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FJM-36: REPORT FROM A CUBAN PRISON VI

Cuba's Social Revolution

Contrary to much that is reported in the U.S. media, or in books written by "Cubanologists," there are positive aspects to the Cuban Revolution. Impressive gains have been made: the elimination of illiteracy, the universalization of free education, tremendous advances in health care, and the eradication of institutions that once fostered such vast inequalities between black and white, rich and poor, urban and rural Cubans.

But do these accomplishments mask so much paranoia and repression? Had I been naive, and mistaken rhetoric for reality?

Inside Number Eight, the reality of solitary provides a partial answer to that question, but objectively it's much more complex than that. While there are instances of injustice, injustices that even form an inherent part of the Cuban Revolutionary process, there has also been an institutionalizing of a collective, or what I'd call social justice, that has benefitted millions of Cubans. The time I spent in Cuba confirmed both realities.

On one hand, if Justice is defined in terms of the right of every Cuban to employment, education, health, a proper (if not plentiful) diet and decent housing insofar as it is available, the revolution has accomplished more in fourteen years to achieve "justice" in this sense than any regime before it. The contrast is Cuba's message.

First, there is no unemployment in Cuba today, a remarkable shift from 1958 unemployment-underemployment figure of 30 to 33 percent. (1) In 1958, there were more than 700,000 unemployed in Cuba, and those that did find work, particularly the 560,000 agricultural workers, earned just 25 cents a day. (2) At the same time, 27,000 Cubans lived off of the numbers racket, another 11,000 received their income from prostitution while 15,000 simply begged. (3) In the months I walked the streets of Havana, Santiago, Cienfuegos or Matanzas, I only saw one man

EMPLOYMENT

in front of the National Opera ask me for a peso. Prostitution has also been eliminated, although the houses once used in the trade have now been made available to couples who want to spend the night together. The cost for a room and rum in one of these Posadas is 750 pesos.

INCOME
DISTRIBUTION

Second, today every Cuban knows not only that he or she has an opportunity to work, but that remuneration for their labor is more equitably shared than it has ever been before. The vast disparity between rich and poor, once so prevalent in Cuba, has disappeared. (4) The lowest paid worker, say a cane cutter, earns 96 pesos a month, while the highest paid, a cabinet minister, a doctor or a university professor receives 700-800 pesos a month. (5) It's important to know, however, that these wage differentials are not an important factor in evaluating the differences in life style of the Cuban population, primarily because all social services -- education, health care, medicines, hospitalization, sports facilities, transport, telephone -- just about everything from birth to burial are provided at nominal cost or entirely free. Further, wage differentials are considerably narrowed in real purchasing power simply because money doesn't mean anything any more in Cuba. Instead, a rationing system operates as a distribution equalizer that governs access to the goods that do become available; and despite the development of a new elite (NOTE: Not new class) represented by middle and top echelons in the Party, Armed Forces, the bureaucracy, Mass Organizations or the university, access is equitable from top to bottom. Indeed, while there are cases of "some being more equal than others," due largely to the existence of a black market, these instances are rare. (6) The doctors, ballet dancers, Party officials and professors I knew might have had more authority and prestige than the ordinary cane cutter or factory worker, but their refrigerators at home were no better stocked than anyone else's. In short, what is available is for all or for no one. The only "privileges" the elite have that are denied the ordinary worker come as a result of the elite's proximity to foreign visitors or because of their work. (The tourist guide who works for ICAP,* for example, eats and drinks well in the hotels reserved for visiting guests of the Revolution, while the Minister or Department Head might have an Alpha Romeo at his disposal.)

But what in fact is available? Aren't Cubans eating less than they did before the Revolution?

*ICAP--The Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples--is the official tourist agency of the Government. Its guides are selected for political reliability as well as linguistic ability. ICAP operates under the jurisdictional arm of the Party and the Ministry of Interior.

DIET

Some, yes; but most Cubans have a better diet than before the Revolution came to power. Indeed, while reports rightly note the decline in the availability of consumer goods and even certain foodstuffs over the period of the past ten years, the lines stretching out in front of Havana's shops, the empty counters in the old Woolworth store on the Avenida Infante, don't provide the full picture. The reality is that more Cubans are eating better than before if one considers that in the 1950s a large percentage of the population, particularly those living in rural Cuba, existed on a calorie intake well below the 2,400 level considered adequate by the World Health Organization. (8) For example, in 1956, a family of six spent only 17 cents per person to feed each member. Then malnutrition was widespread (91% in the countryside) and the average weight of the agricultural worker was 16 pounds below that of the average Cuban. The principal source of energy for these Cubans was rice, which constituted 24 percent of their total diet, followed by beans (23 percent) and root crops (22 percent).

1959

FOOD CONSUMPTION OF AGRICULTURAL
POPULATION (9)

<u>Regular Diet Item</u>	<u>Percentage of Families Consuming Item</u>
Meat	4.0
Fish	1.0
Eggs	2.2
Milk	11.2
Green vegetables	0.0
Bread	3.3
Corn	7.0

The diet of most Cubans was extremely starchy, therefore, with few proteins, minerals, or vitamins. Close to 35 percent of the Cuban people suffered malnutrition, including nine out of every ten rural residents. (10)

Today, there is no malnutrition in Cuba, no blown-out, big-bellied babies standing along the side of the road. Every Cuban, particularly the children, eats sufficiently if not plentifully. (11) For the record, the following itemizes the current ration allotted each Cuban:

PER CAPITA FOOD RATION

<u>Item</u>	<u>Period</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Rice	Monthly	3 lbs.
Meat	Weekly	0.75 lbs.
Grain	Monthly	1.50 lbs.
Fat	Monthly	2.00 lbs.
Eggs	Monthly	(less in 1972) 24 units
Milk	Daily	1 liter
Fish	Weekly	1.0 lbs.
Chicken	Monthly	2.0 lbs.*
Coffee	Monthly	12 ounces
Beans	Monthly	1.5 lbs.
Bread	Daily	50 grams
Vegetables	Weekly	3.5 lbs.**
Sugar	Monthly	6 lbs.***

*(None for residents in Havana in 1971-72)

** (When available usually during summer months)

*** (Somewhat less in 1972)

Further, in addition to the rationed allotment available, every Cuban working or studying receives a full, free meal every day at his or her place of work or study. At the university, for example, the meal provided at noon usually alternated between fish, some kind of egg or some kind of meat dish throughout the week. Rice was the staple, and water the drink. And while we never lingered over the food, it was always a healthy meal and there was plenty of it.

Third, employing any set of indicators, Cuba's achievements in education are unparalleled in Latin America. One index, perhaps the most important, is the number of school-aged children actually enrolled in classes. While 15 million school-aged children are unable to enroll in classes throughout

EDUCATION

Latin America each year for lack of facilities, teachers or textbooks, Cuba is presently educating 1.9 million or 96 percent of its children in primary schools alone. Another 250,000 are enrolled in secondary schools, and 150,000 in either vocational, teacher training or university level courses. In all, 2.3 million Cubans or 26 percent of the population are attending classes -- and every one of them free of charge. This is double the number of Cubans that attended school in 1958. (12)

The number of schools the Revolution has built in ten years is already more than double the number that existed prior to the Revolution, yet this achievement is insignificant to what is happening during the 1970s when an average of six high schools a week or 300 a year are being built by construction brigades all over the country. (13) Another significant achievement is the number of teachers the Revolution has trained (from 26,000 in 1959 to 109,000 in 1973). During the 1972-73 scholastic year alone, 80,000 primary and secondary school teachers will be graduated by the Revolution. The cost of this commitment to education will be 700 million pesos in 1973, more than the entire budgeted allocation of the Republican Government under Batista in 1958. Funds available for state education in that year amounted to 70 million pesos.

Assignificant is the Revolution's effort to reduce or totally eliminate illiteracy. Twelve years ago, almost a quarter of the Cuban population (43 percent of the rural inhabitants) were illiterate, a statistic that compares with current levels of illiteracy throughout the South American republics, where there are 40 million people over the age of 15 who can neither read nor write. (14) In Cuba, after the 1961 "literacy campaign" when 100,000 volunteers spent a year in the countryside teaching the untutored how to read and write, the national illiteracy rate dropped to 3.4 percent. This is the lowest rate of illiteracy in all of Latin America.



COMPARATIVE SCHOOL DATA FOR 1959
and 1973

	<u>1959</u>	<u>1973</u>
Elementary school students	717,000	1,900,000
Secondary school students	63,526	250,000
Technical, Industrial and university students	30,000	150,000
All teachers	20,000	109,000

* * * * *

HEALTH:

Fourth, health care in post-Revolutionary Cuba is dramatically improved over what it was prior to 1959 when President Batista operated what could only be called a bureaucratic cesspool. (Cubans then referred to their Ministry of Health as the "Pain Trust.") Often, hospital care was a political rather than a medical affair. As Wyatt MacGaffrey noted in a study of pre-Revolutionary health care;

"Often, access to a clinic or a hospital bed could be obtained only through the political organization of a town. Services were channeled to the rural population through leaders of the Party in power. Those using the health services and facilities were strongly reminded of the source of the benefits, and many were required to vote accordingly."

Medical services were for those who could pay; those who couldn't -- the 400,000 families living in the countryside -- were simply medical indigents. These Cubans, representing 43 percent of the population, were practically without medicine, hospitals or doctors of any kind. More than 60 percent of the practicing physicians lived and worked in Havana. Therefore, while there was one doctor for every 420 Cubans living in Havana, there was only one physician for every 2,100 in Pinar del Rio, and one for every 2,550 persons living in the rural province of Oriente.

The same sort of distribution pattern pertained to hospital locations. In 1958, there were 88 hospitals in Cuba and the nation had one of the highest percentages of hospital beds per habitant in the Caribbean. Yet the distribution of beds was the critical factor. In pre-Revolutionary Cuba, there were only ten beds in one hospital for the entire rural population. (15)

Housing and sanitary conditions in the countryside did not meet adequate standards either. A study in 1958 showed that two-thirds of Cuba's rural dwellings were made of thatch and had earthen floors that were dirty and muddy whenever it rained. Eighty-eight percent of these shacks had no latrines, while only two percent had piped water, compared with 55 percent in the urban areas. More than 75 percent of rural dwelling Cubans had to fetch water from the rivers, wells or springs, many of which were contaminated. Electricity was also unavailable for most of the inhabitants: 65 percent of rural dwellings were lit by candlelight while a third had no light at all.

Within this environment, communicable and chronic disease spread easily. Ninety percent of the people living in the countryside had worms. In 1962, 4,157 of them died from this disease. Also reported were over 3,000 cases of malaria, 300 cases of polio, 2,600 cases of tuberculosis and almost 1,000 cases of diphtheria and typhoid. (16)

What is the record of the Revolution since?

The investment made in terms of human and financial resources demonstrates the Revolution's commitment to provide medical service for every Cuban. Compared to the 22 million pesos allocated to public health care in 1958, the State spends an average of 250million pesos annually today. This sum, together with the budget for education, represents 30 percent of all State expenditures, an indication of the enormous resources devoted to social services. (17)

Significantly, the ones who benefit most from these programs are the rural inhabitants, those who had been most neglected before the revolution. In 1958 there were only ten rural clinics and one single hospital located in the countryside. Today 55 hospitals and 130 polyclinics have been constructed in the countryside, built by the Revolution so that no Cuban has to travel more than ten miles to find medical care. (18)

As a consequence of the commitment to make medical care available to all, especially to those living in the countryside, structural and organizational innovations have been developed. Today, health care is organized through a system of provincial, regional and area divisions under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Health. Each of Cuba's six provinces has a well equipped general hospital (three in Havana), each with 600 beds. The province is then subdivided into regions, each region having its own hospital with 300 beds staffed to perform treatment of any disease in addition to general surgery. Each region is then in turn subdivided into "areas" in which polyclinics become the core of medical services.

The polyclinic handles outpatients for the most part and its function is to perform preventive rather than curative medicine. For example, in 1972 the polyclinics throughout Cuba administered an anti-tetanus, polio, malaria and tuberculosis campaign in which 4,500,000 inoculations were given. Each polyclinic has a gynecologist, dentist, pediatrician, two nurses and an intern, the last usually a young graduate from one of Cuba's three medical schools. (After graduation all students are obliged to serve two years internship in a rural hospital or polyclinic.)

A further subdivision is the dispensary which is usually located in the most remote areas of the countryside. The dispensaries provide education in hygiene and also administer programs designed to prevent rather than cure disease. Normally, these dispensaries are without beds and are primarily referral agencies to the rural polyclinic.

Despite an exodus of half of Cuba's six thousand doctors since the Revolution took power in 1959 (only 17 of the 158 professors teaching at the medical schools in the University of Havana remained in Cuba after the Revolution), the Revolution has been able to train and graduate 5,000 additional physicians. Consequently, there are 8,000 doctors practicing in Cuba today, that is 2,000 more than in 1958. This provides Cuba, a nation of eight million, with a respectable ratio of ten doctors for every 10,000 inhabitants. This compares with the 16 doctors for every 10,000 persons in the United States, and doubles the five physicians per 10,000 population ratio throughout Latin America today. (19)

To quantify other gains since 1959, 146 new public hospitals have been opened. In addition, there are the 270 polyclinics, 60 rural dispensaries, two public health laboratories, 40 stomatological clinics, eight dental surgery teams and 14 new blood banks. In fourteen years the Revolution has also doubled the number of hospital beds available: there are six beds available for every 1,000 inhabitants, a figure that compares with the number of hospital beds per person in the United States (five for every 1,000) and doubles the ratio averaged throughout Latin America (2.5 beds per 1,000 inhabitants). (20)

As a result of the expansion of health services provided to Cubans these past 14 years, the physical well being of the population has improved. General and infant mortality rates, life expectancy and the reduction of disease measures this achievement.

Considering the fact that before the Revolution ten to fifteen percent of the deaths in Cuba went unrecorded, (statistics were poorly maintained in the countryside), the 6.6 deaths for every 1,000 inhabitants recorded then suggests that the current mortality rate of 6.8 deaths per 1,000 inhabitants is in reality a lower figure than the pre-Revolutionary death rate. Infant deaths -- that is the mortality rate of children under one year of age -- has apparently increased over a ten year period. (21) The infant mortality rate in Cuba is still, however, the lowest in Latin America. Life expectancy, which averaged 57 years during the period 1945-1960 has increased to 67 years in 1969, a significant improvement.

The following table presents the figures for deaths from general disease during the past decade. (22)

Deaths from Gastro-Intestinal Disease	2,784 - 1958	1,346 - 1967
Cases of Malaria	7,000 - 1958	-0- - 1968
Deaths from acute diahhrea	7,000 - 1958	1,300 - 1969
Cases of polio	300 - 1958	-0- - 1965- 1972
Cases of diphtheria	1,469 - 1962	435 - 1967
Cases of Yellow Fever	3,519 - 1962	46 - 1967
Deaths from TB	1,402 - 1962	940 - 1967.

A house in Havana's suburb, once a middle-class home, now a school for scholarship students
Photo: Lee Lockwood



"A minimum of urbanization and a maximum of ruralization." (Fidel Castro, 1968)

HOUSING

To complement the development of its health services, the Revolution is trying to provide a better "sanitary environment," that is housing, water and electricity, for its population. Until 1970, 90 percent of this effort was directed into the countryside, a fact incidentally that accounts for the deteriorating state of the capital city Havana. Visitors who do not get into the countryside, therefore, who instead evaluate living conditions in Cuba in terms of what they see miss the point. The policy of the Revolution has been to develop the Island rural areas, to which enormous resources have been devoted. New towns have sprung up throughout the island from the mountains in the eastern province of Oriente to the tobacco plantations of Pinar del Rio.

In Oriente, Cuba's largest province (34,971 square kilometers), half the population lives in rural areas. Villages like Puente Guillen, Punta Gorda, and El Vinculo, far from Havana, are places that have been the primary beneficiaries of the changes that have come with the Revolution. Take Puente Guillen for example.

Before the Revolution, a Spanish family by the name of Palomo owned large tracts of land and sugar plantations around the gigantic Rio Cauto sugar mill. The Revolution came, and the Palomos left. But things didn't really start to change until October, 1967, when two cane fields near the old Palomo plantation were ploughed up by a bulldozer brigade. After these fields were cleared, construction brigades moved in and built 1200 apartments, a day care center for children, a school, polyclinic, a park and a shopping center. There are now 416 families -- 2,000 people in all -- attached to the Cauto Rice Project and living nearby. Electricity has also come to the people of Puente since the water works and two pumping stations were built in nearby San Jaquin eight miles away. When the people moved into their homes from the scattered shacks in which they were living before, they brought with them only the clothes they wore on their backs. In the apartments,

already provided by the Revolution was furniture, china, beds for the children, pots and pans and new clothes for both work and dress. There were also shoes for the children, medium and short wave radios, food in the pantries that contained refrigerators, and television sets. All of this was completely new.

Another village in Oriente that serves as an example is El Vinculo. The 1,000 small farmers in this village have organized themselves into 19 farmer associations devoted to the growing of coffee. In the same region, nearly 3,000 children attend classes in 45 schools, all of them built by the Revolution. El Vinculo also has its own hospital (before the Revolution there were neither schools nor a hospital in the zone) in addition to a polyclinic, built by the Revolution in 1965.

Then there is Punta Gorda. Before the Revolution more than 90 percent of the dwellings in Punta Gorda were palm thatched huts with dirt floors. Today it is a tiny little town set in pine groves near a large river with 120 houses, a shopping center, a dispensary and a five room school house. In 1971, its 2,500 inhabitants finished the construction of a new cafeteria and a worker's club. They're now in the process of building an amphitheatre with a capacity of 800 people.

As in Oriente, there have also been changes in Las Villas Province too, particularly in the mountains of the Escambray. Throughout the mountains in little villages there are new dispensaries containing four to six beds, and rooms for minor surgery. In a little town called Quatro Vientos, there is a new hospital with 75 beds, and a modern school with a library and theatre attached. Not far away, workers have just completed a pump which generates a half a million gallons of water for people in the region.

On the Isle of Pines where newly planted citrus plantations cover thousands of acres, where 16 dams have been constructed in the past ten years, the population has increased from a pre-revolutionary 10,000 inhabitants to 30,000 today. Since 1965, fourteen primary schools, two secondary and four technical institutes have been built for the 10,000 who attend them. In 1971, 1,000 new apartment buildings were also built, and another 783 were under construction in 1972. Small towns like La Fe, Chacon and Cagigao have new schools and clinics built with materials produced on the island. There are also three newly constructed polyclinics and a hospital in the

capital city of the province, Nueva Gerona, with 139 beds, an operating theatre and services covering every specialty except the treatment of allergies.

The following table demonstrates the changes that have taken place in social services throughout the countryside:

THE GROWTH OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN
RURAL CUBA:
1959-1969

	1959	1969
Elementary schools	4,889	12,353
Teaching personnel	5,336	18,637
Elementary school students	216,850	602,341
General hospitals	1	48
Beds in general hospitals	10	1,607

(SOURCE: JUCEPLAN, 1968, Havana.)

The commitment to the development of rural areas, however, set limits on what could be done in the cities. As a result, housing for the urban population was, until 1971, totally neglected by the Revolution. In the cities, despite the Revolution's policy of distributing the homes vacated by exiles to those without homes, by 1968 the housing shortage was acute. According to Fidel Castro, in that year in order to house the growing urban population it would be necessary to construct 100,000 homes yearly. And yet in 1970, only 10,000 dwellings were under construction and most of these in the countryside.

Finally, in mid-1971, in a speech delivered in the Plaza de la Revolucion, Castro suggested a possible solution to the crisis in housing. He called for the formation of micro-brigades that would be composed of workers from the factories experiencing acute housing shortages. These workers, supplied with materials and machines by the State, would then be sent out to build the housing required.

In the meantime, any slack in production was to be absorbed by the remaining work force.

By November 1972, visitors to Cuba could see the immediate results. In Havana Province alone, 274 apartment buildings were already under construction. In Alamar a construction site 15 miles outside of Havana, Castro himself would often be found demonstrating the effect of his plan to visiting dignitaries. There, 336 apartments had been constructed by 2,000 men incorporated into 30 construction brigades. Each block of 16 apartments took an average of 70 days to build and when completed were turned over to the factories where worker assemblies decided which workers, depending on need and merit, would eventually live in them. Monthly rent was to be six percent of the worker's salary plus an additional four percent for the furniture -- refrigerator and television set -- that went with the apartment.

Despite the skepticism of some foreign observers and diplomats who have visited Alamar (They question efficiency, not the enthusiasm of the brigades), there are now 30,000 construction teams operating throughout Cuba. These brigades are in the process of building nearly 2,000 buildings incorporating 28,000 living units in all. (24) According to Fidel Castro, in the next two years, assuming that shortages in cement, steel rods and manpower will be overcome, the micro-brigades should be able to build 100,000 housing units a year.

RACISM

Revolutionary changes since 1958 have not only eliminated the disparities that existed between Cuba's rich and poor or the urban and rural population, but racism as an institutionalized phenomena has also disappeared. (26) Here it must be noted that Afro-Cubans as such didn't have a monopoly on poor housing, disease and unemployment prior to the Revolution -- whites, particularly in rural areas, were as victimized in that regard. But being black in pre-Revolutionary Cuba meant that there were added burdens to bear. Despite Article 20 of the Cuban Constitution which stated that "all Cubans are equal under the law," institutionalized racism in the better clubs, hospitals, private schools, banks and many parks operated in practice if not in theory.

this Nicolas Guillan, a black Cuban poet, describes stratification as it existed when he was a young man.

"We children of that epoch were forced to live from the earliest moments of our lives with the spectacle of a people divided according to the color of one's skin. Negroes and whites were divided within their own groups. The whites by social classes, Negroes by degree of skin pigmentation. For example in my native city of Camaguey, there were three 'colored' societies. Two were predominantly Negro, although they accepted mulattoes. The exclusively mulatto group was subdivided into darker and lighter pigmentation. Nonetheless these distinctions were of no importance when it came to membership in the exclusive white clubs. In addition, persons were included or excluded in accordance with their economic circumstances. I recall that the leaflets announcing dances often stated that they were 'for whites only.' When this did not occur, I recall that part of the dance hall would be roped off in order to separate Cubans by color. Negroes and mulattoes were excluded in practice from many types of jobs: bank clerks, department store sales clerks, nurses in the best clinics, conductors on the railways, etc. Negroes could find only poorly paid jobs for the most part as cooks, maids, messengers and so on. In many of the restaurants, hotels and bars, Negroes were prohibited from circulating in public. In certain municipal parks there were clearly defined zones the violation of which often produced violence and even bloodshed, no one dreamed in Cuba permitting a Negro to enter a luxury hotel and they were similarly barred from many cafes and restaurants."

Since the Revolution, the government has opened all private clubs, beaches, hotels, educational and health facilities to every Cuban regardless of race. At the same time, the standard of living of the Black or low income white has been improved by law reducing rents, by the agrarian reforms, the increase of wages, scholarships, pensions, and the reduction or elimination of fees for public utilities such as transportation, water or electricity. A black soldier

I met at the hotel Riviera put it this way:

"Cuba has now established a socialist society where everybody is considered the same. Before the Revolution, I knew that I couldn't go into the Havana Riviera; but now during the holidays I get, I can come to this pool that wasn't for the people before. It was exclusive, mostly for the North Americans. I've also been to Varadero, which before the Revolution was exclusively for whites, the best resort in Cuba."

Despite the openness of Cuban society, insofar as race no longer defines the limits of an individual's economic or social situation, cultural and esthetic racism persists, particularly among the older generation. For example, of the six 1971 Carnival queens selected as representatives of various mass organizations, five were white and one, selected by students from the University of Havana, was a light-skinned brown girl. Another anachronism is the militant woman's magazine, Mujeras, the organ of the Federation of Cuban Women that is headed by the wife of Raul Castro. The photos of models it uses in its fashion section are of white European women. One sees also that very few Afro-Cuban women wear their hair in the natural style, although as one woman explained, this could be due more to puritan ethic that lingers on from the 1950's.

In this regard, on one occasion, I found a female head of a primary school who insisted that all her girls have their hair straightened regularly.

"A woman who gets on a bus with an Afro is thought to be a hippie. People look at her and think that she's trying to show off. Besides, the men don't like the Afro, so women just don't wear them although we accept the fashions and the Afro as they are worn by visitors from the U.S. It's just our cultural lag and the hostility we feel to our own brand of hippie-ness."

Black-white sexual relationships, especially those between white women and black men are also subject to an unstated but subtle prejudice. Doris, a white actress, describes her impression:

"In my neighborhood, in Miramar, if I were to bring home a black man, people would object. Not that they would say anything, but

I'd know it. On the other hand, a white man who might have a black girlfriend . . . well that's okay. Among my friends, though, no one would ever object to either situation."

Why then doesn't the Revolution have special programs or emphasize racial equality more openly?

The answer is provided by Fidel Castro in a speech he delivered in 1959. "It should not be necessary to pass a law to establish a right which a person has by the simple fact of being a human being and a member of society." Essentially, therefore, the Revolution has not initiated any special programs or quotas for any racial group. Instead, it believes that given time and open access to egalitarian educational facilities and medical services, all Cubans, regardless of race will benefit equally. Blacks having been the most deprived sector of the revolutionary society will implicitly gain most from the changes brought about by the Revolution anyway. As for the charge that there is a systematic exclusion by the Revolution of Afro-Cubans from positions of leadership (the Party's Central Committee has no more than ten blacks among the 92 currently active there), one must realize that the present generation of leaders were selected on the basis of participation in the guerrilla campaign against the Batista regime. As it happened, the 26th of July movement Castro led into the mountains was predominantly white and middle class. So that as a result there were few Afro-Cubans to select from in the first place. It would also be noted by anyone familiar with the current leadership of the University Federation of Students (a very influential body) or the Young Communist League, the Party, the Army, the Ministry of Interior (the fact Diaz was white surprised me), the press, the various Ministries and the mass organizations like the Unions and Women's Fed (FMC) are staffed with an equal number of whites and Afro-Cubans---even though the Revolution doesn't make a point of it. Because most of these key people are very young (25-30), a generation younger than the top leaders, these are the children of the Revolution, girls and boys who were 12-16 when Castro came to power.

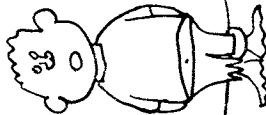
Frank Mc Donald

IN 1958 THERE WERE HALF A MILLION UNEMPLOYED (IN A POPULATION OF SIX MILLION)



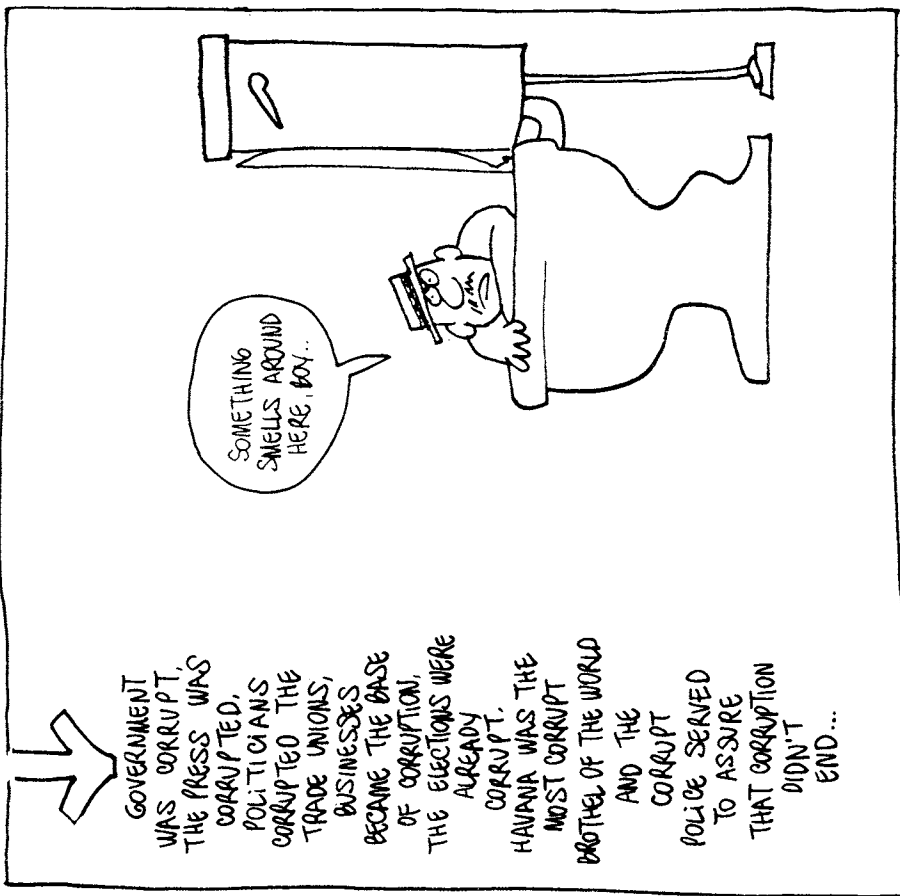
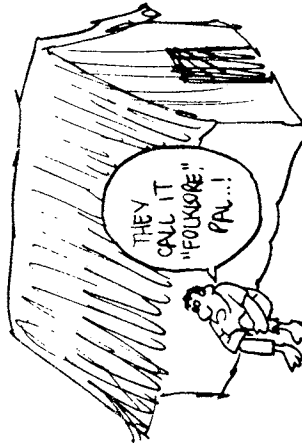
AND SINCE THEY ALWAYS SEE US SITTING AROUND, THEY SAY WE CUBANS ARE LAZY...

EACH YEAR HALF A MILLION CHILDREN WENT WITHOUT SCHOOL. BESIDES WHICH, TWO-THIRDS OF THE CHILDREN HAD NO PRIMARY SCHOOL TO GO TO...



AT THIS RATE I'LL END UP A BONGO DRUMMER OR A SENATOR...

FIVE MILLION CUBANS (OUT OF A POPULATION OF SIX MILLION) DIDN'T HAVE THEIR OWN HOMES AND LIVED IN "BOHIOS" (HUTS) WITHOUT LIGHT, WATER OR SEWERAGE...



GOVERNMENT WAS CORRUPT, THE PRESS WAS CORRUPTED, POLITICIANS CORRUPTED THE TRADE UNIONS, BUSINESSSES BECAME THE BASE OF CORRUPTION, THE ELECTIONS WERE ALREADY CORRUPT. HAVANA WAS THE MOST CORRUPT BROTHER OF THE WORLD AND THE CORRUPT POLICE SERVED TO ASSURE THAT CORRUPTION DIDN'T END...

Drawings from CUBA FOR BEGINNERS BY RUIS, Mexico City, Mexico.

NOTES

1. Carmelo Mesa-Lago writes in a study of the pre-revolutionary economy:

"The most serious socioeconomic problem of Cuba was unemployment. In the years 1956-1957, 39 percent of the labor force found employment in primary activities (agriculture, fishing, mining, cattle-ranching); 20 percent in secondary activities (industry, construction, electricity); 36 percent in tertiary activities (communications, commerce, services); and the rest had no specific occupation. Between 1919 and 1957, the percentage of the labor force employed in agriculture fell from 49 percent to 39 percent. The principal increases in employment were found in construction, commerce, and industry, in that order, but such increases were not high enough to absorb both the rapidly growing labor force and rural-to-urban migration. On the eve of the Revolution, 16.4 percent of the labor force was totally unemployed, and approximately 13.8 percent found itself in various forms of underemployment.

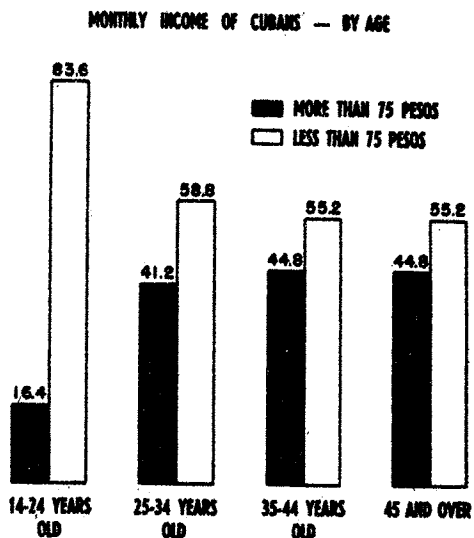
These figures represent annual averages, and they therefore do not reveal the fluctuations of unemployment during the year. From 20 percent to 25 percent of the labor force found work in the sugar sector, but due to the seasonal character of the sugar crop and its processing, this portion of the work force had stable work for only four months out of the year.

In any event, 1956-1957 statistics show that total unemployment increased from 200,000 workers during the period of greatest activity in the sugar harvest (February-April) to 457,000 workers during the period of lowest activity (August-October). Although strict comparisons are not possible, statistics on unemployment calculated in 1943, 1953, and 1956-57, suggest that this situation was becoming increasingly worse."

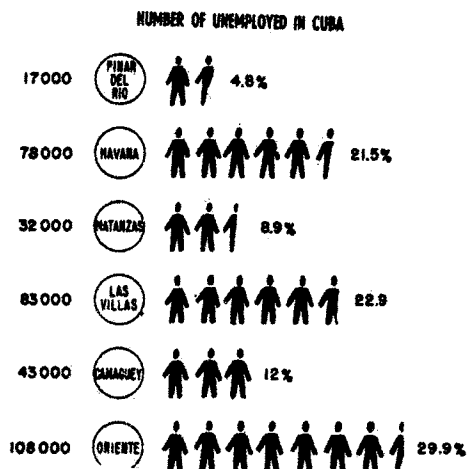
Source: "Economic Policies and Growth" in Revolutionary Change in Cuba, c. Mesa Lago, Editor. (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971).

To compare, today forty percent of Latin America's labor force is presently unemployed or underemployed. Sources: Statistical Abstract of Latin America, December, 1970, published by Latin American Center, U.C.L.A. Also Yearbook of Labor Statistics, International Labor Office.

2. Bohemia, 1958: Graph below shows wage distribution by age and geographic location. 954,180 Cubans received less than 75.00 pesos a month or about 3.00 pesos a day.



PRESIDENT BAPTISTA
(1955)



Bohemia, February 16, 1958.

Also Lowry Nelson's Rural Cuba (U. of Minnesota Press, 1950).

3. Granma, page 6. 11-28-69.
4. Maurice Zeitlin, Revolutionary Politics and the Cuban Working Class, (Princeton, 1967). Also, on wage and income disparity before the Revolution, figures cited by Ricardo Leya in Cuba in Revolution (Doubleday, 1972) Page 457:

In 1956 there were 350,000 agricultural workers with 2.1 million dependents who had a total annual income of 190 million pesos. In other words, 34% of the total population received only 10% of the national income. Moreover, a family of six had an annual income of 548.75 pesos, or a monthly per capita figure of 7.60 pesos. More than 50% of the families had yearly incomes below 500 pesos, and only 7.2% earned over 1,000 pesos yearly.

Sixty-nine percent of earnings were spent on food, that is, 10% more than in 1934. This was a consequence of a 194% increase in salaries from 1934 to 1956, compared to a 228% rise in the price of food. Thus, in 1956 the rural families spent more money on food while eating less than they had twenty years earlier.

In 1956 a family of six could spend only seventeen cents per person to feed each member. It is not surprising then that malnutrition was widespread (91% in the countryside) and the average weight of the agricultural worker was sixteen pounds below the theoretical average, and the height was much less than that of the average Cuban.

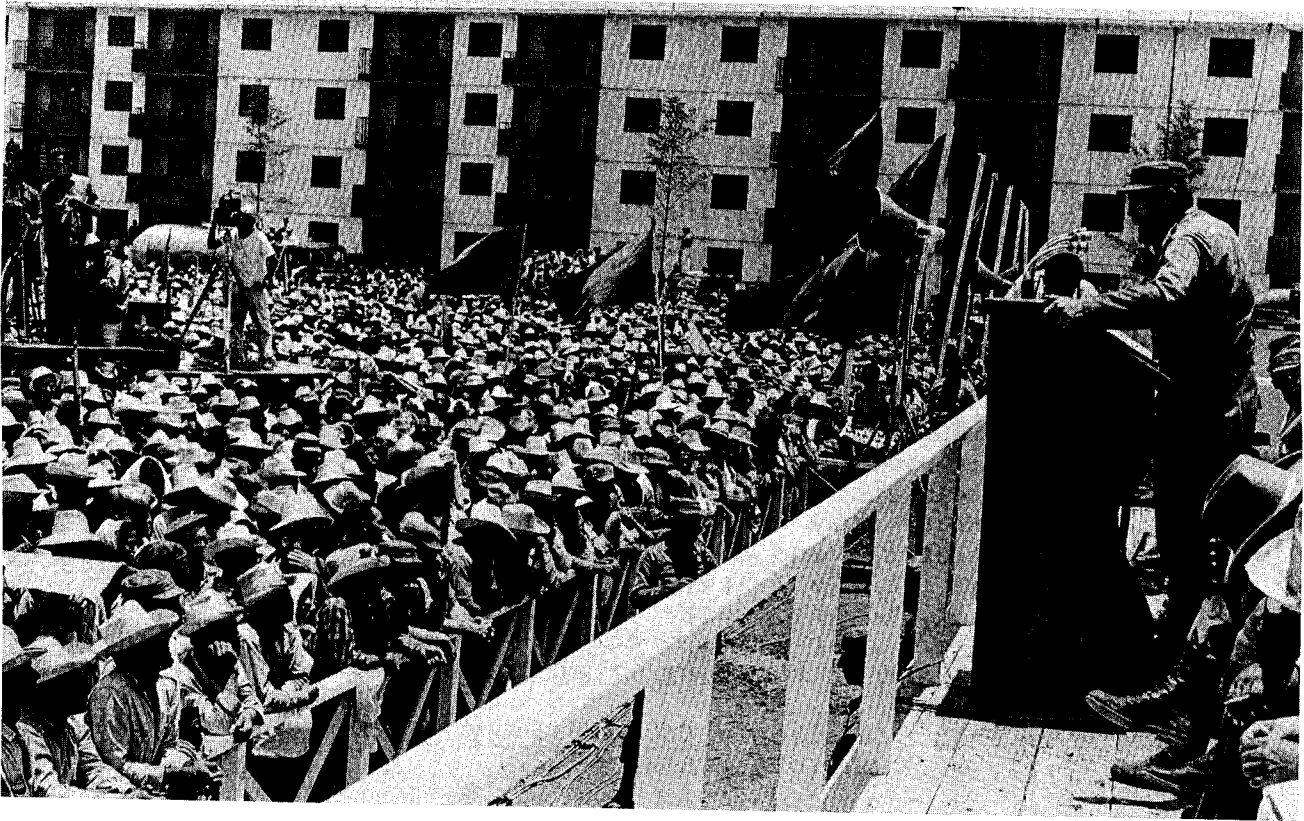
A survey made in 1959 of the rural population of Las Villas by the provincial university discovered that the average rural family still consisted of six members with a yearly income of 657 pesos or 30 cents per capita on a daily basis, that is, an improvement of 5 cents over the study made in 1956 by the Catholic University Association.

For comparison with conditions as they are in Latin America today, the U.C.L.A. Center on Latin American Studies published the following graph:

THE DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME IN LATIN AMERICA

(in dollars)

Countries	Percentage Share	Average Incomes Regional Average	Average Per Capita
Lowest 20%	3.1	15.5	60
30% below median	10.3	34.0	130
30% above median	24.1	80.0	310
15% below the			
top 5%	29.2	194.0	750
Top 5%	33.4	680.0	2600



Near Bayamo in Oriente, apartments built in a small village or "pueblo" called Vado del Yeso, are dedicated by Castro. Every apartment has a radio or television, is furnished also with stove, refrigerator and other necessities.



5. Figures based on my own interviews. Also published in Revolutionary Change in Cuba, page 228, op cit. 22.

6. Despite reports of the development of a "new class" based on power rather than money, interpretations that suggest power means special privileges in terms of extra rations, clothing, vacations, etc. are, based on my own experience, unfounded. While there are instances of bureaucrats operating under the law of "sociolism" (who you know) rather than socialism, generally the distribution of goods and services is very equitable. The "new class" school of American commentators on Cuba misleads when analysing the power elite as follows:

"The disappearance of the bourgeoisie did not mean that there would be none to take their place. Their position was immediately occupied by the new power elite. Privileges of many kinds are enjoyed by members of the new inner circle and dispensed to favorites as they wish. The ration book is a leveling factor, it is true, but those who "mind the stores" and those in charge of those "who mind the stores" have access to supplies denied the ones who stand in the long lines to reach the portals."

(Excerpts from L. Nelson's Cuba, Measure of a Revolution, pg. 177. U. of Minnesota Press, 1972.)

8. "Health and Revolution in Cuba", Ricardo Leyva, in Cuba in Revolution. Ed. by R. Bonachea and N. Valdes. (Doubleday, 1971.)

9. Melchor W. Gason and others. Por que Reforma Agraria, Havana: Agrupacion Catolica Universitaria, 1957. This study is extremely valuable for an objective view of pre-revolutionary Cuba, particularly in the countryside.

Catholic University Association made a survey of the agricultural workers (40% of the country's population) in Cuba's 126 municipalities. The report states:

The inquiry had three principal aims: to make, for the first time in Cuba, a detailed, accurate, statistical study of the living conditions of agricultural workers, which may serve as a firm base for analysing economic and social problems and finding solutions to them; to give our members in the cities an opportunity to become aware of the reality of our countryside and learn its difficulties. And, last but not least, to be able to affirm, with certain knowledge and proof ready at hand, that the Cuban peasants find themselves in the no man's land between abandonment and helplessness, thanks to national egoism, and that our nation cannot aspire to true progress as long as it does not give proper attention to our countryside.

The city of Havana is enjoying an epoch of extraordinary prosperity, while the countryside, and especially the agricultural workers, must live under almost unbelievable conditions of stagnation, misery, and hopelessness.

11. Ration list that is cited is an official list published by the Cuban government. I verified the quantities (with exceptions noted) in several samplings of grocery stores located in Havana, Cienfuegos and Santiago. Cigarettes are rationed, one pack per person each week, as are cigars (one to a person each week). Clothing and shoes were also rationed. Women have greater access to these goods than men who must get along on two pairs of shoes, a few shirts and four pairs of trousers each year.

Again, for comparative purposes, a recent study of the Pan American Health Organization on Latin America states:

"Only in Argentina, Cuba, Uruguay and some of the smaller Caribbean islands where dietary habits are superior, does the average nutritional level climb above the generally accepted minimum. The general diet of the region, based principally on carbohydrates and starches, is usually deficient in the essential animal proteins, vitamins, and minerals required to provide a proper balance. Approximately 7 percent of Latin American children suffer from severe malnutrition, and an additional 45 percent suffer from moderate nutritional deficiencies.

12. Statistics on school enrollment in Latin America taken from the U.C.L.A. Latin American Center survey, 1970, op cit. Figures on Cuban enrollment, number of schools, teachers taken from Speech by Fidel Castro, April 16, 1972.

"Today's problems don't resemble those of 10 or 12 years ago in any respect. At that time, there were hundreds of thousands of illiterates. I don't remember if there were a million or even more. At that time, half the school-age population didn't have any schools. At that time, there weren't enough classrooms or teachers, there weren't enough resources, there wasn't enough of anything for education.

At the beginning, the Revolution was faced with a very difficult, very backward situation. We had to begin solving all those problems: how to place teachers all over the country; how to put up schools-improvised buildings, in many cases-all over the country; how to confront the problems of illiteracy and the lack of culture of millions of people.

Our country is now in a position to build some 300 schools of the Ceiba 1 type a year in 1973, 1974 and 1975. There are already 80 construction brigades at work building schools. From now on, the construction workers' minibrigade movement will be in charge of building elementary schools and day-care centers in every zone where workers' apartment buildings are built.

" Moreover, if we analyze the cost of education, we find that it costs our country more than 400 million pesos a year. And the cost will no doubt increase, of course. We are a developing country, a poor country. And if the cost of education in 1980 is 600, 700, 800 or even 1000 million pesos, how can our country's economy meet such a demand; how can our economy meet such an expense?"

13. The universalization of free education in Cuba has produced new problems for the Revolution, particularly with drop-outs. According to Castro, "there are 215,513 young people between the ages of 8 and 13 years old who are not studying." Rates of promotion are also low (an average of 70%). In fourth grade for example, barely 60 percent of the children were passed to the fifth grade last year.

"What factors cause these difficulties? There are quite a few. For example, the material resources: school installations, the material foundation for study--to name one--the difficulties involved in going to school in the mountains, the distance, the isolated school, the poor school, the school in a hut or the school with a roof of thatched palm. There are other problems: the environment, the cultural level of the population, a lack of awareness which still exists about the importance of the school and of education, of the need for discipline, regular attendance in school and cooperation with the school by the population in general and especially by the parents of the students. This is a problem that makes itself felt."

The quality and efficiency of educational personnel is also a problem. Out of 79,688 teachers, only 24,265 have graduated from a teacher training program; that's only 30 out of every 100 teachers who have qualified. Of the elementary school teachers, only 61.3 percent have become qualified. Castro's proposal to remedy the problem is a crash program he calls the "guerrillas of education movement".

"And what about raising the quality of teaching, of the teaching staff, in addition to the material base? There are two ways to do this: one, with the "guerrillas of education" movement, is to get more young people to enroll in teachers' training schools--which are already under construction--and the other--and this is most important!--is to give refresher courses for nongraduate teachers. We have to make a really special effort with our nongraduate teachers.



A class photo of graduation taken during the 1961 Literacy Campaign. Ministry of Education.

"How are we going to solve the problem of junior high school teachers when 40 new schools will be opened this year and at least 120 will be opened in 1973, and each school needs at least 40 teachers, and the number of students increases? Just how are we going to solve that problem?"

"We have to start a movement among our junior high school graduates this year. There are twenty thousand 10th graders in the country, and a movement for training these 10th graders to teach in the junior high schools in the countryside must be developed by the student organizations and the UJC. They will teach under the supervision of teachers with more experience and should enroll in the Pedagogical Institute. Thus, a 10th-grade graduate would be able to go to a junior high school and work under the supervision of experienced teachers and get his pedagogical training right there in the school. We must start a movement among those young people, getting them to combine teaching junior high with studying pedagogy. At present there simply isn't any other formula except to go to our 10th graders and recruit at least 2,000 of them this year, and at least 5,000 next year.

"We have to find an emergency solution, but an emergency solution with some prospects of raising the educational level of those young people, of enabling them to carry out advanced studies. And this is the only formula through which we can solve the problem of the deficit of 18,000 teachers which we are going to have in 1976."

14. Latin American Center, U.C.L.A. The Statistical Abstract also lists the current level of illiteracy of other Latin American states. The following list illustrates the problem.

"In Venezuela the illiteracy rate reaches 36 percent; in Guyana, 15 percent; in the Dominican Republic, 35 percent; in Brazil, 40 percent; and in Haiti, as high as 85 percent."

Figures for the 1961 Literacy Campaign show the dimensions of the effort.

Results of the Literacy Campaign of 1961

Category	6/30	7/31	8/30	12/21
	Illiterates			
Illiterates located.....	684,000	822,000	985,000	979,000
Illiterates involved in campaign in 1961.....	487,000	656,000	895,000	...
Persons studying.....	465,000	594,000	776,000	...

Category	6/30	7/31	8/30	12/21
Illiterates, cont.				
New literates:				
cumulative total.....	22,000	62,000	119,000	707,000
Remaining illiterates....	272,000
Teaching Force				
Brigadistas.....	47,000	...	90,000	106,000
Alfabetizadores.....	145,000	...	178,000	174,000
Total teaching forces..	192,000	234,000	268,000	280,000
Pupil/teacher ratio....	2.4	2.5	2.9	...

Source: Dudley Seers, ed., Cuba: The Economic and Social Revolution (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), p. 195.

15. Raul de Valasco, "Cuba" in World Medical Journal, May, 1959, page 141. Also cited in Carlos Font Pupo's "Hacia la Salud Publica Socialista", Cuba Socialista (Havana) July, 1965.
 16. Por que Reforma Agraria, 1957. op cit. Also Ricardo Leyva. op cit. Data also culled from the following sources:
 - (a) Compendio Estadistico de Cuba, the Central Planning Office (Havana).
 - (b) Michael Liebowitz, The Cuban Health Care System, (School of Medicine, Yale University dissertation, June, 1969).
 - (c) "Toward Better Health Care", Cuban Research Center, New York.
 - (d) Edward Rice's "Cuba: Services for All" in World Health, published by the World Health Organization.
 - (e) Salud Publica en Cifras, 1971. (Ministry of Health, Havana).
 - (f) Carmilo Mesa-Lago's "Availability and Reliability of Statistics in Socialist Cuba", Latin American Research Review, 1969.
 17. "From spending three pesos per person in 1959, the country invested 23 pesos in the health of each Cuban in 1968." (Ricardo Leyva, page 486. op cit.)
 18. "Salud Publica", Bohemia (Havana) January, 1969.
- K.S. Karol, Guerrillas in Power, New York, Hill and Wang, 1970.

19.

Medical Graduates

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>
1961	335
1962	424
1963	334
1964	315
1965	322
1966	355
1967	400
1968	420
1969	923

Source: Granma, January, 1970 .

Half of the 1972 graduating class at the University of Havana Medical School was female.

The post-revolutionary training of doctors lasts six years. Those enrolling must be 17 years of age, and have a secondary school education. A competitive exam screens applicants. The course work during the first three years is primarily science with three hours a week devoted to historical and dialectical materialism, political economy, philosophy and one foreign language. The fourth and fifth years begin psychiatry, surgery, obstetrics, pediatrics, and some work in hospital training. The entire sixth year is a form of internship at one of 23 hospitals and clinics throughout Cuba. After this period, an examination of the student's work is made by a panel of doctors who evaluate him in science, on theory, practical medicine, laboratory work and ideology. Then the student takes the following pledge and is qualified to practice.

"We promise ... to renounce private practice ... and to make effective with our attitude the new proletarian philosophy of the medical sciences and ... to maintain in ourselves the spirit of scientific and political improvement in order to reach the technical level necessary and to make ourselves true communists.... We state our readiness to give our help, scientific or otherwise, to the peoples that are fighting for their national liberation and their economic, political, and social independence.... We pledge to defend with our lives this heroic socialist and communist revolution. We make this pledge before our people and our Maximum Leader, Fidel Castro, Commander in Chief, whatever it may be, wherever it may be, whenever it may be, at your orders! Fatherland or Death. Venceremos."

20. World Health Organization as cited in Statistical Abstract on Latin America. U.C.L.A. op cit.



Above students in a small country school photographed in 1957. Below high school students in Havana stroll to class in 1972.



21. Infant Mortality

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>(per 1,000 live births)</u>
1958	5,906	33.0
1959	6,646	34.5
1960	7,604	35.4
1961	9,046	38.6
1962	10,389	39.8
1963	9,906	38.6
1964	10,136	38.4
1965	10,132	38.4
1966	9,597	37.6
1968	-	37.4
1969	-	44.7

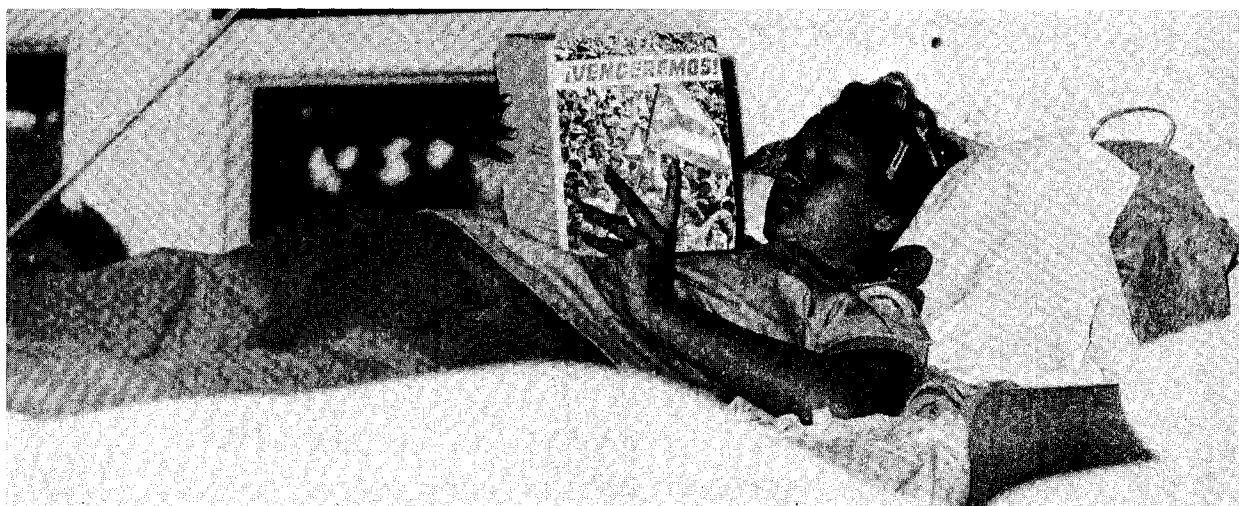
The table above provides statistics on infant mortality since 1958. Why the increase while health care, distribution of services (90% of all births now occur in hospitals), nutrition of the parents and the sanitary environment have all improved? First, registration of infant deaths has improved greatly. Second, according to para-natal specialists from Europe who visited and surveyed infant medical care, the quality of medical personnel plus the persistence of parasitic and infectious disease in rural areas are other factors. (Eighty percent of infant deaths are still due to gastrointestinal disease, induced by worms, bacteria or virus.)

22. These figures are the latest available. Sources noted in footnote 16.
23. By law no Cuban pays more than 10% of his salary in rent. However he cannot "buy" a house for himself although there is an exchange service through which one can "privately trade" an apartment or home for the residence owned by another Cuban. No Cuban may own more than one residence in the city, but may have a second vacation house by the sea or in the interior of the island. In Havana, trading takes place "under the trees" on the Paseo Drive near the Hotel Havana Riviera, where each morning Habaneras meet by a large tree where notices announcing vacancies or changes of address are posted.
24. Lionel Martin, Prensa Latina news service. February 15, 1973.
25. The housing crisis the Revolution confronts is almost insurmountable. The dimensions of it are so vast that construction plans formulated by Castro might alleviate but not solve this

problem. At least, however, to tackle it is laudatory. In Latin America today there is no regime making a comparable effort and the housing shortage throughout is equally acute. The following summary, from a report done by the Latin American Center at U.C.L.A. illustrates:

"Housing, or the lack of it, constitutes a major health hazard in Latin America. Crowded, unsanitary dwellings not only aggravate an already serious health situation, but they also demean the individual and affect his attitude toward life. An estimated 80 million people lack even the most elementary type of housing. Meanwhile, much of the present housing in both rural and urban areas fails to meet basic health and safety standards. A thatched-roof one-room cottage with a door and a window, and an average occupancy factor of 10 persons, serves as home for most of the rural population. That is considered to be a luxury. Over 90 percent of Latin America's rural population lacks water service. In most cases there is neither electricity, sewerage, nor even outside sanitary facilities. Just to meet Latin America's housing requirements, including the construction of 18 million new housing units, would necessitate the expenditure of at least 25 billion dollars (U.S.), or approximately 33 percent of the region's entire annual gross national product."

26. Cuba was the first island in the Caribbean to import slaves in 1521 (Juan Perez de la Riva, a Cuban demographer, estimates there were 816,378 slaves landed in Havana from 1521 to 1873) and the last to abolish slavery in 1880. By 1861, 43.2 percent of the Cuban population was of African origin.



"Now Public Telephones Are Free
Another Benefit from the Revolution
to The People" (Appears on the back
page of the Havana Telephone Directory)

32.

AHORA LOS TELEFONOS PUBLICOS, SERVICIO LOCAL, SON GRATIS



Un beneficio más de la Revolución al Pueblo

El Teléfono no es un entretenimiento,
úselo cuando lo necesite
y reporte las interrupciones al 114