criticism of his neighbours (in addition to the cost of the ceremony, he was obliged to provide a house and furniture) was such as to place matrimony beyond the reach of most of these families. Marriage was regarded as the ideal state but there was general agreement that "a good aplazamiento is better than a bad marriage". The author encountered a similar defence of consensual unions in Havana in 1969 among middle-aged black couples who described themselves as arrimados.

Legally, common law marriages imposed obligations on spouses similar to those of regular unions, but in practice such arrangements were more binding on the woman than on the man, especially in the cities where informal social pressures were less strong. More generally, women were subject to the developed sexual double-standards of the machismo complex, though the culturally-defined response of women towards their situation varied according to social status. In the urban lower strata, partly no doubt because of the tradition of matrifocality in this group, female submissiveness was largely replaced as an ideal by the sub-cultural value of hembrismo, which placed a premium upon sexual irresistibility and physical or verbal demonstrativeness as the measures of womanhood. Nevertheless, male and female attitudes were such that only fourteen per cent of the labour force in the late 'fifties was composed of women. Although women obtained the right to vote in 1934 (before this happened in the majority of Latin American countries) few were prominent in politics before 1959, and the belief that the proper females roles were restricted to those of mother and wife severely limited the access of women to most other positions of importance in public life.

A number of significant changes occurred in these patterns
after 1959. The sheltering of young women in order to safeguard their virginity was a practice which was still reported in Havana in 1969. However, the emigration en bloc of upper- and middle-class families during the early years of the Revolution had the effect of removing one of the principal social bulwarks of the virginity syndrome. On the other hand, the policy initiated by the Revolutionary Government with a view to strengthening the institution of matrimony, which involved the simplification of both marriage and divorce proceedings and the provision by the state of the wherewithal for the celebration of weddings, resulted in an increase in formal marriages. Between 1958 and 1968 the number of marriages registered annually grew almost three times, from 30,658 to 84,620, though the number of divorces increased twice as fast, from 2,251 to 15,357. The incorporation of women into the permanent labour force has been a major priority of the revolutionary regime, the tenets of orthodox Leninism on the 'woman question' and the labour shortage which has plagued the Cuban economy since the early 'sixties coinciding on this point. In the 'sixties, the recruitment of women workers was placed under the aegis of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) and was aided notably by the creation of day-nurseries (círculos infantiles) in most villages and neighbourhoods throughout the country, but these efforts were only moderately successful. The participation of women in the labour force increased from 14.2 per cent on the eve of the Revolution to 15.6 per cent in 1968, but between the pre-revolutionary years 1953 and 1957 it had also risen, from thirteen per cent to fourteen per cent. A major campaign initiated by the FMC in 1968, however, led to the recruitment of 94,000 women into the labour force between November of that year and August 1969, raising the proportion of females in the total to 17.7 per cent,
and by November 1972 some 400,700 women had taken jobs under this 
programme. Ninety-one per cent of those incorporated into
productive work had remained on the job up to this time.\(^{19}\)

Other activities sponsored by the FMC to promote the partic-
ipation of women in the political and economic life of the country
include the mobilisation of its 1,615,000 members (sixty-three per
cent of Cuban women aged between fourteen and sixty-five in 1972)
for voluntary labour in agriculture, political study circles and
activities in solidarity with the Vietnamese revolution. In 1972,
in addition, 173,000 housewives and FMC members were attending
Adult Education courses, 152,500 were organised in Militant Mothers
for Education brigades designed to boost parental support for the
nation's schools, and FMC social workers handled ninety-six per cent
of all cases of "misbehaviour" by minors.\(^{20}\) The number of women
prominent in Cuban public life, however, has not increased
dramatically since 1959. The best known figures - Celia Sánchez
(Secretary to the Presidency), Vilma Espín (President of the FMC),
Haydée Santamaría (Director of the Casa de las Américas, the cultural
institution) and Málba Hernández (Chairman of the Cuban Indochina
solidarity committee) - belonged to the inner circle of the 26 July
Movement from the days of the Sierra or earlier, and two (Espin and
Santamaría) are the wives of Politbureau members (i.e. Raúl Castro
and Armando Hart respectively). Women are absent from the
Political Bureau and Secretariat of the PCC, and are represented by
only five out of a total of one hundred Central Committee members.
Aside from the first three names just mentioned, these include an
'old' communist from the PSP, Clementina Serra (Director of the Day-
care Centres), and one other, Elena Gil. The number of Government
posts of ministerial rank held by women increased by 100 per cent
with the appointment in 1970 of Hora Frómeta as Minister of Light Industries, the only female cabinet-member previously having been Celia Sánchez. Despite the equal participation of women in the membership of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, the National Coordinator of the organisation has always been a man, though today his Deputy, María Teresa Malmierca, is a woman.

According to Hugh Thomas:

The cult of virility or machismo, may have almost vanished, along with prostitution (and sexual habits have somewhat changed too) but in most Cuban households in the past women in fact reigned supreme. Outside the house men rode about in Oldsmobiles or Buicks with machine guns, became gangsters, spoke of Liberty and Destiny, frequented bars, brothels and casinos, but perhaps that was all only theatre, and in real life women ruled. Now the gap between reality and imagination has closed but possibly real feminine power is less, given that in personal relations Cubans still seem conservative....

Nothing further is said to back up this interesting speculation (it is certainly false that machismo has "almost vanished"). What is evidently the case however is that a good deal remains to be done along the lines necessary to make Cubans, male and female, face up to the deeper, non-economic, facets of women's oppression. Indeed it can scarcely be said that a start has been made upon this task. The propaganda of the FMC, as disseminated for instance through its magazine Mujeres, is directed almost exclusively at the economic pivot and otherwise seldom broaches topics other than those of traditionally feminine interest. Even Fidel Castro's arguments on the subject appeal as much to traditionalist reactions towards the depravity of women in the past as to considerations of natural equality. The tendency of the Cuban leadership towards a narrow 'economism' in approaching problems of socio-cultural change
will be remarked upon again further on in this chapter.

One obstacle to the deepening of the movement towards sexual equality initiated by events in Cuba after 1959 derives from the ambiguous orientation of the regime towards the cultural complex of machismo. It is not merely that, being a popular and democratizing process, the revolution has brought popular values to the fore and persons of humble origin into positions of power and influence. It is also true to say that, in the form of a political value, machismo has served the revolutionary leadership in important ways in consolidating its hold over the sympathies and aspirations of the mass of its followers. John P. Gillin has summarised the qualities associated with the ideal of machismo in Latin America in the following terms:

The macho is expected to show sexual prowess, zest for action, including verbal "action", daring, and, above all, absolute self-confidence. He may express his inner convictions by resorting to physical force, as in the case of bandits and revolutionary military leaders, or he may do so verbally as a leading intellectual, lawyer or politician. Not all machos are caudillos (leaders) but all caudillos must be machos.24

Whilst it would be absurd to explain away the popularity of Fidel Castro and other revolutionary leaders in these terms, it cannot be denied that Castro's combination in his person and style of not a few of the qualities of the traditional macho has proved a considerable political advantage to him. Nor is it possible to comprehend the sizeable personal following acquired by 'Che' Guevara in Cuba if it is imagined that the Heroic Guerrilla and prototype of the "new man" was regarded other than as a superlatively masculine figure.25 The Revolutionary Government has both given expression and lent legitimacy to elements of the machista ethic by
its promotion of sport, its idealisation of the guerrilla fighter, and its stress upon military values in both military and non-military contexts. In the Popular Courts, as we have seen, the revolutionaries have sought to combat the expression of lower-class machismo in street-corner guapería not so much by attacking its root as by redirecting it towards new, revolutionary objects.

Perhaps most important of all, in their efforts to restructure urban-rural relationships, Fidel Castro and his comrades have drawn upon the machismo implicit in the way in which the country-dweller traditionally viewed the city and its inhabitants. Replacing the popular image of the ignorant and faintly comic guajiro (peasant) with that of the strapping and tireless machetero, the Cuban leaders have drawn upon one of the few widely accepted social values capable of counteracting the otherwise irresistible lure of the city and the easy life. The notion that, in addition to being the home of corruption, debauchery and other forms of moral pollution, pre-revolutionary Havana was in some sense the centre of all that was effeminate in the life of the nation has proved an indispensable prop to the thesis that the countryside was exploited economically by the capital.  

Arguably, no society at Cuba's stage of economic development can afford not to draw upon the full range of cultural values at its disposal which foster the effort, abnegation and will of its people. The sentiment expressed by the quotation at the head of this section cannot be dismissed lightly. It may also be that, rather than a specific product of the Iberian cultural heritage, what is distinctive about machismo in Cuba, as in Mexico, is in reality universally present in 'frontier'-situations. In this case, to the extent that the 'opening-up' of Cuba's interior
continues not only to call for the development of male comradeship in rigorous physical conditions but also to involve a growing sense of nationalism in the context of sentiments of inferiority vis-a-vis the more developed society of the United States, the regeneration of machismo may inevitably proceed on a par with the revolution itself for some years yet. The consequences of this fact for social development in other spheres cannot however be expected to be entirely positive.

**Fates Worse than Death**

It is not just the more subtle, and the more intimate, aspects of the oppression of women that are at stake here. In a discussion in 1969 of popular attitudes towards the commission of sexual offences against children, the Cuban Deputy Minister of the Interior had the following to say:

> In all such cases - corruption of minors, rape or minors, criminal attack on minors (in other words, rape of a male minor) - the indignation of the citizenry is aroused to fever pitch. That is why, as a result of the sheer baseness of the crime, since the damage that is done to a minor by corrupting him is practically worse than murdering him - he is in fact dead, even though he is still alive - the people become so indignant that they demand the death sentence in certain cases.

The speaker went on to explain that although the incidence of sexual crimes in Cuba was not "a phenomenon of such magnitude as to impress anyone" serious studies would be undertaken with a view to increasing the maximum penalties permitted by the law in this category. The strength of the language employed here was unquestionably due to the fact that not only simple heterosexual rape but also, more particularly, homosexual assault was under discussion. When the draft of new legislation was published for public debate early in
1973, this pattern of concerns was revealed in the fact that whilst penalties of five to thirty years imprisonment or death were recommended for the rape of (female) minors aged up to twelve, the same punishment was suggested in cases of Pederasty with Violence if a minor under sixteen years of age was involved.  

In the context of popular Cuban conceptions of masculinity, to be the object of sodomy is to be fatally and irremediably tarnished. Indeed, according to a widespread belief, for an adolescent to be "caught from behind", if only once, is to be rendered incapable in the future of 'normal' sexual activities and relationships. 'Once a queer', even if involuntarily, 'always a queer' - or so it is commonly supposed.

In one sense, ironically, there may be some truth in this in the Cuban context. As Martin Loney has correctly observed, the Cuban attitude to homosexuality is that it is a form of human degeneration; but we can be more precise than this. The marked preoccupation with homosexuality exhibited by most adult Cuban males can only be explained by the fact that it is largely by reference to the negative stereotype of the maricon that it is possible to identify the positive ideal of the macho. It is not necessary to make a systematic study of child-rearing on the island in order to confirm that the figure of the 'queer' is introduced to the male child at the earliest possible stage, becoming the devil himself during early adolescence and remaining a fundamental bogey for many throughout adult life. Parents do not conceal from the child, or, equally importantly, from his siblings, their preoccupation lest he "turn out queer". Maternal injunctions to the child to avoid in all circumstances placing his hands on his hips
are followed by advice concerning the extreme indignity and insult to his manhood which will result if he permits himself to be as much as touched on the buttocks by another man, or by a woman. Boys are expected to show toughness, self-confidence and aggressive personalities, and those who fail to acquire these characteristics are quickly 'labelled' as deviants by their peers. The possibility that premature labelling may lead very rapidly to a switch in the subject's self-identification and behaviour in the manner of a self-fulfilling prophecy is clearly an omnipresent one in such a setting.

Homosexuality constitutes a serious social problem in contemporary Cuba, not because it is particularly common (this is conceivable, but naturally nothing is known about rates of homosexual practice on the island) but because of the social attitudes and public policies in which homosexuals are ensnared. The thesis just hinted at that the causes of homosexuality may include the culturally-determined expectation that all individuals will conform to one or other of two polar stereotypes of behaviour was regarded in 1969 as an exceedingly advanced if not positively dangerous idea, even in otherwise enlightened circles. The national press occasionally carried didactic articles which somewhat hesitantly and self-consciously suggested that the problem might be susceptible of psychiatric explanation, the most widely-accepted interpretations favouring biological causes. One result has been that homosexuals have been subject to periodic harassment and intimidation not only at the hands of other citizens - including those organised in the CDRs - but also at those of the Ministry of the Interior. For two years in the mid-sixties, young homosexuals of military age were drafted automatically into special work camps (Unidades Militares para Ayuda a la Producción or UMAP) run by the Army. Even after
The UMAP camps were closed it was not uncommon for known homosexuals in Havana to be convicted on dubious charges or held for a number of months in a prison-farm pending trial. The draft legislation published in 1973 had the effect of formalising a situation which already existed de facto in this respect by laying down two to nine months' detention as the penalty incurred by

- He who practices pederasty, actively or passively, in a habitual and flagrant fashion, or makes public ostentation of that activity, or solicits or molests another with his demands;

- Or:

He who, by displays of immodesty or any other act of public indecency, offends against propriety and good customs.

Beginning in 1963, homosexuals were systematically removed from positions of responsibility in the educational and cultural fields on the grounds that they might exercise an improper influence upon the formation of the nation's youth. By the end of the decade it was impossible for known homosexuals to be appointed as directors of theatrical or dance companies by the Consejo Nacional de Cultura, which centralised responsibility for the entire cultural sector, though, in Cuba as elsewhere, the presence of homosexuals at all other levels of the theatrical world remained very marked. The Declaration of the 1971 National Congress on Education and Culture apparently signalled the initiation of a further stage in the purge, and is worth quoting at some length. At the Congress,

The social pathological character of homosexual deviations was recognised. It was resolved that all manifestations of homosexual deviations are to be firmly rejected and prevented from spreading. It was pointed out, however, that a study, investigation and analysis of this complex
problem should always determine the measures to be adopted.

It was decided that homosexuality should not be considered a central problem or a fundamental one in our society, but that its attention and solution are necessary.35

Because of the "complex" character of the problem, the measures taken to combat it should include a long-term educational effort, and specifically: (a) the extension of co-education in Cuba's schools, (b) the provision of appropriate "scientific", sexual education for parents, teachers and pupils, (c) a campaign to contribute to the acquisition of a scientific knowledge of sex by adolescents, and (d) the promotion of discussions among youth "in those cases where it becomes necessary to delve into the human aspect of sex relations". At the same time, however:

It was resolved that it is not to be tolerated for notorious homosexuals to have influence upon the formation of our youth on the basis of their 'artistic merits'.

Consequently, a study is called for to determine how best to tackle the problems of the presence of homosexuals in the various institutions of our cultural sector.

It was proposed that a study should be made to find a way of applying measures with a view to transferring to other organisations those who, as homosexuals, should not have any direct influence on our youth through artistic and cultural activities.

It was resolved that those whose morals do not correspond to the prestige of our Revolution should be barred from any group of performers representing our country abroad.36

One consequence of the implementation of such a policy in the past has been a steady decline in the otherwise high standards and innovativeness of Cuban theatre and ballet, each of which depended for much of its vigour in the first years after 1959 upon homosexuals.37 Literature has been less directly affected by the purges, but the attitudes which inspire them have been present in
the form of murky undercurrents in each of the well-known literary 'affairs' to date. Another effect of the policy has been the gratuitous creation of a new group of political dissidents whose attitudes towards the ongoing revolution reflect their insecurity and frustration. In 1969 a few homosexuals remained convinced that their plight was the result of a peculiar and temporary perversion of socialism in Cuba, but the number who are prepared to make this act of faith can be expected to dwindle in coming years.

CULTS, CARNIVALS AND 'CONSCIOUSNESS'

Last year during the festivities, there were certain cases which resulted from strange superstitions of a religious nature, certain sects which require blood. If they want to see blood, let them donate it and contribute to the public health campaigns.

- Fidel Castro, June 1971.

The rapidity and thoroughness with which the evolution of the Cuban revolution between January 1959 and the middle of 1961 led from a successful liberal-nationalist rebellion to the definitive destruction of the socio-economic foundations of capitalism on the island requires for its explanation an appreciation of a number of historical and structural peculiarities of the pre-revolutionary order. As several scholars have suggested, the creation in the space of scarcely more than two years of a fully-fledged Communist state resting upon a near-complete étatisation of economy and society begins to assume credibility and intelligibility only in the context of the absence in twentieth century Cuba of a semi-feudal oligarchy of the type found in most South American countries and the extreme dependence of the local capitalist classes vis-à-vis foreign business. The combination of these two factors - each closely connected with the evolution of the sugar industry from the
1880s onwards - created structures of social and political domination which were ill-equipped to withstand the impact of a popular nationalist upheaval. On the one hand, the Cuban revolution had the distinction of being the first socialist revolution to have occurred in a country where the wage-earning proletariat was not only politically experienced and influenced by a large Communist party but also by a substantial margin, the most numerous class in the population. On the other hand, neither social-democratic nor liberal parliamentary parties were able to establish themselves as the primary mode of political expression of the Cuban masses, political violence and the formation of loyalties on a personalist or generational basis were normal features of national life, and, finally, the armed forces remained by Latin American standards weakly professionalised and lacking in organic links with the middle classes.

No list of this nature would be complete, however, without reference to the peculiar feebleness of the institutional framework of the Roman Catholic Church. Following the Spanish-Cuban-American War of 1895-98, the Church lost much of the influence which it had enjoyed during the colonial period and its disestablishment preceded (in 1900) even the formal inauguration of the Republic. Although about eighty per cent of the people were nominally Catholics, approximately one-tenth of them practiced their religion and the real base of the Church consisted of "a small, loyal band of largely urban and upper-income faithful". A survey conducted in 1954 by the Agrupación Católica Universitaria indicated that only sixteen per cent of marriages were formalised in a church. Although ninety-one per cent of Cuban children were reportedly baptised, a mere fifty per cent received first communion. Of those interviewed,
72.5 per cent described themselves as Catholics but, of these, only 24.0 per cent claimed regular attendance at Sunday mass. The situation was relatively worse in rural areas, where fifty-two per cent declared themselves to be Catholics and fully forty-one per cent stated that they were "indifferent" as to religious affiliation. Even among the former group, twenty-seven per cent admitted they had never seen a priest. In 1955, in fact, there were only 693 priests in Cuba, including both parish priests and members of religious orders, or one for every 8,800 inhabitants.

Because of the Church's lack of a mass base, Christian Democracy was absent as a political force in Cuba and lay organisations such as Catholic Action did not develop significant proportions. In turn, religion was scarcely an issue at all during the first years after 1959 and the Church played only a small role as the focus of generalised opposition to the leftward drift of the revolutionary regime. Following a period of relatively cordial relations between the Revolutionary Government and the Church during 1959, about 140 priests were expelled from the country for political reasons in 1960-61, religious processions were banned and Catholic schools and universities were nationalised along with the rest of private education. These events, however, reflected the ability of the regime to deal with the Church more or less as it wished, rather than the existence of a successfully concerted Catholic opposition. The emigration during the period of as many as 400 priests, many of them foreigners by birth, has also usually been interpreted as confirming the shallowness of the social roots of the Church outside the upper classes.

Beginning in 1962, confrontation and conflict, albeit muted,
between the Church and the revolutionary authorities gave way with extraordinary rapidity to a phase of cool but uneventful coexistence based upon a tacit understanding between Fidel Castro and the Vatican. This tendency became more marked after 1965, and since 1968 there have been indications of a desire on the part of the Church in Cuba to establish a closer and more positive understanding with the government on the basis of a common commitment to egalitarianism, cooperation and economic development. The experience of the Protestant sects has been more mixed. None played an important role in the opposition to the early radicalisation of the Revolution and the Evangelical churches have shown themselves even more adaptable and receptive to their changing environment than the Catholic hierarchy. On the other hand a number of fundamentalist sects have come into sharp conflict with the government over specific revolutionary measures and laws. The Jehovah's Witnesses, active in Cuba since 1937, have been accused of encouraging their followers to refuse to comply with the law on military service or to salute the national flag. In addition, they have objected to doing voluntary labour on Saturdays and have engaged in "ideological diversionism" and militant anti-communist preaching. Two other groups, the Evangelical Gideon's Band and the Seventh Day Adventists, have adopted similar attitudes and are consequently regarded as "obscuratist and counter-revolutionary sects" which must be "unmasked and fought" by Cuban revolutionaries. However, since even in the 'fifties only about six per cent of Cubans belonged to Protestant churches of all denominations, the Declaration of the First National Congress on Education and Culture is probably correct in minimising the problem constituted by the activities of members of these religions.
Pre-revolutionary Cuba was a society in which church-religion played a smaller role than in almost any other Hispanic country and this fact has affected the course of the Revolution in innumerable ways. It would be wrong to conclude from this however that the society was characterised to the same extent by secular, rationalist attitudes. The reality of the matter is that, as in other Spanish-speaking Caribbean countries, the gap between Cubans' self-identification as Catholics and the extent of their Catholic religious practice conceals the importance of a number of syncretistic cult-religions which combine in varying proportions Christian, spiritualist and African beliefs and function effectively, if not in theory, in competition with the Church. It is with these cults, the product of a complex mestizaje of European and African influences of diverse origins, that we shall be primarily concerned in this section. A brief historical sketch will be necessary in order to locate recent developments in their proper context.

Africa in Cuba: The Background

Modern specialists on the 'transculturation' of African beliefs and religious practices in the New World give general assent, whatever their differences of accent and interpretation, to the proposition that more was retained of African culture in the course of this process than was once supposed. There is also a certain consensus to the effect that, in spite of remaining during slavery and particularly after it one of the 'whitest' societies in Plantation America, Cuba is one of the two or three most striking examples of continuing African cultural influence in the region. According to the census of 1953, the Cuban population consisted 72.8 per cent of 'whites', 12.4 per cent of 'blacks' and 14.5 per
cent of mestizos. Writing in the early 'fifties, however, a prominent student of Afro-Cuban culture insisted as follows:

The weight of the African influence in the very population which is taken for white is, even though this might not be apparent at first sight, incalculable. In reality this influence is more evident today than in the colonial period. One cannot pursue the investigation of life in Cuba very far without coming across an African presence which does not stop at the colour of men's skins.

In modern times, African retentions have been claimed to be perceptible in Cuban popular mannerisms, hair styles, methods of cultivation and cuisine, but more substantial, and subject to more reliable methods of confirmation, are those influences affecting respectively religion, music and language.

A number of considerations help to explain the continued relative importance of African cultural elements in twentieth century Cuban society. Firstly and most obviously, the relatively late expansion and rise to prosperity of the plantation-based sugar industry in Cuba - the apogee of slave-imports to Cuba came a full half-century after the Haitian Revolution - was such that, as in Brazil, substantial numbers of slaves were arriving on the island direct from Africa as late as the eighteen-sixties. Between 1861 and 1864 alone, an estimated 49,532 slaves arrived (illegally) in Cuba, the total slave population at this time being of the order of 370,000. Slavery itself, moreover, was not formally abolished in Cuba until 1880. Consequently, in the nineteen-sixties, there were still citizens of Cuba who were born into slavery, and a few whose parents had been brought in chains from some part of West Africa. Secondly, due to a varying combination of manumission and natural growth, the free coloured population of
Cuba remained substantial even at the height of the era of plantation slavery in the nineteenth century, representing a proportion of the total coloured population between 1774 and 1877 of never less than twenty-five per cent. Although the free coloured community was subject to repression and racial exclusion of both an official and an unofficial nature, the precise extent of which varied from time to time during the period and remains to some extent a subject of contention among historians, free coloureds nonetheless gained entry to a wide range of urban crafts and professions, coming close to monopolising certain skilled trades. Finally, a number of distinctive features of Spanish colonial policy helped to assure a degree of religious and cultural autonomy not only to the economically independent free coloureds but also to the slaves themselves. One such feature was the practice, inspired in the belief that the incidence of slave-suicides was thereby reduced, of locating newly-imported slaves or bozales in accordance with their supposed ethnic origin. Another was the official recognition of cabildos or 'councils' representing slaves and free coloureds of a given nation or land.

The so-called cabildos de nación were unquestionably the major vehicle of African cultural continuity in nineteenth century Cuba. Comparable with the cabildos or cofradías established by Africans under Spanish law at various dates in Seville itself, in Buenos Aires, Cartagena and Peru, they functioned not only as associations providing mutual-aid and recreation but also as the means by which blacks in Cuba re-created elements of African political organisation, including in some cases the institution of 'kingship'. Nominally membership of the cabildos was restricted to Africans by birth but Cuban-born, or criollo, blacks frequently participated illegally.
In the nineteenth century, successive Spanish Captains-General with a careful eye to the diversion of potential slave-revolts into less harmful channels both permitted slaves to play drums and hold festivities in African style on Sundays and the feast-days of the Catholic calendar and established the custom of receiving official delegations of the cabildos on specified dates. Epiphany (El Día de los Reyes) was particularly noted in this connection, the attendance of the accredited 'kings' or leaders of the cabildos de nación at the palace of the Captain-General being accompanied by elaborate processional festivities or comparsas. Although the cabildos were admitted for the last time to Captain-General's palace in 1862, the traditional salidas continued intermittently until 1884 when, in the troubled times between Cuba's first and second Independence Wars, they were banned by the colonial authorities. Under the double impact of government repression and the abolition of slavery the cabildos went into decline after the 1880s,63 though several remained on the official register of property-owners well into the twentieth century, as indicated by a law suit in Santiago de Cuba in 1929.64 After losing their connection with the old cabildos, the comparsas re-emerged in the twentieth century as the basis and inspiration of the carnivals of Santiago and Havana, with their rumbas, congás and other characteristic processional dances.65

Three strands of African culture have been particularly influential in Cuban history, the religious traditions known respectively as Regla Ocha and Regla Conga, and a secular tradition associated with the Abakuá or ñáñigó all-male secret society. The first is attributed to the Yoruba - or lucumí, as they have been known in Cuba since the days of slavery - and is most commonly
referred to simply as santería (saint-cult). The cults of Regla Conga, or palo (the stick), derive partly from the religious culture of Bantu-speaking peoples of what is today the Congo and northern Angola. The Abakuá fraternities, finally, are unique to Cuba, having no direct equivalent on either side of the Atlantic, though they appear to be modelled on the secret societies of the Cross River ports of modern eastern Nigeria and draw heavily upon Efik mythology.

As was universally the case where African religious beliefs came into contact with Catholicism in a New World setting, the tendency towards syncretism was marked at an early stage in the development of the Yoruba and 'Congo' traditions in Cuba. In the case of santería, the origins of syncretism in the efforts of African slaves to conceal their 'pagan' religious practices behind a Christian facade are clearly perceptible in its form. The initiation rituals, divination techniques, chants and myths bear no comparison with those of Christianity, but the calendar employed is that of the Church and devotees of santería have traditionally been required to be baptised before initiation into the cult. However syncretism took place not only between African and Christian elements but also characterised the relationships between the religion of the Yoruba, that the 'Congos' and other minor influences in Cuba, such as vodun (or 'voodoo') of Dahomeyan and Haitian origin. As in other parts of the Americas, it was the Yoruba tradition which emerged most forcefully from this process, with its distinctive content least impaired and most clearly recognisable.

A number of factors may account for the cultural dominance of the Yoruba in Cuba, a phenomenon also particularly marked in the North-East of Brazil. Firstly, it is probable that a relatively
A large number of slaves imported to Cuba during the first half of the nineteenth century originated in the region of influence of the Yoruba empire of Oyo. But this is insufficient by itself, since it is known that the ethnic origin of the Cuban slave population was extremely varied, including notable contributions from at least 95 different African peoples occupying most parts of the coastline from Senegal to Angola. Equally important, perhaps, was the peculiar affinity shown between the Yoruba cult of the orishas on the one hand and New World Catholicism on the other. The religion of the lucumis, with its "developed mythology, formed by natural forces interpreted anthropomorphically, with deified heroes, with organised hierarchies of deities and even local gods", lent itself to a process of reciprocal borrowing with the Catholicism of the Spaniards which left its fundamental structure and character intact. The nature of popular Catholicism in the form in which it was introduced to Cuba needs to be borne in mind:

Alongside the official Catholic dogma represented by the priests, there arrived with the rest of the personnel from the Peninsula certain kinds of popular Catholicism which were much given to the adoration of images and especially to the various devotions of the Virgin Mary, whose cult bordered on idolatry. Together with numerous medieval superstitions and legends, this excessive adoration of images constituted a practical Catholicism which was far removed from the official dispositions of the Church.

The structural similarity between the Yoruba pantheon and the Trinity and saints of this practical Christianity was such that parallelisms and equivalents were not hard to find. The need for devotees of the African religion to conceal their practices behind outwardly Christian forms - a need which persisted throughout the period of slavery in spite of the neglect to which the religious education of
plantation slaves was subject after the sugar boom got under way — supplied the necessary motive. Thus the humanised deities or orishas of Yoruba belief, Shango, Oshun, Yemanja and Babalú-Ayé — to name only the most popular in Cuba — were directly identified with St. Barbara, Our Lady of Charity, the Virgin of the Rule and St. Lazarus. The somewhat distant God of the Catholics was assimilated with ease to the Yoruba sky-god Olofin, Olodumare or Olorun (depending on the usage) who, having created the world, delegated his powers to direct the forces of nature and intervene in the affairs of men to the orishas. In turn, the 'sons' of Olofin — Obatalá (or Orishala) and Oduduwa (or Odua) — became identified with the other members of the Holy Trinity. In each case the identification of orishas with saints was accompanied by a complex, and not always consistent, interweaving of the corresponding mythologies and ritual associations.

Throughout the process of syncretism which produced modern santería, the Yoruba element remained dominant. By comparison, the 'Congolese' religious heritage underwent a far more rigorous transformation in its Cuban setting as a result of syncretism with both the Yoruba religion and Catholicism. Once again the phenomenon appears to have been a general one, not restricted to Cuba. As Bastide has observed, although the Bantus undoubtedly constituted in certain places and at certain times the dominant element in New World slave populations, few traces of their religion, as distinct from their folklore, have survived. Three possible explanations have been suggested. First, whereas ethnic groups such as the Fon, Yoruba and Mina were often chosen as 'house slaves' and thus became relatively numerous in the towns — where cabildos and similar institutions fostering the continuity of 'national' identities
were able to be organised - the Bantus were primarily valued as 'field-hands', tending therefore to remain on rural plantations. Second, this group showed itself most susceptible to conversion to Christianity. Third, the Bantu religions were not only less systematised than those of West Africa but were also based on a form of ancestor-worship which could not survive the disruption of lineage-groups inevitably caused by slavery. Once this framework had been destroyed, all that was left was animism, without the support of the kind of systematised mythology found among the Yoruba or the Fon. This would appear to account for the primitive character of the palo religion as practiced in Cuba, as well as its marked, and in general unreciprocated, borrowings from the Yoruba-Christian pantheon of santería. The paleros were known and feared in Cuba (as, to some extent, they still are) primarily for the power of their magic. The ex-slave Esteban Montejo recalls that the influence of the congó sorcerers or brujos (literally, 'witches') in the baracoons was such that even the overseers had recourse to them. "The difference between the congó and the lucumí", it was said, "is that, whilst the lucumí tells fortunes, the congó gets results".

The third major influence of African origin which calls for discussion here is, as already indicated, a secular one and the bearer of the unique distinction of having remained substantially free from Catholic contamination. The first Abakuá secret society was founded in 1830 by criollo, or Cuban-born, blacks who were excluded from membership of the cabildos de nación. Although an Afro-Cuban invention rather than an African 'survival', the society bore more than a superficial resemblance to the Ekpe (or Egbo) trading fraternity established by the Efik at Old Calabar during
the era of the slave trade, and indeed the original adepts identified themselves as *carabalik*; a probable corruption of the name of their port of embarkation, as well as *off* (Efik) and *bibio* (Ibibio). If Ekpe was "something between a wizard's gathering, a municipal executive, and an early African version of a businessman's club," the *Abakuá* or *ñānigo* society served the free blacks and Mulattoes of nineteenth century Cuba as a source of mutual aid in the difficult business of penetrating racist and other barriers to their entry into the skilled trades and professions. Partly no doubt for the purpose of protecting itself, the brotherhood was characterised by elaborate initiation rites, absolute secrecy and a rigorous code of honour based on the principle of solidarity between initiates. In the mid-nineteenth century, when members of the Society, disguising themselves in their peculiar form of hooded garb, participated otherwise openly in the *salidas* of the *cabildos* on Epiphany, the *ñānigos* were much feared in polite society, and even among the black masses themselves. Of their initiation rites it was said - wrongly, it is now thought - that they involved brutal trials of physical endurance, and it was also believed that they were ritual murderers. The truth was somewhat less dramatic. Applicants for membership of the Society, or *indícimes*, were expected to submit to an exhaustive investigation of their life-histories with a view to establishing beyond doubt their qualities of reliability and manliness (*hombrie*); upon acceptance, candidates were expected to render a substantial monetary payment to the collective coffers. The initiation rite itself was directed in the first place towards insuring the acceptance by the candidate of the principles and rules of the Society and, secondly, towards the renewal of the ritual purity of the sacred drum *Ekue* which formed the centrepiece...
of Abakuá belief. According to a myth attributed to the Efik and their neighbours, the drum Ekue contained a divine "secret" to which only its possessors could be privy. The Baroko ritual, the only quasi-religious element in the life of the Society, involved the sacrifice of animals, but to the extent that nanigos frequently committed homicide this is probably to be explained as the product of rivalries between the various branches or potencias of the brotherhood and of the developed sense of loyalty fostered by it.

In order to bring this survey of Afro-Cuban religions to the point where it is possible to assess recent changes, we need to have the answers to the following questions. To what extent did African cults survive, with or without syncretism, into the twentieth century and up to the time of the Revolution? How is the persistence of elements of African religious traditions in Cuba to be explained? And, what was the nature of the relationship between the cults and the wider society in the period before 1959?

Lydia Cabrera's opinion to the effect that the African influence in the popular culture of Cuba was more considerable in the nineteen-fifties than in colonial times has already been cited. What is certainly the case is that virtually the entirety of recorded knowledge on the beliefs and practices of santería, Palo and Abakuá derives from studies published in this century, beginning with Ortiz's Los Negros Brujos in 1906. The majority of these works, based for the most part upon the testimony of knowledgeable informants, belong to the period since the nineteen-thirties. After a three month field-trip to Cuba in 1948, the Africanist and specialist on Yoruba divination, William R. Bascom, reported:

Santería is a vital, growing institution, practiced throughout the entire length of
the island, in both rural and urban areas; in the latter in fact, it is probably the strongest. In recent years it seems to have been expanding, recruiting additional members from the Negro, the mixed, and even the white population. Bascom attested that, at this time, it was possible to find Cuban Negroes in towns and cities from one end of the island to the other who were capable of sustaining a conversation in Yoruba, and whose speech was able to be identified by Nigerians as belonging to a local dialect still spoken in their country. Although the 'focus' or emphasis of Cuban santería differed from that of the Yoruba religion practiced in modern Nigeria, striking similarities of belief and practice were found. Notably, a comparison of the formulae employed in divination respectively by the Cuban babalawos and by their counterparts in Ife, Nigeria, yielded identical results. Bascom and his wife recorded mention of over forty "African saints" (out of the 400 or so orishas recognised in Yorubaland) in a single interview with one informant.

The generalisation, corresponding to the discovery which surprised Herskovits in Trinidad, that santería has been strongest in recent decades in large urban centres such as Havana, Santiago and Matanzas is supported by Cuban ethnographers. Writing at about the same time as Bascom, Fernando Ortiz also noted that African survivals were found with greater 'ethnographic authenticity' in the outlying neighbourhoods of the cities than in the rural areas. Nor is evidence for notable African retentions continuing into the second half of the twentieth century restricted to the case of the Yoruba tradition. In addition to Yoruba-speakers, informants have been found in recent times who are capable of conversing in the Efik dialect of Ibibio and in the language of the Fon of Dahomey. Elements
of a recognisable Bantu language from the region of the old kingdom of Kongo have also been recorded. However, it is unquestionably the culture of the Yoruba which has proved most persistent. In the late 'sixties, we are told by the Director of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore of the Cuban Academy of Sciences, there were still elderly informants who claimed that their ancestors came from the Yoruba cities of Ife, Egbado, Ilesa or Oyo. The present author was able to be introduced to a santería group and witness part of a presentación (initiation ritual) without undue difficulty in 1969.

The transformation undergone by the belief and practice of santería and palo during the twentieth century appears to have been slight, in spite of the incorporation into the ranks of the believers during this period of large numbers of whites, not all of them of lower-class origin. A partial exception here is the influence of spiritualism, of which a number of variants are present in Cuba. Kardecist spiritualism of the type known in Europe and North America and referred to locally as espiritismo de mesa began to take root in Cuba from the eighteen-fifties, spreading rapidly during the final decades of the last century, due in part to the catastrophic decline of the influence of the Church in this period. In the twentieth century it continued to be important, without seriously challenging the Afro-Cuban cults or gaining the proportions of the movement in, say, Puerto Rico. A second variety of spiritualism of uncertain origin characterised by the combination of Kardecist elements with Catholic symbols and chants and known by its adepts as espiritismo de cordón has been found to be common in parts of Oriente province where the African cults were traditionally weak. Both variants were originally founded upon a strong rejection of African belief,
but a tendency for espiritismo de cordón to become cruzao or "crossed" with African cults, particularly palo, has been noted in recent decades, permitting a degree of mutual influence between the two currents. In 1954 a total of 1.0% of a sample of Cubans reported that they were spiritualists of one denomination or another. 100

The patterns of cult-religion reported in Cuba in recent decades are the product of a continuous and widely-reported presence lasting from slavery to the present day. For obvious reasons, on the other hand, little is known about lengthy periods in the history of the náñigo fraternity, and on more than one occasion literate white society believed that it had ceased to exist until it was "rediscovered" by a persistent investigator. Nevertheless the following elements may be pieced together. Although, like the Ekpe association of Old Calabar, the Abakuá society of nineteenth-century Cuba was based universalistic principles rather than narrow 'tribal' or 'national' loyalties, it was some time before whites could be accepted as members. It was the náñigos who were responsible for the entry into Cuban popular usage of the word makri, a term applied to whites whose insulting connotations are approximately those of the English word 'nigger'. The participation of whites as equal members of the fraternity was first sponsored by one Andres Petit, a Mulatto of Haitian parentage variously described as a Christian 'holy man' and a palo priest as well as a náñigo leader. The considerable opposition encountered by Petit was overcome in some measure by requiring that white indígenes who owned slaves ameliorate their treatment of them and make substantial payments, which were then used to buy the slaves' freedom. Nonetheless, as might be expected, several serious incidents of interracial conflict among Abakuá
members were caused by the first experiences of entry by whites. 101

In a remarkable study of the Abakúá society among the dock workers of the port of Havana, 102 Rafael López Valdés has shown how in the early decades of the present century hámigo groups (juegos or potencias) played a central role in the organisation of the then largely unskilled and casual labour in this sector. Abakúá potencias became established in dockland around the turn of the century, and perhaps even earlier, growing in importance as the occupants of positions of authority or plazas in the hierarchy of the brotherhood succeeded in becoming foremen or recognised sub-contractors of labour. By the 'twenties, the Society had achieved a monopoly of the distribution of jobs in the port to the extent that it was reported that in the "territory" of a given potencia, often a whole neighbourhood, jobs were only available to its members. The role of Abakúá leaders as purveyors of patronage periodically produced violent encounters between hámigos and other, more often than not white, sub-contractors and their followers in this phase. However it was only as a result of the steady growth of trade union and political organisations during the 'thirties - a process which in turn provoked the introduction en masse by employers of white strike-breakers from rural areas - that the influence of the Society began to be undermined. It was not destroyed definitively until the abolition of sub-contracting in 1942. After that - at least until the trade union repression of the late 'forties - individual hámigos became trade union leaders, but now their roles as patron and as okobio (brother) were of necessity more clearly dissociated.

Despite this setback to its prestige and power, the Abakúá society remained strong in the 'fifties including among its members,
according to Cabrera, not only lower-class Negroes, Mutilatooes and whites but also office-workers, teachers, soldiers, politicians, tradesmen and professionals of all types. There were even nánigos who were members of aristocratic families, and, at election time, the Society was capable of controlling a not inconsiderable number of votes. Several Abakú words had passed into the vernacular and were commonly employed even by upper-class Cubans who were unaware of their lowly pedigree.

The survival into recent decades of an organisation capable of providing for its members such tangible rewards as does the Abakú secret society requires no special explanation. The case of the cult-religions is slightly more tantalising from the point of view of historical interpretation. Nevertheless, students of the wider spectrum of Afro-American religious faiths have not been altogether reticent in suggesting global socio-psychological explanations, some of which have obvious relevance in the Cuban setting. Bastide, summarising the conclusions of various Brazilian studies, writes:

If these sects survive - and even expand - it is because they answer some real need.... The vast majority of the Negro population forms a community apart, the lowest strata of society, and for want of education (and hence professional qualifications) cannot rise in the class hierarchy. Such people find much that they need in these sects: in the first place, an atmosphere of security, a protection against life's hazards, and also a chance to better themselves, in so far as they can mount from rank to rank in the priestly hierarchy. Finally they enjoy a prestige status which they could never hope to attain in society at large.

Lydia Cabrera expands upon this point in characteristically baroque style in connection with the Abakú brotherhood, about which she says:

If it has been able to survive both the condemnation and persecution to which it was subject under Spanish
rule in the later years of the last century and the blows it received, if intermittently, at the beginning of this century - its proselytes tending on the contrary to increase in number, on a par with the increase in the number of students attending the University of Havana - the explanation of this curious phenomenon is not only to be sought in the racial background and culture of our people. It is necessary to keep clearly in mind the universal and timeless attraction which the mysterious holds for the general run of men: the innate ambition to rise in the world, to belong to a superior station inaccessible to the rest, and the satisfaction - within the confines of the mysterious world of the sect, in which the impenetrable secret is shared and guarded with others of the elect - of this need for superiority - for power - which is rooted in the deepest and most ancient reaches of the human soul; not forgetting the pleasure of frightening other people, of imposing one's will by means of fear. A Mokongo may be a poor devil; he may be destitute; but in his Potencia he is the Chief, and an immortal chief at that. 

Another outstanding student of the Afro-Caribbean religions makes, with Bastide, the sociological observation which tends to be obscured by Cabrera:

Afro-American religions share with most other religions an impressive array of psychological functions, but black religions in the New World have some special consequences for devotees because of the historical conditions out of which they have arisen and the social structures within which they have their existence. Participation in the cults has afforded emotional release from the economic, political and social humiliations and hardships which have been the lot of lower-class Afro-Americans.

If this is the case we may proceed without pausing to catalogue the full range of benefits possibly conferred by the cults on their members, to identify the major characteristics of prerevolutionary Cuban attitudes in this area.

From what has been said already, it will be clear that to the extent that Cuba possesses a national religious heritage it is only
in a highly problematic sense that this may be described as Catholic. Although, as we have seen, it was reported by a Catholic organisation in the mid-fifties that as many as 72.5% of Cuban adults regarded themselves as Catholics and that a full 91% of Cuban children were baptised, the significance of this finding is far from clear. Even if we make the assumption that it is reliable, it obviously needs to be placed in the context of a number of further observations. Firstly, practitioners of cult-religions in Cuba have traditionally insisted upon their membership of the Church and indeed have usually gone so far as to regard baptism as an indispensable preparation for initiation into one or other of the cults. Conversely, however, popular attitudes towards the orthodox practice of Church-Catholicism — including such central elements as regular attendance at Mass, Confession, and the sanctification of marriages by a priest — have tended towards the view that such matters are “for the rich”, or alternatively “for the whites”. Whilst recognising in Church-religion a superior or elaborated form of their own belief, the opinion of devotees has been that, on a practical level, an acceptable and appropriate expression of Christianity among los humildes is that which is embodied in santería, Regla Conga and the like. Moreover, despite appearances, the actual influence of Christianity in cult practices has been slight. As Bascom observed in regard to santería,

All informants, without exception, stated unequivocally that they were Catholics, yet they stressed the importance of those very elements of their faith and ritual which set it apart from that of the Catholic church.... While Catholicism is outwardly embraced, it is inwardly rejected. 109

The reality of the matter is that the Cuban religious heritage consists of two major elements, the Catholicism of the Church and
and the 'Catholicism' of the cults, the latter being by far the most important as far as the mass of the population is concerned.

If this is the case, it is the more remarkable that it is only in relatively recent times that the Afro-Cuban religions have come to be regarded by polite society as other than an unhappy aberration, the product of the primitive psychology of the lower orders or a shameful manifestation of the nation's social backwardness. As late as 1954, Lydia Cabrera complained that it was impossible to voice the opinion, let alone publish it, that Cuba was the inheritor of two cultural legacies, the one African, the other Spanish. Bascom returned to the United States at about the same time with the impression that "white Cubans of Spanish origin with few exceptions deny the existence of African survivals in Cuba". Nor were intellectual circles entirely free from these influences. Afro-Cuban studies emerged in the early decades of the present century as a branch of criminology and, to a lesser extent, of abnormal psychology, as is vividly illustrated in the titles of the works published in this period. Although Fernando Ortiz, the 'founding father' of Afro-Cuban studies, is correctly credited with the early introduction to Cuba of a Malinowskian concern for the collection of data from informants at first-hand, the most influential studies of the Master bear the intellectual stamp of an older tradition of anthropology - a positivist evolutionism not lacking in implicitly racist assumptions. The transition to the perspective that the African element in Cuban culture warranted investigation in its own right and on the basis of its intrinsic merits did not begin until the formation of the Sociedad del Folklore Cubano under Ortiz's auspices in 1923, and was not marked until this
was replaced by the Sociedad de Estudios Afrocubanos in 1937. It was in a study which appeared in Cuba in 1940 that Ortiz consciously opened a polemic against the ethnocentric bias in the concept of 'acculturation' as applied to the Afro-American heritage, but as late as 1939 he was himself obliquely accused of perpetuating such a bias by virtue of his continued use of the terms brujo (literally, witch) and brujería (witchcraft) in connection with the Afro-Cuban priesthoods. This latter weakness, indeed, continued to manifest itself in Ortiz's later, mainly musicological, writings which appeared in the early 'fifties.

The processional festivities or comparsas of the Havana carnival occurred intermittently during the Republican period. Though constituting a major annual event in the calendar of the Afro-Cuban cults of all denominations, the carnival was subject to the ups and downs of changing political scene and until 1937 the issue of whether or not to permit it to take place was decided annually in accordance with the complexion of the political interests in the government. In 1937, following a lengthy interruption, a body of public opinion succeeded in having the legal status of the comparsas permanently restored. After a break during the Second World War they reappeared in 1946 at the centre of a new storm of controversy, only to be banned once again together with other street demonstrations following Batista's coup d'état of March 1952.

Africa in Cuba: The Revolution

In a number of important respects the revolution of January 1959 provided a long-awaited boost to the morale and self-respect of all those Cubans connected in one fashion or another with the world of the cults. Like almost everybody else, practitioners of santería
welcomed the guerrillas from the Sierra, and it is more than possible, in view of the religious significance of *el monte* in the *lucumi* tradition (that is, as the home of the gods), that the descent of Fidel Castro and his men from the mountains to the plains had an additional dramatic dimension for many devotees. It is almost certainly false that *santería* rituals were performed in the encampments of the rebel army in the mountains, but probably a relatively high proportion of its members, including some officers, held some form of Afro-Cuban belief. The ban upon the cults' 'fiestas', or religious ceremonies, which had been introduced during the Batista dictatorship was lifted immediately and the carnivals of Havana and Santiago recommenced.

The most important innovations which took place after 1959 however were those which affected the recognition publicly given to Afro-Cuban religions as an element of the national cultural heritage. The creation at the end of 1959 of a Cuban National Theatre equipped with a well-staffed Department of Folklore was the first such step. The assumptions and aims of the Department, which in addition to preparing Afro-Cuban themes for theatrical presentation ran a highly successful series of seminars and meetings of *aficionados* during October 1960 - May 1961, are best described in the words used by its Director at the time:

One of the most characteristic cultural expressions of our people - its music and its dance - was also one of the most exploited and corrupted under the system which, thanks to the Revolution, we have recently left behind. The prejudiced use of our folklore, and the distortion and falsification to which our values have been subject, almost convinced us that the tourist routines which were in vogue were our highest and most genuine form of artistic expression. It was imagined that what the people wanted to see was dancers rendering the rumba with ostrich-feathers in their hair, or foreign models pretending to be possessed. But
between these false expressions and the woman of the people or the santera who truly performs her ritual, there was all the distance which separated a latifundist or a nouveau-riche politico from a worker, a peasant or a student....

What is now being proposed is that we take the expressions of our people and, without impairing them, present them anew. It is true of course that much of Cuban folklore consists of elements of distant African origin which even today remain intimately connected with an intricate structure of beliefs. In these cases, we shall stand back from the private and personal side of the religion and try to present the pure values of its music, its dance and its poetry.120

On an intellectual plane, these efforts were founded upon the belief that:

In America, the African and his culture are not elements which have been grafted, incorporated or superimposed but parallel and equal contributions to the forging of the new nationalities produced by the era of capitalist expansion.121

The energetic pursuit of new perspectives on Cuba's African heritage and the imaginative popularisation of the studies of Ortiz and others, both of which were characteristic traits of the initial stages of the movement, can only be understood in the context of the general artistic and intellectual revival which occurred in Cuba in the first years after 1959. Similarly, the reorganisation of the folklore 'industry' at the end of 1961 belongs to the period, beginning in the summer of 1961, in which greater institutional constraints were placed in turn upon each of the main cultural sectors. The legal document which at the end of 1961 formally created a National Institute of Ethnology and Folklore under the auspices of the new Consejo Nacional de Cultura (CNC) was conspicuously solemn regarding the role of this institution:

Whereas: The social and economic changes wrought by the Revolution will in their turn produce fundamental changes in the customs of our people, which will be reflected in the cultural situation
in Cuba; whereas: Cuba is now in a position to overcome all those obstacles which have in the past prevented the development of a culture which is solidly based in our people and therefore integrated and consubstantial with our nationality; whereas: Therefore, it is necessary to allocate responsibility for a task of such importance to the strengthening of the Revolution and to the creation of a towering national consciousness.

Whereas: The concerns of ethnology and folklore consist in the scientific tasks of investigating, recording and providing information regarding the structure of the basic cultural expressions of a people, with a view to making these function in the total integration of the nation in question....

And so on...... The Institute became part of a new Soviet-styled Academy of Sciences in 1962 and at the same time the theatrical functions of the Folklore Department of the National Theatre were transferred to a Conjunto Folklórico Nacional under the control of the CNC. The result was the creation of a group of investigators who, though talented, were at once more soberly scientific, less youthful and, partly because they were less personally involved in the life of the cults, less given to one-sided glorification of the Afro-Cuban ambiance. Additionally, as its Director later observed, a fundamental concern of the Institute from the beginning were the processes of contemporary change involved in the task of socialist construction; a dilution of the movement which brought the more obscure traditions of the Cuban people to the centre of the stage was thus inevitably involved.

How far did developments such as those mentioned meet with the collective approval of practising santeros, paleros and músicos? Part of the answer to this and related questions is that, with the exception of the Abakuá society, the Afro-Cuban currents are not organised in such a way as to permit their adoption of a collective or 'official' point of view. To the extent that there is the
equivalent of an ecclesiastical hierarchy within santería, this is comprised by the babalawos, of which there were about 200 concentrated in Havana at the time of Bascom's study. As specialists in divination, however, the babalawos possess a high status and considerable influence in their own sphere but lack entirely the kind of generalised authority claimed by the leaders of a church. The same is true mutatis mutandis of intermediate grades of santeros and santeras known respectively as Babalocha and Iyalocha. The meetings held annually by the babalawos, finally, are conceivably capable of becoming vehicles for political statements, their purpose being to arrive at prophetic pronouncements about events of the coming year. However, by tradition, babalawos have restricted themselves to a vague and generalised formulations which, aside from being irrefutable, are not well adapted to the expression of political views. The Abakúa fraternity, for its part, though in principle capable of mobilising its forces on a political basis, has apparently rigorously abstained from political involvement since 1959.

In the absence of formal statements, the 'official' views of intellectuals who remain close to the cults in the neighbourhoods where they were born represent an important index in their own right. In 1969 some people in this category regarded the elevation of the culture of the Afro-Cuban religions to the level of 'folklore' and a component of the national consciousness as an ambiguous compliment, equivalent to the spiritual castration of santería and the other cults. A good many more viewed unfavourably the passage of the early grupos de aficionados and the institutional separation of the study of Afro-Cubanisms from their artistic expression in theatre and dance. Others still suggested that, whatever the merits and
deficiencies of the Conjunto Folklórico, it had been a roaring success with the rank-and-file of cult devotees, many of whom returned to witness the same performances on several occasions.

Whatever the truth in this regard, the point at issue obviously concerns a single aspect of the impact of the Revolution on the cults, and one which from the point of view of the daily religious life of the faithful is probably of minor significance. It is to the no less important question of the formation and development of the policies of the revolutionary regime towards the more mundane ramifications of the Afro-Cuban revival that we must now turn our attention.

At a first approximation, relations between the cults and the revolutionary authorities are capable of a relatively simple characterisation. At least since its espousal of Marxism-Leninism, the Revolutionary Government has proclaimed and, by and large, has observed a strict freedom of worship applying to the cults in the same measure as to other religions. At the same time both the Government and the Party have reserved the right to combat all religion on an ideological plane, the Party in particular being expected to perform the role of an advance-guard of militant atheism. No holder of religious beliefs, including those of the cults, may be permitted to become a Party member. The educational system has an explicitly anti-religious orientation and, as far as cult-religion is concerned, its aim is to convey the idea that these currents represent un atraso - a backward survival - which is demonstrably falsified by modern physics, chemistry and biology. The author of an article on santería published in the journal for rank-and-file Party members, El Militante Comunista, in 1968 took
the view that the survival of this cult was due to:

... the abominable teaching which was provided before the Revolution and, in the case of believers who belong to the broad popular masses - though this religion is not restricted to them by any means - the terrible conditions of life, the poverty and the hopelessness of which capitalist exploitation made them the object.128

Santería could be described as a primitive religion in as much as it had not arrived at the point of elaborating abstractions, continuing to work directly with objects and subjects. By implication, santería was therefore proportionately more ripe for the rubbish heap of history than church-Christianity.129 In the late 'sixties, however, it was only Party members and children who were exposed to this type of reasoning, explicit anti-religious propaganda being scarcely perceptible either in the daily press or in radio and television programmes.

In the CDRs in Havana activists were keen to minimise the extent to which Afro-Cuban religions had a following in their own localities. At the same time it was insisted that as a matter of organisational principle the committees did not enquire as to the religious commitments of their members, and in San Ramon it was even suggested that, for this reason, it might be inappropriate for the author to interview cederistas on the subject of religion. In practice there were few dwellings in San Ramon which were entirely free of the array of Virgins and other religious images which have traditionally decorated Cuban homes. A number of activists, including a Popular Court judge, belonged to santería families, and in at least one case a block committee was based in the same household as a local cult-group. In the absence of extraneous sources of conflict,130 relations between the cults and the CDRs appeared to be
both cordial and uneventful. Two Popular Court cases among those analysed in Chapter 4 involved accusations to the effect that one party had employed witchcraft practices against the other. The attitude of the judges in these cases consisted in a studied avoidance of this aspect of the dispute in question.

It remains to draw attention to two not unimportant sources of friction between the revolutionary authorities and the Afro-Cuban groups, the existence of which may mean that the pattern of tranquil and easy-going relationships depicted so far has tended in recent years to be more apparent than real. The first such consideration results from the fact that the life of the lucumí cults and, to a lesser extent, of the Palo groups is not entirely without an economic aspect. A word of explanation is necessary on this subject.

The central figure in the day-to-day religious practice of devotees of santería is the lowliest grade of 'priest' or 'priestess', the babalorisha or iyalarisha - or, colloquially, santero or santera. The principal function of this person - in Cuba today it is most often a woman - is to supervise the ritual by means of which new devotees are initiated into the cult. Popularly known as hacerse el santo, the process whereby the novice is 'presented' to a selected orisha and becomes his spiritual descendant, lasts for several days and entails months of preparation during which the iyawó is required to shave his or her head and wear all-white garments. The 'presentation' itself calls for a painstaking ritual purification of iyawó and a toque de santo, a fiesta with drummers in attendance, in the course of which he or she is expected to be 'possessed' or 'mounted' by the orisha (dar el santo, or subirse el santo). A
good deal of food is consumed at such gatherings, and a good deal more is required to be 'offered' to the orisha on pain of displeasing him.

This is the crux of the problem. By tradition, it is the santera who fixes the quantities of food necessary for the ceremony, for paying the drummers and the like and whose prerogative it also is to retain whatever is left over in her own larder. It is the duty of the iyawo to provide the food or the equivalent in money. In 1968, however, the Revolutionary Government nationalised all remaining private retail outlets and secured an absolute state monopoly on internal commerce. Since that date, foodstuffs in the quantities required for a 'good' presentation - i.e. one that satisfies the orisha in question - have been available only on the black market and at black-market prices (the price of an initiation was quoted at between 500 and 1000 pesos in 1969). Possibly for this reason by 1969 the Ministry of the Interior, whose local station is required to give permission for the holding of any meeting of this type, had severely curtailed the permitted duration of santeria fiestas. Two days was their typical length in Havana at that time, a paltry period by traditional standards.

Although santeras interviewed by the author were restrained in their criticism of this situation, it was obviously a severe blow to their professional standing and prosperity. There was another source of bitterness too: the Revolutionary Offensive of 1968 resulted in the expropriation of a number of shops and cottage industries devoted to the sale and manufacture of ritual objects and regalia of all types indispensable to the practice of the religion. In consequence, a number of items had become unobtainable, being offered for sale only to tourists. A cause of additional
indignation was the fact that the Vatican's regalia shop one door away from the principal Lucumi store (on Reina Street) had been spared the same fate. For their part the Government and the Party leadership have made it clear in recent years that they are not prepared to tolerate cult-members breaking the law in the pursuit of their religion. The pamphlet on criminology which was cited in previous chapters notes in this connection:

All these religious beliefs, the expression of ignorance and obscurantism, are fertile ground for swindlers and social parasites of all sorts to make a living out of the ignorance of others.137

In the closing session of the First National Forum on Internal Order in 1969, the Minister of the Interior Sergio del Valle had cause to make the following statement:

We are materialist atheists from a scientific and philosophical point of view, and our entire education is now directed along this line, yet this has in no way led to the curtailment of freedom of worship. Of course, freedom of worship is one thing, and what goes on behind the facade of the altars, rites and images of any religious sect, the fostering and development of criminal, antisocial and counter-revolutionary activities, is another..... We respect their ideas - without ceasing to combat them on ideological grounds - as long as they stay within the strict limits of religion. But as soon as they overstep those bounds and act against the order or the security of the state, we will repress them and punish them - not for what they believe or don't believe, but rather for what they do, for their actions and their conduct.138

At the meeting at which these words were spoken, another, related topic was subject to some discussion. This question - the source of the second type of friction that I want to identify here - arose concretely from the observation that, according to the Ministry's statistics, more than half of the convictions for manslaughter in Havana were regularly attributable to members of
"certain religious sects", and notably to ñángos. In certain periods, moreover, such people had been responsible for up to seventy-five per cent of convictions for homicide and attempted homicide, the number of minors involved in such cases being unusually large. Two years later, the First National Congress on Education and Culture noted in connection with a preliminary study of the causes of juvenile delinquency "the incidence of problems arising from some religions or sects, especially some of African origin (ñángo or abacuá)." Fidel Castro alluded to something similar in his caustic comment, quoted at the head of this section, on the Tenth Anniversary of the Ministry of the Interior.

This finding was not entirely unexpected. The criminological pamphlet just cited informs the intending social worker:

The abakua must have courage, he must fear nothing and nobody, and he cannot ignore an affront. Because of this machismo the abakua tend to exteriorise their manhood in criminal actions; that is to say, they are psychologically predisposed towards violence.

But there is more to it than that. Since Abakua is a secret society and not merely a cult, it exhibits another important trait:

The abakua ... have their own 'moral code'. The brothers or ekobios belonging to a single potencia are ruled by the principle of unconditional solidarity, such that each is obliged to protect his brothers...... This is a distorted concept of solidarity and comradeship, because, in this way, an abaku would never denounce an ekobio whatever the crime that he had committed. And if, for example, a member of a potencia has been killed, it is the right and duty of his brothers to avenge him; that is, they will take the law into their own hands..... An abakua who has been wronged or insulted by another has to cleanse his honour, generally with blood, and should he fail to do this his manhood is placed in doubt among his comrades; the morality of the group requires that it should be so and, at the same time, the abakua feels that he will always be backed-up by the solidary.
This account is not the invention of the Comisión Nacional de Prevención Social. The existing ethnographic studies testify to its accuracy. Cabrera's informants told her: "To say nánigo is to speak of a brave man, one who knows no fear and who despises all danger." The Abakuá personal ideal is summed up in the original meaning attached to the adjective chébere - a combination, according to Cabrera, of pride, self-sufficiency, presumptuousness, vanity, impulsiveness and self-worship. Likewise, all students remark upon the developed sense of loyalty which nánigos exhibit both in relation to the fraternity as a whole and more particularly towards their own potencia.

A large part of the trouble with the nánigos, as the Comisión begins to suggest, is that they live by what for all practical purposes may be described as a peculiarly refined and unadulterated variant of the widely accepted values and norms of machismo. That Abakuá ethics do not lack the features attributed to machismo earlier in this chapter is indicated by the following passage from one of the little gems of ethnography published in Actas del Folklore in 1961.

The Abakuá concept of manhood is relatively simple and quite separate from the individual's greater or lesser social talents and achievements. One may have merits as a kinsman or friend, artistic merits, even education or erudition; but this adds nothing to one's status as a man, nor does it modify it.

He is a man who is not effeminate and assumes no feminine ways - he whose sexual relationships have been based, strictly and rigorously, upon an archetypical pattern of behaviour, even in the presence of his wife. There are specific components of the repertoire of variations in love-making that are proscribed in the sexual conduct of the Abakuá male. The erotic versatility of certain highly developed cultures, like, say, those of Europe, would fill
the most liberal Abakúa with revulsion.....

To be homosexual is a kind of moral death, according to Abakúa conceptions..... In the social field, too, one has to be a man. This concern is expressed in a certain tenseness, an attentiveness to the accurate assessment of what one must tolerate and what a man may not tolerate if he is to be regarded as such by the members of his group. The candidate Abakúa will appear to us, for this reason, a hostile and easily irritated being. At best he will seem to be a person with a propensity for getting into scraps; but this will always have to do with the fact that he is someone whose sense of virility is tenaciously founded in specific and well-defined conceptions - conceptions conditioned by a tenacious struggle against the hostile environment in which the poor man, by virtue of the enormity of class distinctions, is brought up.¹⁴⁶

The official crime statistic which has been quoted would seem to suggest that the Abakúa society is not dead. By reputation it was still strong in 1969 in its traditional centres, the cities of Havana and Matanzas (Hugh Thomas has quoted a well-known Cuban musician who commented in 1959 "Hay abakúa pa rato! Habrá abakúa mientras haya tambor").¹⁴⁷ More specifically it was reported to the author by a reliable informant in one popular neighbourhood with a high percentage of blacks in its population that here the highest aspiration of many of the youths in their mid-'teens was to become nánigos. Thus groups of teenagers spent the most treasured moments of their free time practising with tall West African drums, in something of the same way that their contemporaries in North American or Western European cities were cultivating motorbikes or electric guitars. This activity, sometimes accompanied by boxing or baseball, led in an ascending line through various masculine exploits - encounters with the police not excluded - to the crowning achievement of being accepted as a fully-fledged náñigo.
It is only to be expected that, just as Cuba has its 'hippies', it will - at least 'during the period of transition' - also have its low-status semi-delinquent youth sub-cultures. Consideration of whether or not sentiments of racial inferiority and exclusion are contributory factors in such situations will be postponed for a moment. What is apparent is that, whatever else has changed, many city neighbourhoods in Cuba remain pockets of culturally-deprived, low income, badly-housed people. Abakuá, because of its glorification of physical values and its capacity to satisfy the status-yearnings of the youth, may be expected to continue to operate as a pole of attraction for such people - as well as for others who do not have these characteristics, it should be added. At the same time, to the extent that the core values of the aspiring naningo do not differ radically from those of society at large but that, equally surely, "being like Che" appears to present an impossible task, the chances that deprived youth will adopt 'illegitimate means' as the solution to their dilemma will continue to be high.

THE QUESTION OF COLOUR

Blanco es una profesión,
Mulato es un oficio,
Negro es una salación!150

-Cuban popular saying, mid-twentieth century.

Without a shadow of a doubt the last member of our trilogy of problems of socio-cultural change is the most difficult to handle satisfactorily. In the first place, it is not an issue upon which a great deal has been said in speeches or written about in newspapers, pamphlets and books. Quite the contrary: the role
of colour in Cuban society past or present has not been spoken of in public by Fidel Castro since 1959; on the available evidence, the delegates to the First National Congress on Education and Culture exchanged not a word on the subject; relevant newspaper reports are scarce; and the number of articles - not to speak of books - devoted to the question which have rolled off Cuban printing presses since the Revolution can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Secondly, even if this were not the case, the task of estimating the impact on social relations in this area of the measures and policies initiated by the revolutionary regime would be a hazardous one. Not only is the field of 'race relations' intrinsically subject to a wide variety of pitfalls when it comes to assessing short-run changes in attitudes and behaviour, but in the case of revolutionary Cuba we lack entirely the main pre-requisite for such an assessment, a solid basis of background studies and documentation. Thus, even if we are able to overcome the initial problem of evaluating the reliability and validity of the available contemporary evidence - much of it casual or anecdotal in nature - the interpretation of these findings remains a source of considerable difficulty.

With this warning in view, the pretensions of the section which follows cannot but be modest. My motives for wishing, in spite of everything, to draw together such new observations or insights as it is possible to muster on the issue of contemporary Cuban 'race relations' derive from two main considerations. One is the palpable importance which this question has within the framework of the long-term development of the Revolution, an importance which is in no way reduced by the neglect heaped upon it by official sources in recent years. The other is the generally
unsatisfactory character of most of the available non-Cuban writings which deal in any detail with this aspect of the revolutionary experience. The argument of the following pages is therefore in the nature of a rescue operation, the urgency of which justifies its being undertaken without most of the necessary safety-equipment.

The history of foreign comment on the achievements and the failings of the Revolutionary Government with respect to domestic racial prejudice and discrimination is an intriguing subject in its own right and one which is replete with lessons, most of them negative, as to the dangers which the student of the subject confronts. On the central question at issue - that is to say, the extent and significance of the changes which have occurred in this sphere since January 1959 - observers have been more or less equally divided. They have also proved with few exceptions susceptible to the appeal of extreme formulations and cut-and-dried judgements. Thus, following a short visit to Cuba in the summer of 1960, the editor of a well-known left-wing periodical in the United States reported that the revolution had "uprooted" racial discrimination and that the black people of Cuba had won "full economic, social and political equality". Although the commentator in question subsequently qualified this assessment, his original statements have been repeated more recently by other visitors. According to one, by the late 'sixties it could be said of Cuba's Negroes that they "share equally in the goods and services and civic respect of their society" and that they "have been fully integrated in the schools and on the job". Another observer reported as of 1969 that Cuba constituted "an inspiring example that black and white can live together in peace and harmony".
Alongside what we might term the White Legend of post-revolutionary Cuban race relations, however, there exists a Black Legend which tells a very different story. According to the testimony of the best-known exponent of this view - Carlos More, a black Cuban exile of Maoist persuasion - changes in the pattern of racism in Cuba since the Revolution have affected "the form of its expression" rather than its substance:

In fact, what goes by the name of 'revolution' in Cuba is no more than the domination of one class, of one race, over another class and another race, whose values and potentialities are opposed to the designs of the ruling class.157

Without going so far as to suggest with this author that it is the national bourgeoisie, not the proletariat, that is power in Cuba, a number of observers have likewise suggested that the much-vaunted liberation of Cuban blacks under the Revolution is an illusion. After a stay of several years in Cuba, the black North American militant Robert Williams denounced in 1967 what he interpreted as a restoration of pre-revolutionary patterns of discrimination:

The Negro is becoming again a pathetic victim to race prejudice and discrimination.... Afro-Cubans are beginning to feel the pinch of subtle but fast returning racism.158

John Clytus, another American who worked in Cuba as an English teacher and translator between 1964 and 1967, has recently published a scathing account of his experiences of continuing racialism in Cuban economic, political and social life.159

Between these two versions of the fate of Cuban blacks and mulattoes since the Revolution, more measured or more scrupulously qualified assessments have not been entirely absent, but they have been relatively few in number.160 A fact which may not be
irrelevant to an explanation of this phenomenon is that the principal critics of the revolutionary regime over the question of colour have so far, without exception, been black, whilst its apologists have by and large proved to be white. It is also true that the latter have often drawn their conclusions on the basis of relatively brief visits to Cuba, and it is not impossible, as Carlos More has alleged, that such sympathetic travellers have often arrived on the island "predisposed towards seeing 'a perfectly integrated society' in operation under Socialism":

The visitor is no longer concerned with reality, since his fundamental need is simply to find confirmation either for his ideological principles or for his preconceptions as to what a 'perfectly integrated society' looks like under Socialism.

The possibility cannot be excluded, on the other hand, that the process of disillusionment undergone by the critics has blinded them to certain positive achievements of the Revolution in ameliorating racial inequalities. If this is the case, what is obviously called for is a careful sorting and weighing of evidence with a view to the construction of a more accurate composite picture. Before anything of this kind is attempted here, however, it is important that we notice the fact that the existence of two sharply contradictory views on the quality of the prevailing patterns of race relations is neither a strictly new phenomenon in the Cuban context, nor one which is unique to Cuba among the Latin American nations. On the contrary, this state of affairs - distinguished on the one hand by the popularisation of an image of absolute interracial tranquility and harmony and on the other by an emphatic rejection or inversion of this view of the matter - has good claims to be considered the norm in exchanges between Latin Americans and North
The origin of the problem is that, evidently, Latin American race relations are very different from those which, as everybody knows, typify the society of the United States. Writing about one of Cuba's neighbours in the Caribbean, Gordon Lewis observes:

There is a widespread belief in Puerto Rico that .... there is no local problem of race prejudice. The belief usually adopts one of two methods of evidence. The first is to argue .... that if there is discrimination it exists only in 'social' or 'class' areas..... The second is, overtly or by implication, to accept the North American criteria of discrimination, based as they are upon an open black-white dichotomy, and then apply it to Puerto Rican conditions..... The general consequence of both modes of argument is to facilitate an optimistic tone whenever the problem is discussed. The optimism is frequently accepted uncritically by outside observers or even resident Americans as proof that all is well.....

The case of Brazil is of course still more notorious as an instance where the undisputed distinctiveness of observed patterns of discrimination, particularly if viewed in the light of the experience of the United States, has led to the creation and persistence of an elaborate myth of racial tolerance and democracy.

Innumerable other examples could be thought of. The possibility already arises however - and I want to suggest that this is more than a possibility - that one factor responsible for the enormity of the discrepancy we have observed between different reports on the race relations situation in Cuba today is continuing confusion as to the characteristic properties of the 'traditional' pattern of discrimination on the island. Clearly, for a thorough-going evaluation of the progress made in this area since the
revolution it is not only necessary to be able to catalogue in an empirical fashion those notorious practices which have successfully been stamped out, together with those which, in modified or blatant form, continue to prevail. It is equally important that specific reforms and social trends be placed in the context of a correct analysis of the deeper, structural characteristics of the pre-revolutionary system of race relations— including, crucially, those features which distinguished it from the patterns of racial exclusion and segregation found in the U.S.A. Some of the observers cited above have provided some indication as to their assumptions at this level. Thus, according to one defender of revolutionary policy, not only was it the case before 1959 that "the working class of Cuba was not as saturated with the poison of racism as that of the United States" but, furthermore, "only the aristocratic upper crust gloried in its whiteness".  

This claim, which from the point of view of a white North American offers a certain plausibility has been partially endorsed by Hugh Thomas, who might have been expected to know better:

The Constitution of 1940 barred all race discrimination. This worked reasonably well. The situation was described by Castro in a press conference on 23 January 1959 when he said, in reply to a North American journalist, that 'the colour question' in Cuba did not exist in the same way as it did in the U.S.; there was some racial discrimination in Cuba but far less..... Castro might also have gone on to say that, in so far as it did exist, racial discrimination was chiefly a middle-class phenomenon. The Cuban middle class was always rather conscious of North American habits. Such racial discrimination as there was appears to have been imitative of North America rather than to have sprung from anything special to Cuban circumstances. In the smarter hotels of Havana, frequented by the American business community, racial prejudice was yet another example of the way that some Cubans were always exiles even in Havana..... That racial prejudice in old Cuba was not overwhelming is suggested by the fact that Castro never mentioned
According to Thomas' scheme of things, the relative absence of indigenous racial prejudice and discrimination in pre-revolutionary Cuba may be attributed to the fact that Cubans of Spanish descent were not 'really' white:

Since race is so much a problem of noticeable physical attributes, the predominantly sallow-skinned Spaniards, with their strong draughts of Moorish and Jewish blood, probably blended more easily, at least with muletoes, than did the pink or beige Ango-Saxons, Celts, Germans and Slavs who constitute the majority in the U.S.

Were it the case, of course, that the problem of colour in Cuba before the revolution was simply an American cultural import or the product of the particular failings of the middle classes, then the White Legend concerning developments since 1959 would scarcely require further confirmation. According to other students, including Carlos More, however, a continuous history of intense racial prejudice and of discriminatory practices bordering at times on attempted genocide links Republican Cuba with the heyday of slavery. Pre-revolutionary Cuba could be characterised without exaggeration - we are now given to understand - as a racist society without essential differences from that of the United States. Is this nearer to being the truth of the matter? Clearly the question needs looking at before we can expect to arrive at any judgements on the contemporary scene.

The Heritage of the Past: Colour, not Race

There are still few discussions of comparative race relations
in the Americas which deal as succinctly and as elegantly with the core of the matter as Charles Wagley's classic statement on the problem. According to Wagley, it is helpful to begin by observing a number of "simple and relatively well-known facts" about the patterns of racial intermixture and discrimination which prevailed in the New World during the first several centuries after the Conquest. These are, to condense the argument still more drastically than Wagley permits himself to do: (1) Throughout the Americas, sizeable mixed-blood or hybrid populations were created from an early date; miscegenation was not a monopoly of Spanish or Portuguese males but occurred in every part of the continent, even in those regions, such as Argentina or Western Canada, which are today predominantly populated by whites. (2) Colonial society reacted universally to the process of miscegenation by creating "a complicated social hierarchy in which racial appearance or ancestry was perhaps the most important criterion of rank"; in the early colonial period, it was customary in every corner of the Americas to attempt to classify persons of mixed ancestry into social statuses according to the precise proportion of Negro (or Indian) 'blood' or antecedents they possessed. (3) Finally, as time passed, as the number of discoverable combinations and permutations of descent increased, and as anomalous instances began to multiply in which the criterion of ancestry yielded results which conflicted with the evidence of physical appearance or socio-cultural status, the system became unworkable and impossible to maintain.

"During the nineteenth century", Wagley writes, "there was a trend everywhere of resolving this conflict between the classification of people simultaneously by physical appearance, ancestry, and socio-cultural status". The result was the eventual creation
in the Americas of three well-authenticated and relatively
distinct modes of 'race relations'. In the United States,
first of all, the dominant white group was able to establish a
'rule of descent' according to which any individual who has a
known Negro ancestor is a Negro. Contrasting sharply with this
system, characterised as it is by an almost exclusive reliance
upon the criterion of ancestry, was that which emerged, with
variations and some important exceptions, in those societies of
the Spanish-American highlands with large Amerindian populations.
Here the pattern consisted in the allocation of individuals to
groups on the basis of social or cultural criteria such as
language, custom, dress and community-membership, to the exclusion
of considerations of descent or appearance. Finally, in
Brazil and the Caribbean region, a third 'option' of social
development made its appearance:

In this region, emphasis has been placed upon
physical appearance rather than ancestry or
social and cultural criteria. The
criterion of ancestry seems important in the
Caribbean and Brazil, as in Mexico and
Guatemala, among those segments of the
population who seek to prove the purity of
their European derived lineage. For the large
mass of the people, ancestry seldom acts to
place an individual in a particular social
race. But the indelible mark of physical
appearance, with the higher prestige accruing
to Caucasoid features and the lowest to Negroid
features, remains as an important set of
criteria by which to classify people into social
races. Throughout this whole region, such
features as color, shape of lips, hair texture
and the shape of the nose are closely analysed
in order to place an individual in the proper
social race.

Emphasis upon 'colour', as distinct from genetically- or
culturally-defined 'race', has further consequences which set the
Caribbean/Brazilian pattern apart from the two alternatives
previously identified. In the first place, whereas both the highland-Indian and the North American modes of race relations resulted in the creation of sharply-defined "racial" groups which might be said to interact vis-à-vis one another, Brazilians and West Indians - by the sheer force of their preoccupation with the subtleties of physical gradations - tended to bring about the dissolution of groupings of this kind. The point here is emphatically not to assert that people living in this region fail to discriminate between their fellows on a 'racial' basis or to deny the prevalence here as elsewhere of racial prejudices of a perfectly ordinary type. What requires to be emphasised is well put by Marvin Harris in connection with the case of Brazil:

A moment's reflection should suffice to bring into prominence the fact that without a method for clearly distinguishing between one group and another, systematic discrimination cannot be practiced. The sine qua non of any thoroughgoing minority system is a foolproof method for separating a population into respective superordinate and subordinate groups. In order to prevent the members of a certain group from freely choosing their jobs, voting, enrolling in a school, or joining a club, it is absolutely indispensable that there be a reliable way of knowing who is a member of the group to be segregated and who is a member of the group that is to do the segregating.174

In view of the immense variety of phenotypes both objectively found and socially recognised in the region, no such criterion is available. The resulting situation is also pithily summarised by Harris:

It is one's class and not one's race which determines the adoption of subordinate and superordinate attitudes between specific individuals in face-to-face relations. It is class which determines who will be admitted to hotels, restaurants and social clubs; who will get preferential treatment in stores, churches, night clubs and travel accommodations; and who will have the best chance among a group
of marriage suitors. There are no racial
groups against which discrimination occurs.
Instead, there are class groups. Color is
one of the criteria of class identity; but
it is not the only criterion.175

As Wagley has it, Brazilian and Caribbean colour-categories "are
a way of describing and classifying individuals according to
physical appearance, but this is but one way that these societies
classify people".

The position of an individual in the hierarchy
of social race combined with education, economic
status, occupation, family connections, even
manners and artistic abilities places one in his
or her proper rank.176

Whether or not it is also the case that this system has as a matter
of historical fact afforded "a situation favourable to individual
mobility",177 it is clear that it fosters a different set of
attitudes towards social mobility, there being no equivalent here
of the process of "passing as white" as observed in the U.S.A.
"An individual does not 'pass' ..... from Negro to white. Rather
by means of improving his education, financial position, and other
qualities capable of modification within a lifetime, he may move
up in the class structure while still remaining 'low' in the hier-
archy of social race".178 We might add that the degree to which
his colour remains a severe handicap varies not only from place to
place but, just as importantly, according to the social context in
question. Thus, for example, a dark skin which may present few
obstacles to success in a military career may constitute a severe
impediment in informal social settings and an almost impassable
barrier to the consummation of a 'good' marriage.179

The foregoing summary is obviously deficient in historical
depth and sociological detail. The central distinction it makes,
between systems based on a descent rule and those which, by contrast, attach primary importance to individual variations in outward appearance, has nevertheless already proved its usefulness to students of comparative race relations, permitting them to pinpoint that which they are called upon to explain and to discard inessential or, alternatively, fraudulent aspects of the contrast between, for example, contemporary Brazilian and North American patterns. The same distinction will serve us here as an important point of reference in characterising pre-revolutionary Cuban developments.

It is not open to doubt that the pattern of relations between whites, blacks, mulattoes and persons of intermediate description which finally formed in twentieth century Cuba was of the Brazilian/Caribbean and not the North American type. Support for this statement will be provided further on. Before proceeding, however, some remarks are called for concerning how this central fact (if such it is) is to be explained historically. Although this is not the place for an extended discussion of the issue, it is unfortunately true that several of the commentaries on contemporary Cuban race relations which were cited above have been coloured by theories whose respectability has been placed in doubt, to say no more, by recent historiography. The following findings of recent studies are relevant to an explanation of the genesis of the colour-class system in Cuba. First, the theses originally advanced respectively by Tannenbaum and Elkins according to which Spanish legal system and the Catholic church successfully intervened between master and slave, thereby substantially modifying and humanising slavery in the societies which they influenced, now appear drastically mistaken for Cuba, at least as far as the
nineteenth century is concerned. Second, although for reasons which include the sexual imbalance in the white population, miscegenation continued to be frequent in late colonial Cuba, formal marriages between persons of different 'colour' encountered a resistance which may even have intensified towards the end of the era of slavery. Opposition among white families to "unequal marriages" was motivated by traditional Hispanic notions regarding limpieza de sangre and the 'stain' of Negro blood, as well as by considerations of the security of the state. Third, the institution of coartación, which was responsible for the manumission of slaves in relatively large numbers in Cuba in the eighteenth century and earlier, came under severe attack during the sugar boom of the nineteenth century. As a consequence of pressures - which became particularly intense during the 'thirties and 'forties of the last century - directed towards terminating emancipations and repressing persons who had the good fortune to have obtained their freedom in a previous period, the free coloured population of the island actually underwent an absolute decline between 1817 and 1827, and again between 1841 and 1846.

The above considerations help to dispense with a number of standard but erroneous explanations for the failure of slave society in Cuba to be succeeded by a system of race relations based on a rule of descent. Of the historical facts which remain in good repute and which are of clear relevance to the problem in hand, one would appear to be the most important by far. This is that, despite harassment and their subjection to systematic racial discrimination, the free coloured population remained substantial throughout the later decades of slavery, and may even be said to have prospered. Although in the period previously indicated Cuba
may for a moment have come close to experiencing the kind of
tendency towards a narrowly-drawn racial segregation which emerged
in the North American States after 1830, this moment passed. As
in the case of Brazil, the reasons appear to be demographic and
economic. The expansion of Cuba's sugar economy in the
nineteenth century occurred against the background of severe
manpower shortages, which tended to grow as slave-labour became
increasingly uneconomic and hard to obtain and following the
failure of successive ventures designed to alleviate the situation
such as the importation of Chinese and Yucatecan contract-labourers.
As the manpower shortage grew more acute, the demand for wage
labour steadily increased. In the absence of substantial white
immigration from Spain or elsewhere, these positions, as well as a
variety of roles which afforded greater economic independence, came
to be performed predominantly by free coloureds.

In accordance with the line of reasoning developed by Marvin
Harris for Brazil, Cuba emerged into the twentieth century with a
colour-class system of discrimination because, in view of the
prevailing demographic and economic realities, it was impossible,
either before or after slavery, for the dominant white group to
force individuals of intermediate ancestry back into a sharply
separated Negro category by application of a rule of descent.

This account of the matter, it should be noted, allows us to proceed
without recourse to the assumption that Cuban whites were either
free of racial prejudice or incapable of discriminating against
their fellow citizens on the grounds of their colour.

To identify the pre-revolutionary Cuban system of race relations
as a colour-class system of the general Caribbean/Brazilian type,
but at the same time to deny that the identifying features such systems include a lack of racial prejudice or a failure to discriminate, is, I suggest, to have the main prerequisite for a realistic account of the problem which concerns us in this section. At the most general level, this perspective enables us to refuse the alternatives offered respectively by More and Thomas - namely, either that the question of colour in pre-revolutionary Cuba amounted essentially to a scaled-down version of the American Dilemma, or that there was no strictly indigenous prejudice or discrimination. At another level, it permits us to view in a more sober light a number of specific features of twentieth century Cuban race relations which, explicitly or implicitly, have contributed to the formation of the two Legends about race and the Revolution. It is to these features and to the actual working of the pre-revolutionary colour-class system that we must now give some attention.

According to the Cuban census of 1953, 72.8 per cent of the national population was white, 12.4 per cent black, 0.3 per cent yellow and 14.5 per cent mestizo. Since the classification of individuals contains a subjective element - in 1953 the judgement of the enumerators - it has usually been assumed that these figures overestimated the 'whiteness' of the total population, and one published estimate has gone as far as to suggest that the proportions may have been 30 per cent white, 49 per cent Negroid, 1 per cent oriental and 20 per cent mestizo. The term mestizo in the Cuban context normally meant Mulatto, though many people of mixed blood showed perceptible oriental traits; and the latter term was traditionally used in everyday settings.

In addition to blancos, negros and mulatos, Cubans habitually
distinguished (as they still do) a number of further phenotypes, paying attention to the quality of the hair and the shape of the features, as well as to the colour of the skin. A mulato claro was distinguished from a mulato prieto, but also from a mulato chino (with oriental features), a mulato indio (with "Indian" features) and a mulato ruso (a "Russian" Mulatto, with fair hair). Negroes of average complexion were distinguished from very dark blacks, who were described literally as negros retintos or half-humorously as negros azules ("blue" Negroes). Ancestry played no part in determining which label was appropriate in a given instance, with the effect that the offspring of a single couple could be, and often were, placed in quite different categories.

At the same time, whereas Caucasoid features were consistently highly valued, Negroid features were regarded as defects. As elsewhere in the Caribbean and in Brazil, Negroid hair was referred to as pelo malo (bad hair) or alternatively as pasas (raisins), whilst 'African' lips and noses were described by the mildly pejorative terms bamba and hato. Women invariably paid scrupulous attention to the combing of their daughters' hair in the belief that this would encourage the growth of "good hair". Not only women but also some 'light' Mulatto males straightened their hair artificially, and in general sensitivity towards the details of physical appearance was reputed to most developed among Mulattoes.

The modern history of Cuba is replete with instances of individuals gaining prominence in military affairs and in politics in spite of the handicap of their 'colour'. Although well-known free coloured personalities made important contributions to Cuban history even before the middle of the last century, among them the Mulatto poet Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés, known as 'Placido',

108
this first occurred on a significant scale during the two major wars which secured the island's independence from Spain (1868-78 and 1895-98). Along with the Mulatto Antonio Maceo who became the second-ranking commander and by far the most popular leader of the Cuban forces, the following names of non-white Cubans became household words in this period: José Maceo, Flor Crombet, Guillermo Moncada, Juan Gualberto Gómez, Quintín Banderas, Martín Morda Delgado, Quirino Zamora and Mariana Grajales. Though few of these figures survived the war of 1895-98, Juan Gualberto Gómez played an important role in national politics under the so-called 'mediatised' Republic as the leader of a depleted group of radical Cuban nationalists. In a later period, the Mulatto Fulgencio Batista dominated Cuban politics for close to three decades, whilst Lazaro Peña and Elas Roca, both Mulattos, and Jesus Menéndez, a dark black, achieved leading positions in the Communist Party. The influence of non-whites in the spheres of music, dance and poetry was, less surprisingly, considerable. However non-whites also achieved extraordinary success in penetrating the middle class professions.

By 1943 there were 560 black or Mulatto lawyers in Cuba, compared with three or four during the years 1899-1907. There were also by this time 424 non-white doctors, one-fifth of the total, compared with ten out of every 1,000 in 1899-1907, and non-whites accounted for more than one-fifth of the teaching profession. 189

These are significant facts but, in view of the preceding discussion, their precise significance requires to be spelt out with some care. What they do not to any degree indicate, still less 'prove', is that white Cubans in the period 1868-1959 were free of racial prejudice or that they desisted from attributing status on the basis
of the colour of a man's skin. For this reason, Carlos More's elaborate insinuation to the effect that certain of Antonio Maceo's white comrades-in-arms not only resented his success on the grounds of his colour but were also responsible for his death is essentially beside the point.\textsuperscript{190} What they demonstrate unequivocally, on the other hand, is that in certain social contexts in pre-revolutionary Cuba - specifically public life and the professions - factors such as talent, education and ambition were capable of outweighing the single consideration of colour in the manner typical of a colour-class system.

Naturally the system did not permit the advance of the mass of the coloured population, and even less the mass of blacks, to a position of equality with whites. According to the census of 1931, non-white Cubans owned a mere 7.79 per cent of agricultural property, the rest remaining in the hands of white Cubans (70.77 per cent) or foreigners (21.44 per cent).\textsuperscript{191}

Before the Revolution, coloured people were in their vast majority cane-cutters, shoe-shiners, sweepers, lottery-ticket vendors, newspaper-sellers, car-park attendants, stevedores - in a word the arms and muscles which performed the most disagreeable and least well-paid jobs. One did not see Negro administrators, managers, cashiers, office employees, advertising agents, etc.\textellipsis
A black girl could not work in a store, in a beauty salon, a cinema, a jewellers' shop, a fashion house, a restaurant or the office of a big hotel. She could be neither a model nor an air hostess. On the other hand, negresses and mulatas were in great demand as entraîneuses, prostitutes both common and de luxe, dancers in the grand cabarets, etc.\textsuperscript{192}

According to the last available census statistics (1943), black employees were substantially less well-paid on average than white workers.\textsuperscript{193} In part, this was simply the product of the economic and social disadvantages automatically inherited by ex-slaves and
their descendants. Partly, too, it was caused by a pattern of immigration which in the course of the twentieth century operated consistently to the disadvantage of non-whites. In the early decades of the century Spanish immigrants, and to a lesser extent the sizeable Chinese community, came to monopolise many of the retail and service trades by sheer weight of their numbers. On the other hand, at the bottom of the scale of economic security and social prestige, the immigration to Cuba of Haitian and Jamaican labourers contracted for unskilled labour on the sugar estates could not but have an unfavourable effect upon the ethnic distribution of employment, at the same time serving to depress the economic situation of poor Cuban-born blacks. Finally, however, the absence of coloured people from certain types of office employment and high-prestige service activities reflected the crucial fact about the colour-class system as it operated in Cuba that the relevance of physical appearance varied markedly according to the social context in question.

Two further features of the pre-revolutionary pattern of discrimination are characteristic of colour-class systems in general and are of central importance to any assessment of developments in Cuba since 1959, though they have been either neglected or misunderstood by most commentators. First, if the relevance of colour was a variable factor, there was no context in which a person's physical appearance was more significant and less capable of being offset by countervailing considerations than in intimate personal relationships and, above all, in matters of matrimony. According to one report,

Mixed marriages and inter-racial sexual relations (between coloured men and white women) were infrequent adventures. Those who had sufficient audacity and psychological maturity to undertake
Them always did so on their own account and at their own risk, because a couple in such a position found itself destined to ostracism and solitude.196

There is a real sense in which discrimination in the selection of marriage partners remained in the twentieth century as it had been in the late nineteenth century the core of Cuba's colour-class system. Although concern over the maintenance of limpieza de sangre largely disappeared with the destruction of the land-owning oligarchy in the eighteen-eighties, ceasing to be realistic for all but a handful of families whose 'aristocratic' pretensions remained relatively untarnished, ordinary Cubans continued to exhibit an intense preoccupation with the external manifestations of colour when it came to the procreation of their offspring. This was reflected in the widespread use in such connections of the phrase para adelantar la familia ('in order to improve the family'), and even para adelantar la raza ('to improve the race'). In no other social sphere was discrimination rigorously practiced, so ardently defended and so hard to resist. It is somewhat surprising therefore that the topic has received no comment whatsoever in discussions of the colour question in Cuba, even among those most concerned to demonstrate the congenital racism of the society.197

The second characteristic, or rather consequence, of pre-revolutionary Cuba's colour-class system which should be noted finally is that, like other systems of its kind, it proved highly resistant to the growth of organised sectional groupings representing the interests of either non-whites in general or blacks in particular. Motives for the organisation of coloured Cubans in their own defence and for their own social and economic advancement were obviously not lacking, nor were specific provocations. Both were placed in
evidence by one of the most dramatic political events of the first
decade of the Republic, the suppression by government troops of an-
alleged 'black uprising' in Oriente province in 1912. The episode,
which was accompanied by bloody scenes and hysterical public reactions
not unreminiscent of events in the United States in the same period
and not without certain encouragement from that quarter, led to the
termination of the brief life of the Partido Independiente de Color,
an organisation without parallel in Cuban history formed in 1907
under the guidance of the Independence War veteran Juan Gualberto
Gómez. Though intended to advance the interests of non-whites by
political means, the Party was almost certainly not a 'racist' formation,
as its opponents claimed. Nevertheless the events of 1912, following
close on the heels of the passage through the Cuban Congress of the
so-called Korda Amendment, which forbade the formation of political
movements composed of persons of the same race or colour, were not
repeated. 198

What is remarkable about the rising of the Partido Independiente
is not that it happened but that it was so quickly forgotten. What
is significant about the Korda Amendment, similarly, is that it
remained unchallenged, and indeed unrequired, on the statute-book
of the Republic throughout the whole period up to 1959. Lest it
be thought otherwise, these were not years in which Cubans of
different colours always lived and worked together in peace and
harmony. No less an authority than the Foreign Policy Association
reported the situation in the mid-'thirties in the following terms:

Racial prejudice in Cuba has not been nearly so
acute as in Anglo-Saxon countries. It seems
true, however, that it has increased during the
past few years. This is attributed partly to
the unconscious influence of the American point
of view and partly to economic distress. When
an economic system is unable to provide adequately
for the wants of every class in the population, the dominant group inevitably employs the racial argument to maintain its economic position at the expense of lesser colored groups....... Following the downfall of Machado, fear of a Negro uprising again took hold of certain sections of the Cuban population. Having suffered perhaps even more severely than the whites in the recent depression, many Negroes naturally attempted to improve their economic position at a time when a wave of revolutionary sentiment swept the island....... During the post-Machado period some Cuban Negroes attempted to abolish social discrimination. In January 1934 Negroes in Trinidad entered the section of the central park reserved by custom to the whites....... As a result of this incident, rioting occurred, one Negro being shot.199

Yet the truth is that no black political party was formed as a consequence of events such as these, and no politician, black, Mulatto or white, was able before 1959 to mobilise coloured Cubans on the basis of appeals to sectional interest or aspirations. As Thomas observed, even Fidel Castro's declarations of the early 'fifties made no mention of the problem of colour; this fact however, rather than indicating that no such problem existed, is eloquent testimony of the peculiar resilience of a colour-class system of discrimination.

To end this discussion of pre-revolutionary Cuban race relations - and at the end is where this observation rightfully belongs - it should be said that foreign, mainly North American, attitudes and mores did influence the behaviour of Cubans in this as in other spheres. Though largely immeasurable, the effect upon the pretensions of white Cubans of the proximity of Miami and New Orleans, as well as of the presence in large numbers of citizens of the United States as soldiers, tourists, estate-managers and businessmen, cannot have been negligible in any period. It clearly reached a height never subsequently attained during and immediately
following the First and Second Interventions by U.S. forces in the early part of the century (1899-1902 and 1906-1909), but we have already heard the opinion of one outside source regarding the causes of deteriorating race relations in Cuba in the 'thirties. The strictly enforced colour bar found in first-class hotels and restaurants in Havana until the advent of the Revolution was at least in some degree produced by Cuban accommodation to 'Anglo-Saxon' sensibilities. The fact that upper-class clubs and private beaches applied a rigorous colour bar in addition to other socially-exclusive membership requirements (the elite Country Club rejected even President Batista on the grounds of his off-white complexion and 'Indian' features) may be partly explained, as Thomas has suggested, as an imitative response to the customs of the American-British-Canadian community. To a lesser extent the same is possibly true of those other pre-revolutionary institutions which were subsequently accused of practising formal or informal racial discrimination, including private schools and universities, and private hospitals and clinics.

Two caveats are essential here, however, if confusion is to be avoided in the discussion which follows. The first is that, whatever their origin, such practices were not in themselves alien to Cuba's colour-class system. Contrary to Hugh Thomas' suggestion, it was characteristic of the normal operation of this system to enforce equally rigorous discriminatory norms in certain types of social setting. In reality the most notorious centre of racial exclusion in pre-revolutionary Cuba was not Havana, where the American presence was greatest, but the interior province of Las Villas where expatriate influences were relatively insignificant. It was in the city of Trinidad, one of the first colonial capitals
of Cuba and by reputation the most defiantly Hispanic municipality on the island, that, in accord with a tradition which remained in force until the arrival of the guerrilla column in 1958, whites, mulattoes and blacks were obliged to stroll of an evening along separate tiers of the Central Park. The local oligarchy of Santa Clara, the principal city of the same fiercely traditionalistic region of Cuba, maintained an identical custom without the aid of North Americans until the early months of 1959.202 The only social milieu whose reputation for racial exclusiveness was comparable to that of upper-class Las Villas was the one which was associated with the Cuban cattle-ranching families of the province of Camaguey.

The second point which needs to be insisted upon, on the other hand, is that, whilst such instances of practical convergence between the longstanding traditions of Cuban bourgeois families and the customs of the expatriate community are damaging to Thomas' point of view, it is a mistake to interpret them as evidence for the almost equally simpliste version offered by Carlos More. As a system of race relations, pre-revolutionary Cuban patterns of discrimination differed in fundamental respects from those characteristic of the United States, as we have seen. To say this is not to defend the Cuban system but merely to describe the logical and structural consequences of its non-adoption of a descent-rule. It follows nevertheless that the rigorous colour bar operating in informal settings in the higher reaches of the pre-revolutionary Cuban social order possessed a sociological significance quite unlike that of superficially similar North American practices. In a word, whereas the latter represent a norm observed by every social layer in a wide variety of functional contexts, the former deserves attention precisely as the limiting-case of a system in which the
relevance of colour in social relationships is highly variable and contextually-dependent. An appreciation of this point is essential to a realistic assessment of developments in Cuba since 1959.

Colour and the Revolution: The Absent Centre

The question of colour was not a major issue in Cuban politics before 1959. So deeply ingrained, in fact, was the feeling that 'racial' identities had no place in public discussions affecting the civic life of the country that even the proto-revolutionary statements and manifestos of the 26 July Movement neglected the problem almost entirely. Rather than reflecting an allegedly benign racial situation, however, these facts were the product of a system of discrimination of a particular sort which, by virtue of its adoption of fine gradations of physical appearance as the criterion of 'racial' identity, tended directly or indirectly to bring about the dissolution of colour-based groupings at all levels of social, economic and political life. In the absence of corporate black or coloured social entities, neither an independent black consciousness nor the associated spectrum of white political responses was able to emerge in the twentieth century.

If this analysis is correct, why did the question of colour become an issue with the advent of the Revolution? In large measure, I want to suggest, the reasons were circumstantial, arising from the unique set of political relationships in which the Cuban revolutionaries became entangled during the first months and years after January 1959. The fundamental factors which militated against the formation of clear alignments on the colour question before the Revolution continued despite appearances to be operative
after it. For this reason if for no other the policies of the revolutionary leadership for eliminating domestic racial discrimination and prejudice have had uneven success as a definitive solution to the colour problem. In the last analysis it must probably be recognised that the policies themselves have not been immune to the subtle illusions fostered by a colour-class system of discrimination.

The question of colour was posed in Cuba from the moment when Fidel Castro arrived in Havana as the recognised chief of a battle-weary but exuberant and aggressively self-confident revolutionary army which, if not preponderantly composed of blacks and mulattoes, was almost certainly substantially less white than the national population. Ugly incidents occurred almost immediately when blacks wearing the uniform of the Rebel Army were turned away from the Havana Hilton and other exclusive hotels and restaurants in the capital and elsewhere where their white comrades-in-arms had been admitted. For a long moment there was no official response to these incidents on the part of the new government. On 13 February however, Fidel Castro stepped in to take charge personally of the direction of the Revolution, forcing the resignation of Jose Miro Cardona as Prime Minister of the Revolutionary Government and assuming this position himself. There followed another brief interval but on 22 March the new Cuban leader took to the speaker's rostrum to make his first extended public statement on the subject of the domestic colour problem.

Castro began by observing that the mentality of the Cuban people was still "conditioned by many beliefs and many prejudices from the past", expressing the view that if they wished to overcome
this backwardness they would have to begin by admitting its existence.
The people had had to fight many different battles on the road to
their final liberation and would have to fight many more yet, he
said, and one of these was the battle against racial discrimination.
There were two types of racial discrimination. One was that
which took place in recreational or cultural establishments, the
other - which was worse - was that which took place in work centres:
The first thing we have to fight is racial
discrimination in work centres, because, if the
one type of discrimination limits access to
certain circles, the other is a thousand times
more cruel, for it limits access to places where
a living is earned, it limits possibilities for
the satisfaction of needs, and thus we commit
the crime of denying, more than to anyone else,
to precisely that sector which is the poorest
the right to work; we commit the crime that,
whereas colonial society made the black work as
a slave and made the black work harder than
anyone, made the black work without any form of
recompense, in today's society, which some have
chosen to call the democratic society, he is
prevented - or rather, they try to prevent him -
from working to earn a living. And so, whereas
the colonial regime worked him to death and beat
him to death, we want to make our black brother
die of starvation.
It ought not to be necessary to make a law to
establish a right which every man has simply by
virtue of being a human being and a member of
society. It ought not to be necessary to make a
law against a simple prejudice.206

In Cuba, Castro added, the fact was that he who was not more or
less dark of skin207 because he was descended from Africans was
somewhat dark because he was from Spain - which was colonised by
the Moors, who came from Africa. It was necessary "to put an end
to racial discrimination in work centres, to mount a campaign to
put an end to this hateful and repugnant system, with the slogan:
"Work opportunities to all Cubans without discrimination of race
or sex". As far as social establishments were concerned, integrated
recreational centres would be created and, above all, in the future the public educational system would educate whites and blacks together in a spirit of brotherhood, not of exclusivism.208

According to an eyewitness, the effect of the speech was dramatic:

The white bourgeoisie in its entirety, and the white petty bourgeoisie in its majority (including the well-to-do mulattoes), even those who at that time would have given their life for the Revolution, were seized with panic, as if the Prime Minister of Cuba had announced that an atomic bomb would fall on the island the following morning. In the rich neighbourhoods of Havana, Santa Clara, Camagüey, Santiago, etc., there was a general uproar. The counter-revolution bristled to a man, putting about the rumour that Fidel Castro had invited coloured men to invade the aristocratic sanctuaries of the country to dance and revel with any vestal virgins who, up to that moment, had been successfully preserved from the terrible radiation which is emitted by black skin. This biological menace, this sexual cataclysm, threatened not only white flesh but also Religion, the Family, Private Property and the marvellous indices of the stock market. The whole sinister mythology developed in the days of slavery returned to the surface of men's consciousness........ The volcano of negrophobia was in eruption........ Highly respectable white ladies left the country repeating that, since Fidel Castro's speech, the blacks had become impossible.209

Restrained as they might have been, Castro's first words on the colour problem threatened to have consequences which their author had probably not anticipated. In order to allay the worst fears engendered by the speech, a televised press conference was arranged to take place three days later. Returning to his subject the Cuban premier once again on this occasion roundly condemned "those who call themselves Christians but who are racists, those who claim they are followers of Martí but who are racists, those who believe themselves to be educated but who are racists". Now
however he stressed that the Revolution did not propose to oblige anyone to dance with anyone else against their will - as if to underline the exclusive emphasis in his previous speech upon the public forms of racism manifested in the "two types" of discrimination. He also spoke at some length about the heroism of Mestre, a black who had fought in the attack on the Moncada barracks back in 1953, and dwelt pointedly upon the merits of the mulatto comandante Juan Almeida. The 'line' was the same but the tone was notably more diplomatic, even perhaps apologetic.

Thus it was that the position of the Cuban revolution on the colour question was defined. In these two speeches in the early months of 1959 Fidel Castro both identified the aspirations of his movement in relation to domestic racial discrimination and established the limits beyond which it could not go. Henceforth he referred to the problem in his speeches only in passing and in a manner which suggested that with the successful completion of the campaign to end discrimination in workplaces and social centres there was little if anything which remained to be done. At the end of the Revolutionary Government's first year of office, he cited in defence of the record of the Revolution the fact that the once private beaches were now open to all Cubans "regardless of colour, without stupid prejudices" and that employment opportunities were likewise open equally to Cubans "of every colour". Speaking to the prisoners taken by the revolutionary forces at the Bay of Pigs, many of whom were black or mulatto, Castro dwelt upon the same theme. It was the Second Declaration of Havana of February 1962 however which set the pattern in the clearest fashion for all future Cuban statements on the colour question, focussing attention upon the manifest evils of North American race relations and
emphasising the common exploitation to which imperialism subjected all the Latin American peoples - Indian, mestizo, black and white alike. Thus it was in the context of a bitter attack on the policies of the United States that, on the occasion of the third anniversary of the CDRs, Castro pointed to the apparently manifest truth

... that here, among the people, among the masses, in the schools, the hospitals and the theatres, on the beaches and in other centres of recreation, in cultural centres and work-centres, there is not a shadow of discrimination.

In conversation with Lee Lockwood in 1965, the Cuban leader stated baldly:

Why hasn't the United States been able to eradicate discrimination? It is because racial discrimination and the exploitation of man by man are two things intimately joined. In Cuba, the exploitation of man by man has disappeared, and racial discrimination has disappeared too.

Few Cubans in the late nineteen-sixties would have gone as far as to claim that the nationalisation of the means of production had by itself caused a significant change in patterns of discrimination. Many, on the other hand, were prepared to argue that, combined with the longer-term educational efforts made by the Party and the communications media, the campaign of 1959 had served as a powerful lever for changing interracial relationships. Many more agreed with René Depestre that the psychological impact of the great cooperative enterprise undertaken by the revolutionary regime had been such as to weaken racist currents in the society:

In its everyday praxis as well as in its great periodic moments of exaltation (mass meetings, celebrations, marches, commemorations of heroes and martyrs, etc.), the Revolution leads towards a spontaneous humanisation of interracial relationships which comes together very well with the conscious labour of education carried out
by the cultural organs of the Party or, at the
level of the popular organisations and the trade
unions, within the framework of institutions
like the cinema, television, radio, the press,
publishing houses and the various activities of
the Consejo Nacional de Cultura. 216

Whatever their views as to the causes of this change, most CDR
members interviewed by the author in 1969 endorsed with minor
qualifications the government opinion that racial discrimination
in Cuba had "disappeared".

Advocates of the view that the pre-revolutionary system of
race relations underwent a drastic reversal in and after 1959 point
in support of their contention to a number of different sorts of
change wrought by the Revolution. First and foremost it is usual
to cite the elimination of open discrimination in public places,
social centres and industrial, agricultural and service enterprises
which, it is argued, has taken place both directly, as a consequence
of the action of politically conscious managers or officials, and
indirectly as the by-product of the opening of the premises of
socially exclusive private associations under state control. 217
In fact, there are no strong reasons in this instance for doubting
that the changes claimed have indeed taken place. In the face of
what is widely known to be the policy of the Revolution, few
responsables would dare to engage in overt discrimination and, just
as important, in the absence of effective competition between
nationalised enterprises the spur of economic interest which
previously underpinned, for example, the exclusion of black women
from employment in department stores and offices is no longer present.
The simple truth which lies at the back of the traditional Marxist
argument regarding the interdependence of racial oppression and
social class-exploitation is relevant here. There remains the
possibility of course that on an inter-personal level, and therefore more covertly, and in spite of the absence of economic reasons or justifications for this behaviour, persons in authority, especially in institutions previously barred to dark-skinned Cubans, may continue to afford significantly different treatment to individuals of different physical appearance. Similarly it is not inconceivable that the attitudes acquired by Cuban blacks as a defensive response to overt discrimination in the past may still operate as effective mechanisms excluding them from certain types of careers and leadership positions. For what it is worth, black Cubans reported the existence of both phenomena to the author in 1969. A more central question, it will be suggested further on however, concerns the precise importance which should be attributed to changes of the type mentioned. For the record, the most convincing argument for viewing discrimination in employment as the key to the transformation of Cuba's colour-class system has been well put by Depestre and turns upon the need felt by revolutionaries to find a practical, workaday expression for their anti-racism:

Before Major Fidel Castro, other white revolutionaries - first and foremost José Martí - had condemned racial discrimination and on various occasions had called upon those Cubans who practised it to revise their false conception of their dark-skinned compatriots. But such criticisms of racism were conducted on an abstract, speculative, Hegelian plane and were not related to the class struggles in Cuban society or to a concrete historical initiative...... In the new conditions of Cuba, the leader of the Revolution was able to call upon white patriots not merely to renounce their illusions and erroneous opinions about the blacks but also to modify concretely their relations with them on a decisive terrain, that of labour.218

A second category of post-revolutionary changes usually mentioned in connection with the alleged abolition of racial discrimination in Cuba has to do with what may be thought of as
part of the infrastructure of colour prejudice, the unequal
distribution of goods and services and other life-chances as
between individuals of different colour. Once again, the
elementary point is not in dispute: by improving the lot of Cuba's
poor in relative if not in absolute terms, certain early measures
undertaken by the Revolutionary Government, including most importantly
the Agrarian Reforms of 1959 and 1963, the Urban Reform of 1960,
the literacy campaign of 1961, wage-increases and social security
improvements, the provision of services gratis or at nominal cost
and the gradual spread of rationing, cannot but have favoured black
Cubans inasmuch as blacks previously suffered more than their
share of poor housing, rural unemployment, illiteracy and low wages.219
The major query which needs to be registered here arises from the
observation that some of these improvements not only were limited
in their extent but also have a 'one-off' character, being inherently
and despite the best of intentions incapable of repetition.
Although the redistributive phase of the Cuban revolution undoubtedly
brought significant and lasting improvements for instance in the two
key areas of job distribution and housing - providing not only
regular employment but positions of responsibility in the management
of state farms to countless coloured agricultural labourers, and
all but eliminating exclusively white residential neighbourhoods -
there is no suggestion that the overall 'racial' distribution of
employment, still less of housing, was altered dramatically.220
Moreover it is an open question - an intriguing question which no
statistics published to date permit us to answer - whether the
equality of opportunity fostered by the new Cuban educational system
and by the distribution of new dwellings to meritorious workers will
result in a long-term trend towards racial equalisation.221
A third and final type of change said to have been effected by revolutionary regime is harder to pin down but has nonetheless often been alluded to by black Cubans within earshot of foreign observers. The most precious conquests achieved by coloured people under the Revolution, it has been argued, are those affecting the intangibles of dignity and self-respect. A number of factors have contributed on this level to a change in the perception and self-perception of blacks in Cuban society: the mere adoption of a clearly anti-racist stand by the revolutionary leadership, permitting possible or expected victims of discrimination "to lean on the moral strength of the Revolution"; the aggressive campaign pursued by Castro against the oppression of North American Negroes and his support for militant black liberation movements abroad; and the elevation of the African elements in Cuban culture to their rightful place as a part of the national cultural heritage.

Critics of the policy of the Cuban leadership on the colour question, principal among them Carlos More, have been particularly incensed by this last set of claims and have devoted considerable space to rebutting them. The existence of a body of opinion deploring the use made by the authorities of the religious culture of santería, palo and other cults was noted in an earlier section of this chapter. According to More, it amounts to nothing less than a manifestation of attempted cultural genocide, particularly if viewed alongside the revolutionary leaders' disdain for the study of African history, their distant but nonetheless respectful attitude
towards the Judaeo-Christian religions and their constant stress
upon the ethnic and cultural 'Latin-ness' of the Americas south of
the Rio Grande. Although it is certainly correct to point
out the very limited character of Cuban government efforts to
restore a sense of racial pride to people of African descent - in
the late 'sixties school text-books and propaganda material for
adults both typically abjured themes of this sort - in the view of
the present writer there are at least three reasons for rejecting
this accusation as it stands. First, the indulgence shown by More
towards the religious and magical content of Afro-Cuban culture
is difficult to square with this author's supposed militant atheism.
Second, the immunity towards 'Latin' cultural influences which is
implicitly attributed to Afro-Cubans and other Afro-Americans is
not consonant with the facts. Third, it is in all events
unrealistic to expect the leaders of a contemporary Third World country
to relinquish one of the most effective levers available to them
for mobilising the population in the effort for economic development,
the inevitably homogenising force of nationalism. Carlos More is
on surer ground when he points out the spuriousness of direct, albeit
propagandistic, comparisons of the plight of Negroes in today's United
States with that of the coloured population in pre-revolutionary
Cuba, though, as we shall see, the point is insufficiently developed.
The contention of the critics, finally, that the alleged anti-racism
of the Cuban government contains in reality important elements of
expediency, condescension and paternalistic racism leads us
directly to the main thrust of the Black Legend of race relations in
Cuba since 1959.

Whereas upholders of the interracial status quo in contemporary
Cuba have leaned heavily, as More indicates, upon "the famous theme
of access to the beaches.\textsuperscript{229} Its opponents have also concentrated their fire on a single topic: in this case the under-representation of 'Afro-Cubans' in the leadership of the revolutionary movement from its inception and in the higher levels of the Party and the administrative, educational and cultural apparatuses since 1959. In More's view, the right of the oppressed to govern themselves being fundamental and other civil rights merely derivative, it is before anything else the absence of blacks from the cabinet\textsuperscript{230} which establishes the continuity between pre- and post-revolutionary patterns of discrimination. The presence of the Afro-Cubans Juan Almeida in the Party leadership and Lazaro Peña (until 1966) at the head of the Cuban Workers' Federation (CTC) has the same significance, it is argued, as the adoption of Negroes by the U.S. State Department. Both More and Clytus insist that these individuals are permitted entry to the top echelons of leadership precisely as "window dressing" and in order to provide a permanent refutation of charges of racial prejudice.\textsuperscript{231} This allegation, like the customary retort that sufficiently meritorious coloured candidates cannot be found, is of course practically irrefutable. What interests us primarily here however is the mistaken idea that the most appropriate test of significant change in Cuba's 'traditional' system of racial discrimination is the proportion of blacks or mulattoes in the government.

The view I propose to advance is that, in doing battle with supporters of the White Legend, More and Clytus fail almost entirely to strike their target since, lacking an adequate perspective on the character of the pre-revolutionary colour-class system, they direct most of their fire in the wrong direction. More's vision is the more seriously obstructed, in spite of his Cuban birth, by the tacit assimilation of twentieth century Cuba to the North American
model of discrimination. An index of this tendency is the use made throughout his article of the politically suggestive but sociologically misleading characterisation of individuals as 'Afro-Cubans' and the avoidance of the somewhat clumsy but more realistic terms 'black', 'mulatto', etc., leading perforce to an account of the failure of independent black political movements which rests heavily upon a 'betrayal-repression' model. Clytus, who describes at some length his experiences of the aesthetic, personal and sexual judgements typically made by Cubans in relation to colour, comes nearer to the mark.

The real drawback of the White Legend of Cuban race relations is that although, as one observer has put it with charming naivete, the Revolution has succeeded in "knocking out Jim Crow", it can scarcely be said that "before the revolution Jim Crow flourished" and it is certainly not the case that the system was ever based on Jim Crow. It is not true either, however, as was indicated earlier, that the centre of the old colour-class system, the point at which colour-discrimination was most systematic and least qualified, was the political system. On the contrary, politics and the professions were the two principal avenues of upward social mobility for blacks and mulattoes; if indeed it has been the practice in recent years to exclude dark-skinned persons from high political office, the fact cannot be represented as a continuation of traditional Cuban racism but must be condemned as a monstrous new development without parallel in the dismal history of the Cuban Republic. This being the case, we shall be forgiven if we fall back on the hypothesis that the monopolisation of important ministerial posts in the Revolutionary Government by whites simply reflects the social origin of the leading cadre of the 26 July Movement and the near-monopoly of decision-
It would not be much of an exaggeration to say that if the Cuban Prime Minister were black we should not have incontrovertible proof that the traditional colour-class system had broken down. The most significant and the only foolproof index of qualitative change in a colour-class system is on the contrary, I wish to suggest, the incidence of 'mixed' marriages, of formal unions between persons of markedly different physical appearance, and, more exactly, of roughly equal socio-economic standing. This would be the case, of course, independently of the observer's views as to the desirability or reprehensibility of miscegenation either as a rule or in the particular case of Cuba. Such evidence as there is on trends in mixed marriages is not encouraging. Unhappily in Cuba as in most countries it is not possible to find relevant statistical data and it is necessary to rely on casual impressions. Clytus has reported: "I constantly saw black women strolling with white men, but I saw no white women with black men". The observation is valid to the extent that Cubans do spend much of their free time on la calle and increasingly do so as couples. It is possible that 'mixed' couples tend not to go out as frequently as those consisting of men and women of approximately similar colour, but this would tend to reinforce the finding that attitudes remain much as they used to be. Moreover any index, such as the results of attentive observation of couples in the street, which includes within its purview more or less casual sexual encounters may be expected to overrepresent the frequency of mixed marriages.

The present observer's impressions were, if anything, less positive than Clytus'. In public places in Havana, whether in the central quarters or in the working-class suburbs, men and women of
sharply different appearance in any of the possible combinations were rarely seen together. Less extended periods of observation in the cities of Santa Clara, Cienfuegos, Holguin and Santiago yielded nothing to suggest that the capital was exceptional in this respect. Couples consisting of white foreigners and dark Cubans - which were exceedingly common in Havana in 1969 - frequently met with reactions from watchers and passers-by varying from wry grins or humorous racist comments to what appeared to be frank disapproval. The latter type of attitude seemed to be most in evidence in the cities of the interior, though this may reflect the fact that foreign visitors were less often seen there than in Havana. In San Ramon section, one regular household consisting of a white man and a dark black woman was known to the author, the man being, significantly, of low status and a resident of the tenement block La Corona.

If Cubans were no longer overwhelmingly concerned with "improving the family" (or with avoiding "setting it back") they did still seem, then, to behave as if they were. There are a number of reasons why attitudes regarding colour might be expected to have altered little even in a decade or more of social revolution. The first and the most frequently invoked in such contexts is the sheer inertia of the island's cultural inheritance or, alternatively, the 'relative autonomy of the superstructure'. After all, if the entire Western Christian linguistic heritage is permeated with racist symbolism, there are innumerable ways in which implicit colour prejudices can survive vigorously but almost unnoticed in a society which is still not a century away from slavery. Thus talk of 'bad hair' is almost convincingly rationalised by reference to the difficulty of combing Negroid curls. The fact that at Carnival time
the outstanding beauties selected as 'Star' and 'Starlets' of the festivities are invariably endowed with light skins and Caucasoid features is explained away as the product of purely aesthetic judgements. Aesthetic criteria which denigrate all things Negroid are often so firmly rooted that they appear to have independent validity.

It is not the case however that in pre-revolutionary times Cubans discriminated by colour in their selection of marriage partners exclusively for pseudo-aesthetic reasons and we should be wary of taking for granted that the only possible explanation for the continuation of this practice is a superstructural 'lag'. In truth - a fact illustrated by the prevalence of folk-stereotypes ascribing chronic unreliability to the black male, promiscuity to the dark female, status-sensitivity to mulattoes - this type of discrimination was based upon a number of broadly realistic assumptions about what being a Negro or a dark mulatto, or the spouse or offspring of one, normally entailed in terms of life chances as well as social prestige. Prejudices these expectations might have been, but they were not baseless. It was not for nothing that in the refrain quoted at the head of this section the social existence of the black was described as a salación. Today, reality no longer sustains to any degree certain traditional beliefs such as that which led countless mothers to warn their daughters that Negroes might steal their virginity but would never marry them. The fact however that we have had to express some doubts as to the extent to which the Revolution altered the pattern of distributive racial inequality means that more than mere cultural inertia may be involved here.

A third and final reason why Cubans continue to select their
marriage partners in the old manner, thus sustaining the core of
the pre-revolutionary colour-class system, will not be neglected.
But first it should be noticed that my contention regarding the
premature invocation of the relative autonomy of superstructures
may apply not only to marital decisions but also to the sphere -
probably the next remove from matrimony from the point of view of
the intensity of traditional colour discrimination - of informal
personal, but non-sexual, relationships. In Havana in 1969, man-
to-man relationships at a personal level between individuals of
sharply different colour were invariably relaxed and unremarkable,
but then it was probably only among the social elite or in a few
well-defined types of situation that this norm was ever departed
from in twentieth century Cuba (a fact which, I repeat, indicates
nothing about the incidence of prejudice but a good deal about the
character of discrimination). A case from the neighbourhood of
San Ramon is suggestive of the way in which the essential dynamics
of the colour-class system may persist in new forms and despite
appearances at the interpersonal level. In San Ramon the intimacy
of black-white personal relations seemed to be directly related to
whether or not the subjects regarded themselves as political
comrades, in practice by virtue of active participation in the CDRs,
and whether the relationship in question was structured principally
by this fact. Relations between active cederistas of contrasting
physical appearance were often close. In the CDRs and among Cuban
revolutionaries, it was explained, colour is irrelevant; what
matters is whether or not a person is a compañero, a good comrade,
one who can be depended on and whose heart is in the right place.
Depestre among others has pointed to this attitude as an example of
the "spontaneous humanisation of interracial relationships" which
he says has been produced by the Revolution. The interpretation
is plausible enough, particularly if it is held in mind that the lower organs of the CDR system occupy a social space not previously structured by any formal organisation, but there is another possibility: that with the institutionalisation of the committees a new sphere was created in which Cubans saw fit to practice their venerable custom of paying attention to a variety of attributes in assessment of one another, some or a combination of which could offset and even 'abolish' a defective physical appearance.

The attitude of white CDR members in San Ramon towards non-members who were also black was consistent with this hypothesis. A general tendency for whites to be inordinately incensed by black counter-revolutionaries has been suggested by sensitive Cubans. An element in the notoriety in San Ramon of La Corona similarly appeared to be the fact that it housed a proportionately higher number of dark Negroes than the surrounding buildings. In reality less than one-third of household heads in La Corona was 'black', according to the CDR census, the largest group being 'white'. Nevertheless some cederistas habitually 'explained' the political sentiments, ignorance, chusmería and alleged debauchery of the people of the building in a time-honoured Cuban manner - by rubbing the skin of the left forearm with the finger and nodding in the appropriate direction. The same uneducated but fervently revolutionary CDR activist who could be observed barracking with seemingly perfect ease in the present of a black comrade could also ejaculate impatiently about La Corona: "You can't do anything with those blacks! ..... The blacks in there are destroying everything! ..... They are all monkeys!" In the case of the tenement, in other words, colour could be regarded as a highly salient attribute, granted its inhabitants' singular lack of positive qualities capable
of mitigating this defect and hence of 'whitening' then in the eyes of coloristas.

The several sophisticated anti-racists in San Ramon attributed the existence of racist undercurrents in relations between La Corona and the committees to the educational or ideological backwardness of some CDR members. Similar attitudes, they implied, would not be found in the more selective ranks of the Party, which may be true. Once again however it is possible to doubt whether the spread of education and the deepening of ideological indoctrination will be sufficient to eliminate colour prejudices so long as there continues to be an objective correlation between colour and important foci of social problems of the type represented by La Corona. To be sure, what is to be combatted is an inheritance from the past, but the past does not, unhappily, weigh exclusively upon men's consciousness.

This brings us to the point where we can no longer ignore the final factor which has contributed to the failure of Cubans to modify their behaviour patterns in the key sectors of the colour-class system. It will be recalled that in 1959 Fidel Castro at no point singled out discrimination at the interpersonal and familial levels as primary targets for the revolutionaries. Indeed it is not impossible to understand his second speech as specifically excluding these areas from inspection by would be assailants of pre-revolutionary racism. In all events the policy pursued since 1959 has effectively neglected to tackle either directly or indirectly the sources of colour discrimination in personal relations between Cubans. Perhaps because at the deepest level of awareness many educated revolutionaries, black, white and mulatto, remain unconvinced that 'black is beautiful',
observers of different persuasions have been able to note a tendency for women's magazines, propaganda-posters and the like to retain the implicit assumption that 'real people' are white. Despite the efforts of a conscious group of young black intellectuals who work mainly in the theatrical and cultural sectors, attempts to follow through the aesthetic implications of the new racial equality, such as the manufacture of black but otherwise Caucacoid dolls, have too often proved gauche in the extreme. Although internal Party literature and the pamphlets used in the training of social workers, policemen and judges are often self-consciously anti-racist, a narrow definition of the phenomenon is invariably employed, and, as for the government's stand on racial oppression in the United States, in the last analysis official Cuban statements contain a good deal of the traditional and, needless to say, unjustified self-righteousness with which Latin American leaders have viewed the Caliban in the north. The notion that some degree of positive discrimination along the lines of colour as well as of class might be desirable (even if immediately impractical) has to the present writer's knowledge never been mooted in Cuba. Finally and most important of all, as several commentators have noticed there exists a species of taboo of frank public discussion on the colour question. Since, as it has been defined, racial discrimination has been abolished, it is easy to accuse those who insist that all is not well of gratuitously creating division in the ranks of the Cuban people, of being inverted racists, or even of being agents of imperialism.

In one sense the picture which it is intended to convey here is as unattractive as what I have called the Black Legend of post-revolutionary race relations. What has been suggested is that in the most critical area of the colour-class system not only has little
changed but no effective leadership has been provided. At the same time, however, the perspective which has been adopted permits us to show rather more indulgence in judging this failure on the part of the revolutionary regime than has usually been shown by its critics. It is in fact quite unnecessary to have recourse to the hypothesis of a white racist conspiracy within the Cuban revolution. Surveying the history of the gradual emergence of a sophisticated anti-racist consciousness in recent decades in the United States of America and elsewhere, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, were it not for the growth of a militant and independent social movement of blacks, very little at all might have been achieved. Yet, as has repeatedly been stressed in the foregoing pages, colour-class systems of discrimination seem to be endowed with the ability to delay indefinitely the rise of such movements. For this reason alone it is perfectly possible that it will turn out less easy in the long run to bring about the definitive suppression of the heritage of slavery in countries like Cuba and Brazil than in more obviously racist societies such as the U.S.A.

If it is the case that black liberation will have to come about in Cuba, with all the difficulties thereby entailed, without the prior emergence of a mass black self-consciousness, the worst aspect of the current situation is clearly the impossibility of an intelligent and thorough discussion of the problem within the framework of the revolutionary order. A certain amount may perhaps be achieved by enlightened young black intellectuals engaging in 'guerrilla actions' designed to provoke reflection without openly challenging the established myths. Ultimately however the solution to the colour problem - and the same applies to other issues of socio-cultural change which have been discussed in this
chapter, as well as to many which have not been dealt with — depends
upon the development of institutional forms which assure revolutionary
Cubans the right not merely to defend past conquests but also to
extend the Revolution into new fields, if necessary challenging its
present policies and leadership in so doing. It is foolish to
condemn the Castroist regime for having created a less than perfect
society in under a decade-and-a-half of revolutionary change. It
would be equally short-sighted however to assume that with the
passage of time the desired improvements will occur automatically
and without conscious effort. Revolutionary societies being what
they are, a great deal will depend upon the flexibility, maturity
and innovative capacity which is shown by the Cuban political system
in coming years, and it is to this subject that we must return in
conclusion.
1. A secondary aim of the Congress was to bring together teachers' delegates for the election of the leadership of a new National Trade Union of Workers in Education and Science. Its General Secretary, Olga Amaro, reported at the meeting held on the last day of the Congress that the Union's membership totalled 174,518, 77% of whom were women. See report in GWR, 9 May 1971, p. 1.


4. See "Declaration", op. cit.


6. Ibid., pp. 224-5.


8. In contrast with Puerto Rican family patterns and child-rearing practices, which have been the subject of numerous monographs, the Cuban family is discussed with summary brevity by D.W. Ames, "Negro Family Types in a Cuban Solar", Phylon (Quarterly Review of Race and Culture, Atlanta, Georgia), Vol. XI, No. 2 (1950), p. 163; Problems of the New Cuba (New York: Foreign Policy Association, 1955), p. 68; and W. MacGaffey and C. Barnett, Twentieth Century Cuba (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1965), pp. 62-67. Lower class child-rearing was the subject of a somewhat pedestrian investigation, heavily influenced by the 'cultural' psychoanalysis of Kardiner and Linton, during the last years before the revolution of 1959. (See José Angel Bustamante, "Actitud de la familia ante el niño enfermo en Cuba", Archivos de Neurología y Psiquiatría, Vol. 8, No. 1, January-March 1958; and "Patrones de crianza del niño en la clase baja urbana de la Habana", ibid., Vol. 8, No. 2, April 1958.) Of much greater value is the preliminary but highly suggestive work of Verena Martínez-Alier. See her "Color, clase y matrimonio en Cuba en el siglo XIX", Revista de la Biblioteca Nacional "Jose Martí"

10. Problems of the New Cuba, op.cit. The author is grateful to Verena Martínez-Alier for drawing his attention to these figures.


12. Ibid., p. 65.

13. Ibid., p. 63.

14. Martínez-Alier, "Color, clase y matrimonio", op.cit., pp. 108-109. On the basis of her 19th century data, Martínez-Alier offers a new view on the disputed question of the origins of the so-called 'matrifocal family' in the Caribbean. According to her contention: "It is .... in the sociological factors deriving from the type of social order as it prevailed in the colonial period, where the lower classes, on account of their ethnic cum economic and social inferior status, were sexually marginalised by the dominant sector, that one must seek the reasons for the family forms obtaining in the post-colonial period, and not so much in the labour relations characteristic of plantation systems productive of economic marginality or male absenteeism". Martínez-Alier, "Elopement and Seduction", op.cit., p. 129. (Emphasis added.)

15. MacGaffey and Barnett, loc.cit.


17. Between 1959 and 1963, the government held 'mass weddings' for the purpose of legalising common law unions. From 1967 all that a couple was required to do in order to be married was to present themselves in a state law office or one of the Palacios de Matrimonios together with two witnesses and sign the necessary affidavit. Marriage ceremonies were provided free of charge and a special ration of food and drink was allowed to recently-married persons. Divorce could be obtained immediately by mutual consent and relatively easily at the request of a single party.


20. Ibid.


23. See the extracts in Linda Jenness, Women and the Cuban Revolution (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), pp. 3-9. The implied suggestion by the author of this pamphlet that an adequate assessment of the progress of women's liberation in Cuba may be arrived at by comparison with modern Mexico, Bolivia and Spain is questionable, to say the least.


25. The slightly effeminate beauty suggested by the posters which were disseminated throughout Europe after 1967 could not be more misleading in this respect.

26. In 1969 countrymen sympathetic to the Revolution still used expressions such as los maricones de la Habana ("the queers of Havana") to refer to city-bred intellectuals in general, as was directly confirmed by the author.

27. América Paredes has advanced the view that what is peculiarly notorious in the Mexican cult of machismo, as distinct from the universally-held association between virility and military valour, is of twentieth century origin. Those components of it which are not due to straightforward mimicry of the cult of the cowboy which originated on the North American frontier have their origin in the analogous experience of Mexico and Mexicans during and after the Revolution. See "Estados Unidos, México y el Machismo", Journal of Inter-American Studies, Vol. XI, No. 1, (January 1967).

28. Cf. ibid., p. 82ff.


30. Ibid.


33. For an account of the UMAP episode and some commonly-held attitudes towards it, see José Yglesias, In the Fist of the Revolution (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968), p. 274ff.

34. "A Discusión", op.cit.

35. "Declaration", op.cit., p. 5.

36. Ibid.

37. There is general agreement among critics that 1959 saw the initiation of a period of considerable creative potential in the Cuban theatre. The curtailment of this promising development may be dated more or less precisely in 1962-63. Two useful surveys are Julio Matas, "Theater and Cinematography", in Mesa-Lago (ed.), op.cit., pp. 427-445; and Mario Benedetti, "Situacion actual de la cultura cubana", Marcha (Montevideo), 27 December 1968, translated and reprinted as "Present Status of Cuban Culture", in Rolando Bonachea and Nelson P. Valdés (eds.), Cuba in Revolution (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1972), pp. 500-526.

38. This is not the place to examine the intricate issues involved in the successive domestic and international exchanges which have centred upon the poetry and politics of Heberto Padilla. It seems to the present writer, nevertheless, that the reasons for the generally unproductive turn taken since 1968 or earlier by the debate on the role of the revolutionary writer in Cuba are closely related to some of the causes, which are to be examined further on, of the unevenness of the revolutionary leadership's response to the wider challenge of socio-cultural change. A number of the pertinent documents, including Padilla's self-criticism before the Artists' Writers' Union in Havana in 1971, have been translated and collected as "Cuba: Revolution and the Intellectual - the Strange Case of Heberto Padilla", in Index (London), Vol. I, No. 2, Summer 1972, pp. 65-88, pp. 101-134.


40. Ruiz, op.cit., pp. 159-163.

42. Ibid., p. 402.


44. Ibid., p. 405ff. The Declaration of the First National Congress on Education and Culture notes "the trend of certain Catholic groups to separate socio-economic from philosophical problems - which makes possible and even stimulates individual contributions in activities connected with the Revolution's economic construction". "Declaration", op.cit., p. 4.

45. Ibid., p. 413.


47. "Declaration", op.cit., p. 4.

48. Agrupación Católica, op.cit.

49. "Declaration", op.cit.


52. See particularly Bastide, op.cit., pp. 23-45, pp. 111-112, pp. 119-120.

53. Cuba, Oficina Nacional de los Censos Demográfico y Electoral, Censos de Población, Vivienda y Electoral, 1953, Informe General (Havana, 1953), quoted by MacGaffey and Barnett, op.cit., p. 34.


56. F.W. Knight, Slave Society, op.cit., Table 5, p. 53, and Table 8, p. 86. In contrast with the case of Brazil, there is no evidence of contact between Cuban Negroes and Africa after the end of the slave trade. William R. Bascom, "Yoruba Acculturation in Cuba" in Les Afro-Américains (Dakar: IFAN, 1953), translated and reprinted as "La aculturación yoruba en Cuba", Publicaciones del Centro de Estudios Africanistas, Serie IV, Num. 1, October 1966, p. 3.

57. For instance, Esteban Montejo, the 'author' of Miguel Barnet (ed.), Biografía de un cimarrón (Havana: Instituto de Etnología y Folklore, 1966).


63. Juan Pérez de la Riva, Cuadro sinóptico de la esclavitud en Cuba y de la cultura occidental (Havana, Suplemento de la Revista Actas del Folklore, May 1961), p. 23.

64. Marcelino Arozarena, "Los cabildos de nación ante el registro de la propiedad", Actas del Folklore, year 1, No. 3, March 1961.


68. Bastide writes: "Of all the African religions that have been preserved in America, it is undoubtedly that of the Yoruba which has remained most faithful to its ancestral traditions". Op.cit., p. 115.

69. At least one specialist is of the opinion that, of the 436,844 Africans registered as entering Cuba between 1790 and 1875, the "immense majority" came from the Yoruba lands. (Rómulo Lachatañeré, "El Sistema Religioso de los Lucumí y otras influencias africanas en Cuba", Estudios Afrocubanos, Vols. III, IV and V (1939, 1940 and 1945-46), extract reprinted in Actas del Folklore, year 1, No. 2, February 1961, pp. 3-9). It is almost certainly the case that a vast majority of the slaves imported to the New World in the nineteenth century came from the ports which then spanned the West African coast between the Bight of Benin and the Bight of Biafra - or between contemporary Togo in the west and Cameroon in the east. (Philip D. Curtin and Jan Vansina, "Sources of the Nineteenth Century Atlantic Slave Trade", Journal of African History, Vol. 5 (1964), pp. 185-208, cited by Knight, op.cit., p. 48). The case for a large Yoruba contingent rests upon the observation that the period in which the slave trade into Cuba reached its plateau - approximately 1815-1840 - corresponds to a phase of extended warfare in Yorubaland, in the course of which the forces of the declining empire of Oyo were repeatedly defeated by those of its neighbours, which included the kingdom of Dahomey, a state notorious for supplying the slave trade with its prisoners-of-war. The defeat of Oyo by the Fulani at Ilorin in 1835 led to a massive southward migration of Yoruba from the city of Old Oyo, followed by a further period of endemic war. For these events, see Robert S. Smith, The Kingdoms of the Yoruba (London: Methuen, 1969), pp. 120-154; and Peter Norton-Williams, "The Yoruba Kingdom of Oyo", in Daryll Forde and P.M. Kaberry (eds.), West African Kingdoms in the Nineteenth Century (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 36-69.

70. Montero, "Influencias africanas", op.cit., p. 2. The difficulty of providing an exact account of the ethnic origins of slaves imported during the nineteenth century derives both from a lack of data on slave-imports occurring after 1800 and from the confusion of names and peoples that is contained in such sources as exist.


72. Barreal, "Tendencias sincréticas", op.cit., p. 18. In an early work, much influenced by positivist evolutionism, the well-known Cuban ethnographer Fernando Ortiz put the point more forcefully as follows.

To sum up, African fetishism survives in Cuba not only because of the intellectual backwardness of the Negro race but because of its essential
equivalence with the religious element in Catholicism, because of the indifference typically shown by Cuban society with regard to such matters and because of the deficient psychic development of considerable masses of whites, who, by their closeness to the level of the African psyche, have facilitated ..... the communion of ideas, superstitions and prejudices between the two races in accord with a law analogous to that demonstrated in Physics by the experiment of the communicating glasses of liquid ..... (El hampa afrocubano: Los Negros Brujos (apuntes para un estudio de etnología criminal)) (Madrid: F. Fe, 1906), p. 335.

73. This has recently been documented by Moreno Fraginals, op.cit., pp. 46-55; Knight, op.cit., pp. 107-113; and Hall, op.cit., pp. 43-50. H.S. Klein, following in the older tradition of Tannenbaum and Elkins, makes a great deal of the scrupulous attention paid to the Christianisation of slaves in the very different world of Cuba in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Op.cit., pp. 87-104.

74. Or, to be more exact, the local variant, the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre.

75. Virgen de Regla.

76. Oduduwa with the Son, and Obatala with the Holy Sacrament. The reality is in fact less clear-cut than this sentence suggests owing to (i) the existence of at least two well-established versions of the Yoruba Creation myth which attribute different roles to these deities, and (ii) the inconsistency and regional variation of the identifications observed in Cuba, a phenomenon which is particularly marked in the case of Obatala, who is also very commonly assimilated to Our Lady of Mercy. On the Yoruba myths, see William R. Bascom, The Yoruba of South-Western Nigeria (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), pp. 9-12; and Smith, op.cit., Chapter 2, pp. 15-31. On Cuba, see Barreal, "Tendencias sincréticas", op.cit.; Lachateñeré, "El Sistema Religioso de los Lucumís", op.cit., extracts reprinted in Actas del Folklore, year 1, No. 6, June 1961, pp. 3-8; and year 1, No. 7, July 1961, pp. 9-20; Teodoro Díaz Fabelo, Olorun (Havana: Teatro Nacional de Cuba, 1961); José Luciano Franco, La presencia negra, op.cit., Chapter II (pp. 31-58); and Bastide, op.cit., pp. 152-170.

77. Bastide, op.cit., pp. 105-6. The same factor was not entirely irrelevant to the transformation undergone by the Yoruba religion as a result of its transplantation to American soil. However in Nigeria the cult of the orishas took two forms. In the first place orishas were regarded as the founders of lineages; on the other hand certain members of a given lineage, together with non-related persons, formed fraternities to dance for the orisha and to seek to be 'possessed' by him. Members of the lineage were known as 'sons' of the orisha, whereas non-members successfully possessed were said to be 'born' of him. (Ibid., pp. 115-116).
Although in Cuba today devotees of Santería who are possessed by an Orisha (Dios del Santo) are referred to as Hijos del Santo, it is evident only the second type of cult-group which may be said to have been reinvented on Cuban soil. On the modern Nigerian pattern, see William R. Bascom, "The Social Role of the Yoruba Cult Group", American Anthropological Association, Memoir No. 46, 1944.

78. See Lachapelle, "Sistema Religioso", op. cit., extract reprinted in Actas del Folklore, year 1, No. 6, June 1961, pp. 3-8; and "Rasgos Bantús en la Santería", Viernes (Havana), 30 September 1950, reprinted in Actas del Folklore, year 1, No. 8, August 1961, pp. 3-5.


80. The only other African religious current which continued on a significant scale into the present century was Regla Arará, better known by the term used to refer to the objects said to contain its deities: vodun. Syncretism with Santería was also marked in this case. Despite heavy Haitian immigration to Cuba in the twentieth century, however, the Dahomeyan influence in the Cuban slave population was not sufficiently significant to make the autonomous influence of vodun a lasting one. Barreal, "Tendencias sincréticas", op. cit., pp. 21-22.

81. Pérez de la Riva, Cuadro sinóptico, op. cit.; León, "Presencia", op. cit., p. 11.


87. More exactly, it was held to contain two spirits, that of the divine incarnated in a fish, Téhízé, and that of a woman, Síhán, chosen by God (Abasi) to receive his Secret and later sacrificed by her kinsmen, the Efor, who were in turn predestined to become the possessors of the Secret. (See Cabrera, La Sociedad Secreta, op. cit., pp. 16-17, p. 19.) According to one interpretation which draws heavily upon the anthropological ideas of Freud, the explanation of the frequent mention made by the Abakúa of the sacrifice of women who are the "possessors of secrets" is that the Efik/Efor cultural elements in question were brought to the New World at the moment when the social organisation of these peoples had recently evolved from matriarchal to patriarchal forms. (See José Angel Bustamante, "El sacrificio totémico en el Baroko Nónigo", Revista Bimestre Cubana, Vol. LXXIII, July-December 1957.)
88. Fernando Ortiz, op. cit.

89. See bibliography.


92. Specifically, the religious significance of the stones kept beneath Yoruba altars, in which the power of the orishas is said to reside, was greater in Cuba than in Nigeria. Bascom, "Focus", op. cit., p. 65.


94. Ibid., p. 6.


100. 0.5% said that they were Freemasons. The figure given for "Afro-Cuban faith" (0.5%) must be taken as entirely spurious in view of the observation made above and to be insisted upon further on that most practitioners regard themselves as Catholics. See Agrupación Católica, "Encuesta", op. cit.

101. Cabrera, La sociedad secreta, op. cit.


104. Two of the words cited by Cabrera were frequently noticed by the author in 1969: chébere, an adjective applied to a handsome,
jovial or witty individual, and butúba, meaning 'food'. Others
include nampaar (to kill), ferenbûke (cocky, gutsy) and
Koriofo. Ibid., p. 9ff.


106. A high-ranking ñánigo.


This essay also includes a discussion of the literature on the
psychiatric significance of 'possession' and related features
of cult practice in the region.


110. La Sociedad Secreta, op.cit., p. 8.


112. Viz. F. Ortiz, El hampa afrocubano: Los Negros Brujos (apuntes
para un estudio de etnología criminal) [The Afro-Cuban
Underworld: The Negro Sorcerers (notes for a study of criminal
ethnology)] (op.cit.); Rafael Roche Monteagudo, La Policía y
sus misterios en Cuba [The Police and its Mysteries in Cuba]
(Havana: La Prueba, 1900); Israel Castellanos, Medicina legal y
criminología afrocubanas [Afro-Cuban Criminology and Legal
Medicine] (Havana: Molina, 1937). The last-mentioned work was
widely hailed as having drawn attention, by means of measurements
of the craniums of Cuban convicts, to 'unequivocal signs of
physical progress among those belonging to the coloured race, due
to the improvement and civilisation of the milieu in which they
are formed'. Leonor Saavedra y Gómez, La delincuencia infantil

113. See Los Negros Brujos, op.cit.; and El hampa afrocubano: Los
Negros Esclavos (estudio sociológico y de derecho público)
(Madrid: F. Pe, 1918).

114. See the Introduction by Malinowski to the English edition of this
work: Fernando Ortiz, Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar

115. The author of this audacious attack was Rómulo Lachatañeré, an
underestimated scholar whose studies on the religious aspects
of santería are probably superior to those of Ortiz himself.
Without naming names, Lachatañeré argued that the global
application of these terms could be attributed only either to an
elementary mistake or to religious prejudice. Its effect was to
obscure the clear distinction made by African as well as by
European religions between legitimate religious or magical
practices on the one hand and witchcraft or 'black' magic on the
other. It had the additional drawback that the nature and causes
of crimes committed during and after slavery and attributed by
the press of the day to "witches" had, as a result of failure to
draw the appropriate distinctions, never been properly investigated.
See "El Sistema Religioso de los Lucumís", op.cit., extract reprinted in Actas del Folklore, year 1, No. 5, May 1961, pp. 11-15. Other works by this author include Oh mio Yemayá (Manzanillo: El Arte, 1938); and Manual de Santería: el sistema de cultos 'Lucumís' (Havana: Caribe, 1942).


118. As was reported to the author in 1969.

119. The former was alleged, to the indignation of some local cederistas, by one of the parties to a Popular Court hearing in San Ramón in 1969. The Castro brothers, the Mulatto comandante Juan Almeida, and Vilma Espín were specifically cited as practitioners. It is widely known, however, that Dr. René Vallejo, another comandante and until his death in 1969 personal physician to Fidel Castro, was a devotee of santería, having been barred from Party membership for this reason. Vallejo's funeral, which was attended by Castro and other leaders, was presided over jointly by the Army and a contingent of santeros.

120. Angeliers León, "La expresión del pueblo en el TMC", Actas del Folklore, year 1, No. 1, January 1961, p. 5.

121. León, "Presencia", op.cit., p. 3.

122. "Creación del instituto de etnología y folklore", Actas del Folklore, year 1, Nos. 10-12, October-December 1961, pp. 34-35.

123. This company has since earned a considerable international reputation for its productions of Yoruba, 'Congo' and Abakúa music and dance, as well as of carnival music of more recent origin. Its first 56 members were selected from a group of over 400 applicants, all of whom had become expert in the appropriate style of dancing or drumming by participating in cult religions. The aim of the company was described in 1963 as being "to select those forms which possess true artistic value and to organise them according to the most modern theatrical principles, without thereby betraying their folkloric essence". (See Rogelio A. Martínez Furé's text in the 1963 Programme of the Conjunto.)

124. Angeliers León, "El Instituto de Etnología y Folklore de la Academia de Ciencias", Etnología y Folklore, No. 1 (1966), p. 13. Between 1962 and 1966, the Institute undertook studies on the following subjects: (1) the backgrounds of workers on a state sugar plantation; (2) a community of Haitian immigrants in Camagüey province; (3) the Abakúa society among Havana port workers; (4) the eradication of the 'economically-weak urban neighbourhoods'; (5) the history of slavery; (6) new forms of
peasant production; and (7) pockets of African cultural influence. See ibid., pp. 13-16.

125. See Bascom, "Two Forms of Afro-Cuban Divination", op.cit. In 1969 informants guessed independently that there might be of the order of 300 babalawos in Cuba.

126. I am grateful to Alberto Pedro Díaz of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore in Havana for clarification on this point. For a very detailed study of the divination practised by the babalawos of modern West Africa, see William R. Bascom, Ifa Divination (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1969).


128. Ibid., p. 82.

129. Ibid., p. 85.

130. Such as were present, for instance, in Case 35/68 heard by the Popular Court of Locality 2, where a man accused of Prohibited Gaming was suspected by his CDR of concealing numerous illegal or "anti-social" practices under the cloak of his santería.

131. According to Bascom, the Yoruba terms are the same as those employed in Nigeria. "Focus", op.cit., p. 64.

132. Ortiz suggested in an early work that the number of men involved in brujería was "much greater" than that of women, which, he wrote, was surprising in view of the frequency with which women were active in brujería both in Africa and in Europe. This calls for two comments. First, it certainly is the case that the high-status roles such as those of babalawo and olubata (drummer) are monopolised by men, which is probably what the writer had in mind. Second, this appears to be a clear instance of Ortiz’s ethnocentric confusion on the subject of witchcraft. See Los Negros Brujos, op.cit., pp. 253-54.

133. The choice of the appropriate orisha is the province of a babalawo but in Cuba the most popular figures tend also to be those which are most often selected by divination. They are Changó (Shango/Santa Barbara) the orisha of warfare and of lightning — and not incidentally a symbol of machismo in the eyes of most Cubans; Ochún (Oshun/Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre) a local Mulatto Virgin, orisha of fresh-water and female beauty, and something of a coquette by reputation; Yemayá (Yemanja/Virgen de Regla) orisha of sea-water and maternity; and, not least important, Babalú-Ayé, orisha of sickness and indigence (the name is borrowed from Dahomey) who was identified with St. Lazarus until the latter’s recent desanctification.

134. In 1969 the sight of women, most of them elderly, dressed in this way was still a common one in the streets of Havana.

135. For a description, see Ortiz, Africana, op.cit., p. 194ff., and p. 204ff.

136. Santeras naturally are equipped with numerous means of securing
an adequate supply of new devotees. Divining may be used to indicate to an initiate that an orisha wishes a member of his family to be 'presented'; or the santera may simply rely upon her own powers of 'foresight'.


139. Pedro Pupo Pérez et al, "Report on Internal Order", GNR, 11 May 1969, p. 9. Either the Vice-Minister himself or his translator - which, I have been unable to ascertain - exhibited unexpected ignorance on this occasion by referring to "such fánigo sects as the abakúa and paleros". (Ibid.) It is clear from the context and from subsequent discussions (see below) that it is members of the Abakúa society that are principally involved.


142. "Speech of 6 June 1971 at the meeting to mark the X Anniversary of the creation of the Ministry of the Interior", GNR, 13 June 1971, p. 5.


144. Lydida Cabrera, La Sociedad Secreta, op.cit., p. 21.

145. Ibid., p. 10.


147. "Abakuá will be around for a bit yet! There'll be Abakuá as long as there are drums". Hugh Thomas, Cuba, op.cit., p. 1432n.


149. In 1971 it was reported that 50% of all crime occurred in the national capital and that 50% of juvenile crime was among sixteen- and seventeen-year olds. (Castro, "Speech of 6 June 1971", op.cit., p. 6.) The National Congress on Education and Culture was informed that, in addition to the one I have focussed on, the following factors were important in the backgrounds of juvenile criminal cases: (1) mental backwardness and/or scholastic retardation, (2) absence from school, (3) the law which prevents adolescents from working before a minimum age, (4) bad living
conditions at home, (5) low per capita family income, (c) dis-
rupted or incomplete families, (7) inconsistencies in the law
and its enforcement, (8) inadequacy, incorrect priorities and
poor coordination of the social work (prevención social) system.
(See "Declaration", op.cit., p.4.) It is certainly the case
that Cuban criminologists would do well to enquire more than
they do into the states of mind and inter-personal processes
which intervene causally between these factors and the
commission of offences. Nevertheless I find it hard to accept
the position apparently held by Martin Loney, that the
"straightforward positivistic frame of reference" used, and the
fact that the factors cited "are identical to those used by
Western criminologists in explaining delinquency under
capitalism", indicate that the Cubans have fundamentally misread
the nature of the problem. Cf. his "Social Control in Cuba",

150. The dramatic effect produced by the rhyme cannot be reproduced:

White is a profession,
Mulatto is a trade,
Black is washed-up and done-for!

(The word salación refers to the technique by means of which the
Afro-Cuban sorcerer, using salt, secures the definitive undoing
of his victim.) Elizabeth Sutherland quotes some variations on
this tripartite theme in The Youngest Revolution, op.cit., p. 145.

151. Two carefully-prepared specialist bibliographies may be cited in
support of this contention: Halcy Leon Pérez, "Bibliografía
sobre el Negro en Cuba", Publicaciones del Centro de Estudios
Africanistas (Havana, Instituto de Etnología y Folklore), Serie
III, Num. 1, September 1966; and Rafael Fermoselle-López, "The
Blacks in Cuba: A Bibliography", Caribbean Studies, Vol. 12,
No. 3, October 1972, pp. 103-112. The former, prepared by the
librarian of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore, contains
74 items, all consisting of books, pamphlets or articles published
or re-published in Cuba between January 1959 and the end of 1965.
The coverage of the latter on the other hand is unrestricted in
time or space and includes a total of 194 items. If (purely for
purposes of a rough illustration) we discount (a) all titles
relating exclusively to the nineteenth century or earlier, and
(b) all titles which are devoted to religious or cultural themes,
we get a total of 15 items published outside Cuba, 33 published
in Cuba before 1959, but a maximum of two published in Cuba since
the Revolution (dated 1960 and 1962 respectively). The present
writer would wish to add several items in the first category but
only one (1966) in the category of items published since 1959.
The corresponding references will be provided below.

152. Harry Ring, How Cuba Uprooted Race Discrimination (New York: Merit

153. Ibid., second edition, pp. 2-5.

in Irving Louis Horowitz (ed.), Cuban Communism (New York:

156. By analogy with the traditional terms of the debate over Spanish colonial policy towards the New World Indians.


158. Quoted by Thomas, Cuba, op.cit., p. 1434n.


160. This category includes one uniquely nuanced discussion which contains a lively and accurate report on the actual concerns and opinions of young black and mulatto intellectuals in Havana in 1967. See Elizabeth Sutherland, "Colony Within the Colony", in her The Youngest Revolution, op.cit., pp. 138-168.

161. An exception on both counts is René Depestre, a Haitian mulatto poet permanently resident in Havana since 1959, who in 1966 published an article which pointed out the more blatant factual errors and inconsistencies in Carlos More's argument, providing at the same time an eloquent statement on the significance of the Cuban revolution for the less fortunate dark-skinned peoples of the Caribbean. See "Carta de Cuba sobre el imperialismo de la mala fe", Casa de las Américas, No. 34, January-February 1966, reprinted in René Depestre, Por la Revolución, Por la Poesía (Havana: Instituto del Libro, 1969), pp. 71-130. Subsequent page references are to the latter source.


163. For a reasonably successful effort along these lines, see Nelson Amaro and Carmelo Mesa-Lago, "Inequality and Classes", in Mesa-Lago (ed.), op.cit., pp. 346-353.

164. Lewis, op.cit., p. 167.

165. Green, op.cit., p. 92.

166. Thomas, Cuba, op.cit., pp. 1120-21. Cf. a similar passage in Thomas, "Middle Class Politics", in Veliz (ed.), op.cit., pp. 263-64. It is characteristic of Thomas' style that this statement is accompanied by a wealth of factual detail, much of which would appear, on the face of it, to render it untenable.

168. See "Le peuple noir", op.cit., pp. 177-198.


170. Ibid., pp. 532-536.

171. Ibid., p. 536.

172. Ibid., pp. 537-540.

173. Ibid., p. 540.


175. Ibid., p. 61.


177. Ibid., p. 542. For the source of doubts on this score, at least as far as Brazil is concerned, see Florestan Fernandes' summary of the major findings of his research in "The Weight of the Past", in John Hope Franklin (ed.), Color and Race (New York: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1968), pp. 282-301; and "Immigration and Race Relations in Sao Paulo", in Magnus Mörner (ed.), Race and Class in Latin America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp. 122-142.


182. On this see Martínez-Alier, "Color, clase y matrimonio", op.cit.; and "Elopement and Seduction", op.cit.

183. See the references given in note 59 above; and Franklin W. Knight,
184. See Harris, *op.cit.*, pp. 79-94.

185. On the labour shortage in nineteenth century Cuba and the measures taken with a view to its solution, the best source is Moreno Fraginals, *op.cit.*, pp. 141-155. On the economic position of the free coloured community, see references cited in note 60 above; and Knight "Cuba", in Cohen and Greene, *op.cit.*, pp. 289-300.

186. Cf. Harris, *op.cit.* It is not essential for purposes of this argument that the demographic proportions and the security of the position of free coloureds were both considerably more delicately balanced in Cuba in the nineteenth century than they ever were in Brazil.

187. MacGaffey and Barnett, *op.cit.*, p. 34.

188. Thus the Mulatto character in Manuel Granados' perceptive novel, who declares:

\[
\text{No vuelvas a decirme nices, o vamos a tener en grande! Fijate que ni soy haito ni tengo pasa. Tengo pelo, pelo, pelo!}
\]

*(Adiós y el tiempo roto (Havana: Casa de las Américas, 1967), p. 208.)*

189. Thomas, *Cuba*, *op.cit.*, p. 1119. For further data of this type, see *ibid.*, pp. 1117-1126.

190. It is incidentally almost certainly false. See More, "Le peuple noir", *op.cit.*, pp. 189-195; and Depestre, "Carta de Cuba", *op.cit.*, pp. 74-84.


195. For this very reason, Cuban Negro leaders sympathised with the policy inaugurated by the Grau government in the 'thirties of repatriating Haitian and other black contract-labourers, or codasos as they were pejoratively known. See Foreign Policy Association, *Problems of the New Cuba* (New York, 1935), extract reprinted in Robert F. Smith (ed.), *Background to Revolution: The Development of Modern Cuba* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), p. 124. On the wider question of the plight of the codasos, see Alberto Pedro Díez, "Guamaca, una comunidad haitiana", *Etnología y Folklore*, No. 1 (1966), pp. 25-39; and Depestre,
196. Depestre, "Carta de Cuba", op.cit., pp. 103-4. That such a pattern is indeed typical of colour-class systems may be judged from the following account of the situation in contemporary Sao Paulo, Brazil:

In many social environments, there exists a very clear-cut tendency to accept and to practice old discriminatory procedures. Some people are afraid they will lose their social standing by accepting the Negro; others accept the Negro only under conventional circumstances and reject him when it is a question of true friendship or communion of sentiments. Still others defend certain archaic positions at all costs and reject any possibility for the Negro to reach positions of management. Mixed marriages meet with almost insurmountable resistance as things now stand.

(Fernandes, "The Weight of the Past", op.cit., p. 298. Emphasis added.) In Puerto Rico, we are told, though there is no absolute bar on marital admixture "the real bar comes from the existence of an elaborate and subtle system of informal social pressures and prohibitions based upon an ambivalent attitude to color". (Lewis, op.cit., p. 229.)

197. Surprising but not inexplicable. Clearly recognition of this fact would seriously undermine Thomas' contentions regarding the foreign origin of discrimination in Cuba. In the case of More, account has to be taken of the militantly anti-assimilationist views of this author.


200. The best account in English on the period is still that which is contained in Philip S. Foner, A History of Cuba and Its Relations with the United States (2 vols., New York: International Publishers, 1962-63), vol. II; but see also Thomas, Cuba, op.cit., Books IV-V.

201. For a list of such institutions see one of the rare post-revolutionary discussions of the subject: José F. Carneado, "La discriminación racial en Cuba no volverá", Cuba Socialista, year 2, No. 5, January 1962, pp. 54-67.

203. As Thomas has rightly stressed, Castro's History will absolve me (English edition, London: Cape, 1968) contained no reference to the racial question. The Manifesto programa del Movimiento 26 de Julio of November 1956 on the other hand invoked José Martí's concept of organización social, according to which "no group, class, race, or religion should sacrifice the common good to benefit its particular interest", declaring in favour of a policy of "national integration" which would "incorporate all, without privilege or exception, to the advantages and responsibilities of progress". "Program Manifesto of the 26 July Movement", in Bonachea and Valdés (eds.), op.cit., pp. 132-33.

204. This is likely simply on the basis that the Rebel Army recruited most heavily from Oriente province which had proportionately the highest population of Negroes and Mulattoes, a near-majority even by the optimistic standards of the 1953 census. See MacGaffey and Barnett, op.cit., p. 402, Table 2.


207. De piel morena.

208. Quoted in ibid., p. 93, pp. 95-96.

209. Ibid., pp. 96-97. Carlos More concurs with the substance of this account, insisting however that the alarm was not restricted to any particular social class. See "Le peuple noir", op.cit., pp. 202-3.


217. See for instance Carneado, "La discriminación racial", op.cit.

218. Depestre, "Carta de Cuba", op.cit., p. 90. (Emphasis in the original.)

221. Even Sutherland appears to assume that this will be the case. *Op.cit.*, p. 147.

222. In one important sphere the Cuban government does practice a form of positive discrimination. The sons and daughters of small agricultural proprietors are incorporated in particularly large numbers into the scholarship schemes providing technical training to secondary level. Apart from righting the wrongs of the past, this is intended to facilitate the gradual completion of the collectivisation of private agriculture. In view of the pre-revolutionary distribution of land ownership, however, it is far from clear that blacks and mulattoes are highly represented among the beneficiaries of the policy.

223. Black CDR responsible in conversation with the author.

224. For a recent case of a major speech devoted substantially to condemnation of U.S. racism, see Fidel Castro's speech of 28 September 1972, *GHR*, 8 October 1972, pp. 2-4.

225. Nicolson Guillén, Cuba's best known poet, himself a mulatto and a longstanding devotee of Afro-Cuban rhythms and language, has written that on the island today "the study of the religion, the traditions, the language and the culture of the erstwhile slaves proceeds on a par with that of those of the erstwhile masters", adding however that the new national unity rather than being the product of a mechanical aggregation of cultural elements is "the result of four centuries of Afro-Spanish spiritual intermixture". Quoted Depestre, "Carta de Cuba", *op.cit.*, p. 79.


230. There were no non-white cabinet ministers in 1964 when More published his article. The new Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers created in 1972 consisting of seven 'Deputy Prime Ministers' (Ramiro Valdés, Guillermo García, Pedro Miret, Flavio Bravo, Belarmino Castilla, Carlos Rafael Rodríguez and Diocles Torralba) in addition to the Prime Minister and the President of the Republic included no individual who by Cuban standards was not white. The eight-man Political Bureau of the PCC continues to contain one non-white (Juan Almeida). For the Deputy Prime Ministers, see "Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers Established", *GHR*, 3 December 1972, p. 2.


232. See particularly the analysis of the events of 1912 (the date given by More is incidentally wrong) on pp. 197-198.


235. It is interesting but not strictly relevant to this point to speculate with More as to what might have become of the Cuban revolution at any point from Moncada onwards had Fidel Castro been black. Cf. "Le peuple noir", op.cit., pp. 201-203.

236. As was observed in an earlier footnote, the fact that Carlos More does not pursue this line of enquiry may need to be explained, though it cannot be justified, by his views in this area. In reply to the possible objection that in the absence of colour prejudice there would be no reason to expect frequent mixed unions, it is sufficient to point out the popular beliefs in the superior sensuousness of the dark Negress and the virility of the black male which are common in Cuba, as throughout the Brazilian-Caribbean region. For a wide-ranging discussion of such beliefs, see Bastide, "Dusky Venus, Black Apollo", op.cit.


238. Elizabeth Sutherland has it that, whereas "the vicious circle of institutional racism ..... was broken once and for all" in the 'sixties, "certain forms of cultural racism still existed". (Op.cit., p. 140, p. 139.) Depestre insists that "as such, racial prejudice can survive the social development which brought it into the world", quoting Engels in his support. ("Carta de Cuba", op.cit., p. 122.)


240. The Carnival 'Queen' was renamed 'Star' after the Revolution to emphasise the addition of new criteria to the selection process. For full coverage, including photographs, of the contest of 1970, see Hector Hernández Pardo, "Elba Seven Hours after her Election", GWR, 19 July 1970, p. 4.

241. I am consequently puzzled by Martínez-Alier's remark (about 'mixed' marriages in nineteenth century Cuba):

   The real motivation for the prohibition of marriages was not racial prejudice...... It would be naive, however, to try to explain the echo which the racial discrimination revealed in the legislation on marriage had in all the Cuban social strata dealt with by this study - all, except the slaves - by saying that its adoption was due to their real interests. The racial discrimination exhibited by the dominant class was transformed into racial prejudice and internalised, constituting by itself a satisfactory reason in many cases of why people did not get married. In these cases, contrary to what we have said above, the racial prejudice came first and on this basis ideally endogamous groups were formed.

   (Verena Martínez-Alier, "Color, clase y matrimonio", op.cit., pp. 76-77.)

242. As was said, los negros no se casan.
243. It is possible to argue over the meaning of the concept of 'interest'. However the view taken again by Martínez-Alier, though widely held, remains highly problematic:

Relics of racial prejudice persist to this day in Cuban society, and these do not correspond to objective interests. It is in this way that we should interpret the belief which appears to survive among coloured people that to get married to a white is 'to improve the family', because the social and economic advance of the family certainly does not now depend on colour.

(Ibid., p. 77.)


245. Sutherland, op.cit., p. 150.

246. The numbers were: 'white' - 25; 'black' - 14; 'mulatto' - 13. White families were smaller however, and if all household members are counted as being the same colour as their heads (an expedient not to be recommended as a rule) we get: 'white' - 71; 'black' - 63; 'mulatto' - 76.

247. Even Depestre has recognised that it is possible to find revolutionaries who do this. "Carta en Cuba", op.cit., p. 123.

248. To the author, who is white.

249. Sutherland, op.cit., p. 141; Clytus, op.cit., p. 49.

250. For example, "Nociões de Criminologia", op.cit.

251. More, "Le peuple noir", op.cit., p. 208, p. 213; Sutherland, op.cit., p. 159; Clytus, op.cit., p. 76. In the few instances (two) where allegations of colour prejudice found their way into the court proceedings in San Ramon, judges criticised both parties for raising the matter of colour. "In this new society we do not recognise such differences", it was said.

252. The 1970 "Black Power" revolt in Trinidad and Tobago, to cite one possible type of counter-example, must be judged to have had little to do with colour in the sense of the present discussion and everything to do with power in a neo-colonial setting. On this see Ivar Oxaal, Race and Revolutionary Consciousness: A Documentary Interpretation of the 1970 Black Power Revolt in Trinidad (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1971).

The aim of this dissertation has been to examine the role in the social and political transformation of Cuba of two of the most distinctive and original institutional products of Fidel Castro's revolution: the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, and the Popular Courts. A major part of the enquiry has taken the form of a detailed description of the genesis, evolution and day-to-day functioning of these institutions, drawing both upon evidence of a documentary type and, where appropriate, upon illustrative material derived from the intensive investigation of organisational life in a selected Havana neighbourhood. Elsewhere, on the other hand, an attempt has been made to tackle the relationship between political organisation and social change in revolutionary Cuba from the opposite angle, a lengthy chapter (Chapter 5) having been included which dissects revolutionary policy and practice in regard to three key sectors of socio-cultural change.

Two tasks remain to be undertaken in these concluding pages. Firstly it will be helpful, even at the risk of a certain repetition, to reassemble some of the more significant findings which emerge directly from the discussion in Chapters 2-4 above concerning the role and character of the committees and the courts. Secondly, although the issues discussed under this rubric do not lend themselves to a satisfactory summary discussion, our principal finding regarding sex, religion and colour in contemporary Cuba - namely that very uneven progress has been made in these areas - calls for some final comment. Specifically what is needed is a statement on the relationship between this observation and the general remarks about the problem of organisation in Cuba with which this study began.
In the foregoing chapters what might appear to be an inordinate amount of space has been devoted to the documentation of two institutions, comprising a single sector of the organisational framework of the Cuban revolutionary order. The rationale of this approach was given at the outset and hinges upon the peculiar parameters of the problem of post-capitalist political organisation as it has come to be posed in Cuba. Castroist political practice, we suggested, has the dual characteristic of being guided by a political theory which is systematically ambiguous with respect to the problem of bureaucratic rule versus workers' democracy but of being prone, on the other hand, to unexpected and often highly unorthodox shifts in policy which are justified by reference to the need for revolutionaries to resist a trend towards reliance upon 'administrative methods'. This generalisation, which even the casual observer of Cuban affairs ignores at his peril, places a premium on an attentive attitude towards the actual practice of the regime on organisational questions. The CDRs and Popular Courts are especially worthy of attention as two significant products of a major concern of the Fidelista leadership: to assure the 'participation' of its mass following in the enterprise of socialist construction.

With these considerations in view, the following findings of our examination of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution seem to be worth reiterating. First of all, the apparently continuous evolution of the committees since their inception in late September 1960 in fact conceals three distinct phases of leadership policy. The first (1960-66), characterised by the temporary ascendency of political perspectives originating in the pre-revolutionary PSP, tended towards the creation in the CDRs of an
organisation which, while possessing distinctive properties due to its particular history, was not altogether unlike the 'Front' organisations typical of the Soviet-dominated countries of Eastern Europe. A second phase, heralded in 1966 by the dismissal of the first National Coordinator of the committees, was distinguished by the increased priority assigned to 'participation' as a goal of the organisation, reflecting the increased assertiveness shown in this period by the specifically Fidelista current in the Cuban leadership. In 1970, finally, the CDRs were not unaffected by the global reorientation of leadership policy towards a new "mass line" which followed the economic crisis of that year. Although it would not be entirely misleading to describe the 'turn' of 1970 as the extension to the trade unions and other sectors of precisely those organisational precepts which had guided the work of the CDRs in the late 'sixties - Castro himself seemed to present the matter in this way - a significant new step was also contemplated: the formal establishment of the committees as representative bodies possessing quasi-governmental functions at neighbourhood level.

Important as some of these medium-term changes in the orientation of the CDRs may be judged to have been, they should not be permitted to obscure the important constancies which the organisation has exhibited since its origins. A second significant finding, then, is that over a long period the CDRs have functioned as a highly effective mechanism serving, as Cubans put it, to "integrate into the Revolution" large numbers of ordinary Cubans whose levels of revolutionary commitment and political understanding might otherwise have remained low. This fact more than any other explains the importance attributed to them by Fidel Castro and why the anniversary of their foundation remains one of the most important political
events in the revolutionary calendar. The effectiveness of the committees on this level is due in large measure to the practical contribution to the well-being of the local community that they are commonly perceived as making by Cubans of varied backgrounds and otherwise contrasting ideological reflexes. Another facet of the CDR system which is important in this context is the use that is made of it by the Fidelista leadership to secure a relatively unimpeded flow of political 'information' in both directions between the apex and the base of the revolutionary polity.

To conclude that the committees serve as effective political 'integrators' is not of course to concede the claim that they are actually, or even potentially, organs of workers' democracy in the accepted sense of this phrase. Without thereby wishing to deny that the establishment of the committees has resulted in a net gain for ordinary Cubans when it comes to assessing their power to control and shape their immediate social environment, it must be stressed as a third major finding of this study that the decision-making authority which has so far been accorded to rank-and-file cederistas has been severely curtailed both in a geographical sense and with respect to the types of issue that are involved. Precisely because of the tendency towards the localisation of control at the community level which is inherent in the structure of the organisation and which has been developed in new directions in each stage of its evolution, the CDRs are ill-suited as the vehicle for solving the problem of bureaucracy in the central sectors of the state and society.

What is true in this regard of the CDRs is of course true, mutatis mutandis, of local community participation in the administration of justice in the manner of the Popular Courts. It was
neither the intention nor the result of the inauguration of the new courts on a nationwide basis in 1967-68 to effect a de-bureaucratization of the judicial arm of the state as such. Rather, two achievements of note may be credited to the Popular Court experiment on the basis of our findings, both of them likely to prove of long-run significance in the evolution of the revolutionary legal system. Firstly it provided a practical demonstration of the feasibility within the framework of the revolutionary order of taking justice 'to the people' in a number of new ways, including the most literal way of all - by setting up courts with jurisdiction over localities of a few thousand inhabitants. Secondly, by virtue of their effective use of a wide range of 'moral' sanctions, the Popular Courts set a precedent in the sphere of sentencing procedures which it will be hard for Cuban jurists to ignore in the future and which will almost certainly be incorporated in some form in the judicial reform currently under way. Against this must be set what appears to have been the major negative lesson of the Courts: the uneven quality of the judiciary produced by an exclusive reliance upon non-vocational personnel - though this experience too appears to have been assimilated by the architects of the new, 'unified' judicial system. Finally, we have found, Popular Court practice suffered from a number of procedural defects, the most serious of which was a failure to provide safeguards against injustices committed knowingly or otherwise by the police. It is to be hoped, but not to be expected with any certainty, that this problem will be dealt with in the near future.
Within the limits of this dissertation it has been possible to discuss the global reorientation of Cuban policy since the dramatic events of summer 1970 only in a cursory fashion and with a close view to its consequences for the evolution of the CDRs. A systematic assessment of the long-term implications of developments such as the reform of the trade unions, the 'organic separation' of the PCC and the UJC from state- and mass-organisations, and the adoption of a people's-parliament approach towards new legislation (as well, of course, as the equally striking changes which have occurred in this period in Cuba's international positions) remains a high priority for Cubanists. On balance it is unlikely that future historians will be able to say that the practical results of the turn measured up to the promise contained in Fidel Castro's first speeches following the failure of the zafra. Nevertheless an important positive feature both of Castro's programmatic statements and of the reforms themselves seems certain to merit special attention. Whatever its many other weaknesses as a solution to the long-term problems of socialist construction in Cuba, the new orientation was based clearly and squarely upon the recognition that, in a transitional, post-capitalist society, economic problems and political problems are indissolubly linked. The fate of the development programmes of the Revolution will depend, that is to say, not only upon the degree to which solutions are found to a number of technical deficiencies of Cuban planning (and there can be no question of minimising this aspect of the matter) but also upon the successful realisation of reforms at the level of political organisation.

The importance of this insight, containing as it does the germ of a thoroughgoing critique of bureaucratic rule which has
the merit of departing from eminently practical premises, cannot be overemphasised. The suggestion that I wish to offer in this concluding note, however, is that it is not only the economy whose progress is conditional in this fashion upon reforms in the political-organisational sphere. It is high time that some recognition also be given to the heavy dependence of the basic elements of social progress in transitional societies upon the strengths and weaknesses of the political system, upon the political form which is given to the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in a given case. As far as our specific findings regarding sex, religion and colour are concerned, the point to be stressed is that revolutionary Cubans often deceive themselves when they ascribe the failings of official policy in these fields to historical conditions which are incapable of modification in the short term.

Two considerations to do with the structure of the Cuban revolutionary polity are manifestly relevant to any discussion of the obstacles to the continued social radicalism of the process set in motion in 1959. (The same considerations, let it be said, arise from any comparison of the actual practice of Cuban socialism with the guiding principles of classical Leninist theory on the subject.)¹ First, the mass organisations, among which the CDRs, are not structured in such a way as to permit the kind of large-scale exchange, confrontation and cross-fertilisation of ideas and practical proposals which is indispensable if the difficult task of stamping-out centuries of accumulated social prejudice and narrow-mindedness is to be tackled with any hope of success. As we have seen, the committees function primarily as transmitters of new values and models of social behaviour and only to a slight degree as innovating agencies in their own right. The same can
in reality be said of the FMC, the trade unions (before or after their reform) and each of the other mass organisations which plays an important part in Cuban political life. To be sure, the difficulties attendant upon the modification of these structures or the creation of new institutions in such a way as to produce a system based, for instance, upon democratically-elected bodies of the soviet type are enormous. Cuban history, whether before or since 1959, has bequeathed to the revolutionaries of today all too few experiences of forms of political authority which emanate directly from the mass of the working class, with the result that proposals along these lines are popularly regarded as little short of recipes for anarchy. What is sadly lacking however is a clear perspective among the more perceptive of the country's leaders of the need to begin advancing, albeit cautiously, in such a direction before it is too late.

The second observation whose relevance to the problem in hand cannot be disputed is in one sense still more elementary. It is almost beside the point to insist that Cuba's mass organisations serve as transmission-belts for decisions and priorities worked out elsewhere when, as is still the case eight long years after the foundation of the PCC, the same is true of what is nominally the vanguard organisation of a revolutionary working class. The devaluation of the contribution to the tasks of socialist construction potentially to be made by a properly-constituted Leninist party (or parties) - a phenomenon reflected in the failure of the PCC to hold a national congress, the infrequency of its Central-Committee meetings and the absence of real internal democracy in its deliberations at every level - is perhaps the single most deplorable feature in the present context of the recent
Nothing that was said in Chapter 5 above was intended to imply that the final socio-cultural liberation of man in Cuba will prove anything but a long and difficult struggle in the course of which, for long periods, sincere revolutionaries may be unable to see a way forward from their present dilemmas. It is precisely because the issues are difficult that it is necessary to begin discussing them now. It is also for this reason, and because many of the difficulties in question have a deeply-ingrained ideological character, that it is necessary to insist particularly, in the Cuban context as in any other, upon the central importance of the role ascribed by classical Leninism to the party of the vanguard: the provision of that quality of political leadership which can only be sustained by an organisation whose internal democracy is as vigorous as its discipline is strict. Speaking on 26 July 1973 at a ceremony held under the walls of the former Moncada fortress to mark the passage of twenty years since the inception of the revolutionary struggle in Cuba, Fidel Castro asserted that it was the "bounden duty of all revolutionaries" to work to improve the Communist Party, "to raise its authority and discipline, to perfect its methods of leadership and its democratic character and to raise the cultural and political level of its cadres and members". It is to be hoped that these words were not spoken in vain.
1. For an analysis along these lines which accords essentially with the present writer's views on the subject, see Jacques Valier, "Cuba 1968-1971: le développement des déformations bureaucratiques et des difficultés économiques", Critiques de l'économie politique, No. 6, January-March 1972, pp. 112-141.

APPENDIX 1  EMULATION TARGETS FOR URBAN CDRs, PERIOD 1 MAY TO 28 SEPTEMBER 1969

Vigilance

1. To have discussed the new Vigilance Programme with every member of the CDR and to have at least 80% committed to performing guard duty.

2. To mount a guard on the day for which the CDR is responsible.

Organisation

1. To have held a block assembly to publicise the targets for 28 September.

2. To have all the 'fronts' allocated.

3. To have as members of the CDR all those living in the block who are in agreement with the Revolution.

Propaganda

1. To have an up-to-date noticeboard on the block.

2. To have a functioning block Study Circle using the suggested discussion materials.

3. To make a minimum of two wall-posters dealing with the tasks of Vigilance and of the zafra of 1970.

4. To have decorated the block.

Voluntary Labour

1. To have participated actively in agricultural voluntary work, accumulating not less than 200 hours on the block.

2. To discuss with each family the leaflet "The Havana Family on the Road to the Ten Million Tons".

Education

1. The CDR must be free of cases of absenteeism from Primary and Secondary schools.

2. To have selected to Exemplary Parents of the block.

3. To have all the illiterates in the block attending the local CDR Reading Circle.
Public Health
1. To mobilise one blood donation.
2. Everyone to have had an intra-uterine smear test.
3. To have collected 300 empty medicine bottles.
4. To have held two Health Talks.

Services
1. To participate in activities designed to improve the service in retail establishments.
2. To participate in Information Assemblies.
3. To report any deficiencies observed by the CDR.

Local Administration
1. To keep the locality clean and attend to the maintenance of its parks and squares.
2. To contribute a labour force to the tasks of the Local Administration.
3. To have somebody in the block responsible for street-cleaning.

Economy
1. To have somebody responsible for economies.
2. To have held a discussion with every family in the block about the need to economise on the use of electricity.

Civil Defence
1. To have an up-to-date block plan for Civil Defence.
2. Everyone to have read the recommended material on Civil Defence.

Salvage
To have collected 100 cosmetics bottles, 300 other bottles, 150 lbs. of paper and cardboard, and 1 oz. of used postage stamps.

Sports
1. At least three activists to be made responsible for children's events in the block.
2. At least 5 members to have taken a sports aptitude test.
Sports (cont'd)

3. To have mounted at least one sports event on the block.

Culture

To have held one cultural event on the block.

Finance

To have a 100% paid-up membership and all dues paid on time to the Zone Committee.

(Source: Dirección Provincial CDR, La Habana, "Distinción 28 de Septiembre - Tareas a cumplir por un CDR Urbano" (leaflet), Havana, 1969.)
## Appendix 2: Selected Indices of National CDR Activity, 1961-1972

### (1) Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Membership of the Exemplary Parents in Education Movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>21,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>247,799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>315,491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>447,277</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Fidel Castro, "Speech of 28 September, 1971", GWR, 10 October 1971, p. 2; and "Committees for the Defence of the Revolution: 12 months, 12 years check-up and summary", GWR, 8 October 1972, p. 10.)

### (2) Public Health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Health Talks: Annual Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>106,005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>263,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>454,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>750,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>390,861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>619,924</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Blood Donations: Annual Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>8,109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>10,019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>105,932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>127,906*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>130,125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### (3) Salvage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Glass Bottles Salvaged: Annual Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>8,930,673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>33,620,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>76,444,553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>88,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(3) **SALVAGE (cont'd)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Paper and Cardboard Salvaged: Annual Totals (Tons)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>2,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>12,196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Castro, "Speech of 28 September 1971", *op.cit.*, p. 2; and "Committees for the Defence of the Revolution: 12 months, 12 years", *op.cit.*, p. 11.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANAP</td>
<td>Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños (National Association of Small Farmers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDRs</td>
<td>Comités de Defensa de la Revolución (Committees for the Defence of the Revolution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIR</td>
<td>Círculos de Instrucción Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Instruction Circles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNC</td>
<td>Consejo Nacional de Cultura (National Culture Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COR</td>
<td>Comisión de Orientación Revolucionaria (Commission for Revolutionary Orientation of the Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTC(-R)</td>
<td>Central de Trabajadores de Cuba (- Revolucionaria) (Central Organisation of Cuban Workers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D(G)OP</td>
<td>Departamento (General) de Orden Público (Department of Public Order of the Ministry of the Interior. The ordinary police force)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIR</td>
<td>Escuelas de Instrucción Revolucionaria (Schools of Revolutionary Instruction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEU</td>
<td>Federación Estudiantil Universitaria (Federation of University Students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMC</td>
<td>Federación de Mujeres Cubanas (Federation of Cuban Women)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GWR</td>
<td>Granma Weekly Review (see bibliography)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INAV</td>
<td>Instituto Nacional de Ahorros y Vivienda (National Savings and Housing Institute)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUCEI</td>
<td>Juntas de Coordinación, Ejecución e Inspección (Boards of Coordination, Execution and Inspection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUCEPLAN</td>
<td>Junta Central de Planificación (Central Planning Board)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINCIN</td>
<td>Ministerio de Comercio Interior (Ministry of Internal Commerce)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLAS</td>
<td>Organización Latino-Americano de Solidaridad (Latin American Solidarity Organisation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORI</td>
<td>Organizaciones Revolucionarias Integradas (Integrated Revolutionary Organisations. Founded 1961. The first product of the attempt to fuse the PSP, the 26th July Movement and other revolutionary groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCC</td>
<td>Partido Comunista de Cuba (Communist Party of Cuba. Founded 1965)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PSP  Partido Socialista Popular (Popular Socialist Party. The name adopted in 1944 by the pre-revolutionary Cuban CP)

PURS  Partido Unido de la Revolución Socialista (United Party of the Socialist Revolution. Replaced the ORI in 1962)

UJC  Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas (Young Communists' Federation)

UMAP  Unidades Militares para Ayuda a la Producción (Military Units for Aid to Production)
**GLOSSARY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abakuá</td>
<td>An Afro-Cuban secret society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aficionado</td>
<td>Amateur, 'enthusiast'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aplazamiento</td>
<td>Common-law marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arrimado</td>
<td>In common-law union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>babalawo</td>
<td>Divination specialist in santería</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>barrio</td>
<td>Neighbourhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrio Chino</td>
<td>Chinese Quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>barrio de indigentes</td>
<td>Shanty-town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batistiano</td>
<td>Follower or henchman of Fulgencio Batista</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bodega</td>
<td>Corner shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bozal</td>
<td>Newly-imported African slave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bronca</td>
<td>Row, punch-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brujo</td>
<td>Lit. witch. Commonly applied indifferently to Afro-Cuban sorcerers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caballería</td>
<td>Land measurement of $33\frac{1}{3}$ acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cabildo</td>
<td>Form of mutual aid association recognised under Spanish colonial legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carnet</td>
<td>Membership card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caserío</td>
<td>Public housing project (Puerto Rico)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cederista</td>
<td>Member of a CDR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>central</td>
<td>Sugar mill and its ancillary installations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chinchical</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chismería</td>
<td>Gossip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chusmería</td>
<td>'Common' behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ciudadela</td>
<td>Large tenement building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coartación</td>
<td>Spanish colonial institution regulating the manumission of slaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cofradía</td>
<td>Fraternity (19th century)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comadre</td>
<td>Ritual co-parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>corandante</td>
<td>Major. The highest rank in the revolutionary Cuban armed forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comparsa</td>
<td>Processional festivity (19th century)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coronero</td>
<td>Inhabitant of La Corona (see Chapter 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>criollo</td>
<td>Cuban-born person of either African or Spanish descent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ekobio</td>
<td>A 'brother' in the Abakuá fraternity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girón</td>
<td>Playa Girón. The site of the main battle which led to the defeat of the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>granja</td>
<td>Farm. In judicial contexts, prison-farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guajiro</td>
<td>Peasant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guapería</td>
<td>The behaviour of a tough guy or bully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gusano</td>
<td>Lit. maggot. Counter-revolutionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hembrismo</td>
<td>Exaggerated cult of female sexuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>humilde</td>
<td>Humble; whence, ordinary, poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indicime</td>
<td>Candidate-member of the Abakuá fraternity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iyawó</td>
<td>Candidate for initiation into santería</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lucumí</td>
<td>The Yoruba, as they are known in Cuba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lumpen</td>
<td>Individual of allegedly lumpen-proletarian disposition and behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>machetero</td>
<td>Sugar-cane cutter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>machismo</td>
<td>Exaggerated cult of male sexuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maricon</td>
<td>(tabu) Homosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mestizaje</td>
<td>Miscegenation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mestizo</td>
<td>Person of mixed blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mulato(a)</td>
<td>Mulatto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>náñigo</td>
<td>Member of the Abakuá fraternity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>normación</td>
<td>Establishment of industrial output standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>orisha</td>
<td>Yoruba deity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>palero</td>
<td>Practitioner of Regla Conga cult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palo</td>
<td>Popular name for Regla Congo cult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peso</td>
<td>Cuban unit of currency. Nominally equivalent to the US dollar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Por su cuenta</td>
<td>'On one's own account', self-employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potencia</td>
<td>Abakú grouping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recogida</td>
<td>Police raid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsable</td>
<td>A person charged with a given activity or responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salida</td>
<td>The exit of the populace into the streets for festive purposes (19th century)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santeria</td>
<td>Lit. Saint-worship. An Afro-Cuban religious cult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santoro(a)</td>
<td>Practitioner or leader in santería</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solar</td>
<td>A building containing small dwelling-units with collective sanitary facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timbiriche</td>
<td>Vending stall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaso</td>
<td>Loafer, 'bum'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vida</td>
<td>La vida. Low-life, prostitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vodun</td>
<td>'Voodoo'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zafra</td>
<td>Sugar harvest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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